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Press Release

Copa and Cogeca call for an ambitious MFF and Economic Recovery Programme reflecting the lessons learnt from the COVID-19 crisis and acknowledging the key role of agriculture and forestry

In view of the upcoming adoption of the revised Union's 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and the Economic Recovery Programme, Copa and Cogeca underline the need to take on board the lessons learnt from the current pandemic, secure a well-functioning Single Market and include agriculture and forestry as critical sectors of the economy, making them eligible for investment support.

It is crucial that the European Commission ensures that the revised MFF proposal adequately supports agriculture and the CAP, and in such way, helps to ensure food security in the EU, as per the provisions laid out in the Lisbon Treaty. In order to foster the right conditions for the European farming sector to plan its recovery, the CAP needs a strong and adequate budget that provides the same level of support as the current CAP. In addition the European Commission should design, deploy and implement all necessary tools—grants, loans with different maturity periods, and financial instruments in order to incentivise the much-needed investment support for the sector to recover.

The current emergency resulting from the outbreak of the new coronavirus is having a dramatic impact on rural areas across the EU, with both immediate effects as well as medium to long-term consequences. Exceptional circumstances require exceptional measures, and considering the exceptional circumstances the farming sector is currently facing due to the COVID-19 crisis, European farmers and agri-cooperatives believe additional support should come from outside the agricultural budget.

It is imperative to start preparing for the post-pandemic reality following a common and coordinated approach anchored on the principles of solidarity, understanding and flexibility.

There are, at least, two important lessons that this pandemic has taught us: one is the key role that agriculture and the food supply chain play, and the second is the need to maintain the integrity and the functioning of the Single Market.

In this context Copa and Cogeca Secretary General Pekka Pesonen underlined that *“It is crucial to take into account the recovery priorities of the sectors hit hard by the COVID-19 crisis and to provide the conditions for farmers, forest owners and agri-cooperatives to continue their activity and guarantee the daily supply of food and by-products for European society. To this end, all measures that can safeguard and guarantee the functioning of the markets and agricultural activity need to be introduced and/or revamped. Stimulating and facilitating additional investment in the sector is key. In addition, a careful approach must be adopted regarding the measures and requirements imposed on EU farms and agricultural cooperatives. In this period, during which the sector is suffering, disproportionate restrictions impacting food security and the sustainability of the sector should be avoided.”*

Under the Union's economic recovery programme, the drive for increased and improved sustainability, combating climate change and enhancing biodiversity must continue to be at the heart of our ambitions. In this regard, it is fundamental to ensure that the Economic Recovery

Programme includes, with adequate budgetary allocations outside of the agricultural budget, the following areas:

- Expansion of adequate broadband coverage in rural areas
- Digitalisation of the agri-food sector, including infrastructure development, especially in rural areas
- Digital technologies to exploit the EU's technological lead in satellite technology
- Investments in on-farm diversification and enabling access and use of latest technologies (e.g. investments in AI, robotics, NGTs)
- Promoting digital skills in rural areas—upskilling and reskilling of workers could facilitate the transition
- Support to biomass production as a replacement of fossil fuels
- Support to the European bioeconomy sector, which needs to play a pivotal role in the transition to a more circular, sustainable and resource-efficient society

Copa and Cogeca, its farmers, forest owners and cooperative members strive to deliver food and biomass produced in a manner that protects the environment, enhances biodiversity, contributes to combating climate change and that ensures animal welfare. Their role in contributing to delivering on the objectives of a revised EU Green Deal is crucial.

The European decision makers must now show that their ambitions are also backed-up by the necessary financing and instruments to ensure a fair transition for all.

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