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Press Release

Strategic dialogue on the future of agriculture - a report that kicks off Ursula von der Leyen's second mandate on agriculture

This morning, Professor Strohschneider presented the conclusions of the strategic dialogue on the future of agriculture to Ursula von der Leyen. This report, notable for its unique deliberative approach and comprehensive recommendations, marks a first step toward the development of the "Agri-Food Vision" announced by the Commission President in July. The Presidents of Copa and Cogeca, who played an active role in this dialogue, commend the change in method used and call for further urgent actions.

Originally introduced by Ursula von der Leyen in her September 2023 State of the Union address, the strategic dialogue on agriculture was mainly conceived as a response to the shortcomings of the top-down approach seen in the Farm to Fork strategy. The initiative was therefore aiming at reintroducing genuine dialogue into the decision-making process. Under Professor Strohschneider’s guidance, discussions have been focused on substantive issues, avoiding the pitfalls of political posturing and polarization.

The result of these intensive seven months of negotiations is a dense document that attempts to address all major aspects in the agricultural and agri-food sectors. Copa and Cogeca particularly welcome the consensus on recognising agriculture and food as strategic sectors for Europe, the imperative need of ensuring food security, and the commitment to competitive sustainability.

The strategic dialogue also strongly advocates for a coherent trade policy, urging the Commission to elevate the importance of agriculture and food products in trade negotiations, especially relevant in light of ongoing discussions about the EU-Mercosur agreement.

Among the key outcomes, the emphasis on financing the necessary transitions - whether through a “*dedicated and commensurate CAP budget*,” a “*temporary Just Transition Fund*” and “*a well-resourced nature restoration fund*” both outside the CAP, or the strengthening of public-private partnerships to mobilize capital - is especially notable and needs to be considered in the upcoming budget proposal.

The report also includes several critical recommendations aimed at empowering farmers within the value chain including on acting on selling below cost, improving transparency, addressing unfair trade practices, and promoting the cooperative model.

Cogeca President Lennart Nilson remarked, *“I am particularly glad that the strategic dialogue recognises the important role that our cooperative enterprises play in strengthening the farmer in the value chain and boosting the sustainable competitiveness of our sectors.”*

Copa and Cogeca also highlight the report’s recommendations on land management (no net land take by 2050, European Farmland Observatory), revitalizing rural areas (Rural Test), generational renewal (action plan for generational renewal), bioeconomy, water management, risk management, and access to innovation.

However, the challenges faced by the farming community today, such as unfair competition, limited income, rising energy costs, generational renewal, and climate change, will only intensify if not tackled with a timely, pragmatic, and impact-driven approach to policymaking. Swift and coherent actions are now needed while we will remain vigilant on a number of points and especially the place of livestock farming, that remain key for rural areas and the recommendations on balanced diets that should follow FAO guidelines.

Copa President Christiane Lambert emphasised, *“This report should be viewed as the beginning of a constructive process that will lead to a more balanced, and strategic vision of agriculture under Ursula von der Leyen. We must continue the dialogue and involve the European Parliament and Council. Many stakeholders will share their views on this report in the coming days and weeks, and Commission must listen to them.”*

In this context, Copa and Cogeca take note of the proposal to create a European Board on Agri-Food (EBAF) as a high-level forum for ongoing and deeper exchanges among key players at the European level. The process must require greater transparency, including broader involvement of farmers and agri-cooperatives.

**-END-**

Translations will be available in DE, ES, FR, IT, PL and RO on the Copa-Cogeca website soon.

About us - Copa and Cogeca are the united voice of farmers and agri-cooperatives in the EU. Together, we ensure that EU agriculture is sustainable, innovative and competitive, while guaranteeing food security for 500 million people throughout Europe. >>> More information [www.copa-cogeca.eu](http://www.copa-cogeca.eu)

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