

CAP: European Parliament fighting for strong EU agricultural policy with less red tape

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"The European Parliament, as co-legislator, will fight for a strong EU agricultural policy to secure food production in Europe while reducing red tape for farmers", said the EPP Group's Co-ordinator in the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee of the European Parliament, Albert Dess, ahead of the presentation by the European Commission of the legislative proposals on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) after 2013.

"Europe's farmers have to do much more today than in the past. They must ensure a continuous food supply in the face of a growing world population, contribute to the fight against climate change, and help protect our environment, while at the same time meeting the highest standards for food safety, animal health and the preservation of our natural environment. The future Common Agricultural Policy needs to reflect these tasks and make sure farmers can continue to deliver for the benefit of society as a whole", Albert Dess said.

The EPP Group in the European Parliament would push for a comprehensive reduction in red tape for farmers, he added. "Cross compliance rules need to be simplified so that farmers can spend more time working in the fields or in their barns instead of behind their desks." In addition, the CAP needs to become more flexible and take into account the differences in farming across Europe. "It is impossible to put mountainous areas into the same category as lowland farming."

Albert Dess warned against abandoning farmland prematurely. "A growing world population leads to a rising demand for food. We need incentives for growth. Anything else would be irresponsible", he said. "The CAP's two-pillar structure made up of direct payments for farmers and a fund for rural development needs to be maintained. The Common Agricultural Policy of the future needs to build on the successes of the past. The two-pillar structure provides planning security for farmers while at the same time giving vital impulses for rural development", Mr Dess said.

The EPP Group will play the leading role in shaping the future of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy. Of the four main legislative Reports to be tabled today by the European Commission, EPP Group Member Michel Dantin (FR) will be Rapporteur for the Single Common Market Organisation, while his colleague Giovanni La Via (IT) will be Rapporteur for the financial aspects of the CAP. Mairead McGuinness (IRL) will be the EPP Group Shadow Rapporteur for direct payments, and Elisabeth Kustinger (AT) will be EPP Group Shadow Rapporteur for rural development.