

Committee on Agriculture
Hungarian National Assembly



Conclusions
by the Heads of Delegations of the Committees on Agriculture
of the Parliaments of V4 Countries
(Budapest, 14-15 February 2018)

We, the Committees on Agriculture of the Parliaments of the Visegrad Countries, having met in Budapest on 14-15 February, 2018 under the Hungarian V4 Presidency agree – that in light of the substantial challenges of recent times – Europe needs a Common Agricultural Policy which can provide an efficient answer to managing diverse crisis situations, that enables the European agricultural sector and the food industry to continue to remain a competitive actor in the global arena. We aim to preserve the present role of the traditional policies, the Cohesion Policy and the Common Agricultural Policy during the negotiations on the multiannual financial framework for the post-2020 period.

The Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy

We stress that the Common Agricultural Policy (hereinafter CAP) guarantees the functioning of the single market in the EU Agri-food sector and provides EU citizens with high-quality safe food, plays a key role in strengthening the vitality of rural areas and contributes to the preservation of natural resources and landscape.

We emphasize that the CAP should remain a highly integrated and a truly common policy, for which the new multiannual financial framework (MFF) should provide appropriate financial resources for fulfilling its objectives.

We agree with the European Commission Communication “The Future of Food and Farming” published on 29 November 2017 in preserving the two pillar structure of the Common Agriculture Policy and in considering that direct payments should remain an essential part of the CAP in line with its EU treaty obligations.

We support the Commission’s willingness to reach further simplification and modernisation of the CAP.

We emphasize that farmers should continue to be key beneficiaries of the funds disbursed through the CAP, and object to the inclusion of any new objectives completely independent of agriculture such as migration in CAP. Management of this problem should not be the task of CAP.

We would like to point out that the proposed new delivery model as put forward by the Commission Communication would declaredly grant a greater extent of subsidiarity to Member States, but there is still a danger of CAP shifting in the direction of re-

nationalisation. We call the attention to a common concern that the new delivery model which aims to provide Member States with higher flexibility in designing their policy choices and means of implementation could also run astray if strategic plans entail time-consuming planning procedures and generate more red tape. In addition, we stress that a late Commission approval of CAP strategic plans might jeopardise the continuity of granting direct payments and would result in a high political and economic risk.

All delegations point out that differences in direct payments per hectare persist yet among Member States, therefore call to complete the process of their full convergence. We underline that all EU farmers face the same challenges and have to meet the same standards and requirements.

Furthermore, we would emphasize that the introduction of a possible national co-financing in the first pillar is unacceptable.

We highlight that voluntary coupled support measures contribute substantially to the economic activity of rural areas and to maintaining employment in the countryside. We therefore have to preserve these forms of support, preferably with a wider scope and with appropriate financial resources.

We highlight that Member States should continue to have the possibility to choose the most appropriate payments scheme fit to their local specificities and needs from a menu of decoupled, coupled and simplified lump-sum payments. We emphasize that the Single Area Payment Scheme (SAPS) proved to be efficient and popular among farmers, therefore it should be kept as an option for the future as well and made available to all Member States.

We believe that equal access to CAP funds should be ensured for all farms. We think that the introduction of capping of direct payments should be voluntary.

We welcome the Commission's effort to ensure that support is targeted to genuine farmers, focusing on those who are actively farming in order to earn their living.

We emphasize that the new proposed system of greening should decrease the administrative burden of farmers and national authorities.

We emphasize that the new proposed system of obligatory environmental measures as put forward by the Commission Communication should not increase the administrative burden of farmers and national authorities.

We consider that a financially strong rural development policy within CAP should play an important role in levelling development differences in the agricultural sector, strengthening the position of the EU agriculture and food sector on the global market and in stimulating sustainable development of rural areas. We would like to point out that challenges faced by rural areas require also involvement of other EU policies, including Cohesion Policy.

We emphasize the continued domination of non-refundable subsidies typically for rural development programs and the supplementary nature of financial instruments with respect to the subsidy-based system. Member States should continue to prioritize between investments and other subsidy-instruments. We consider it especially important to preserve actual agricultural investment measures and their financing in the future.

We agree with the significance of the Farm Advisory System as mentioned in the Commission Communication, however this being a precondition for the approval of Member State programs is too strict in our opinion.

We support the Commission Communication on an increasing role of innovations and new technologies. CAP solutions addressing these issues should better consider the needs of small and medium farms.

We underline that the CAP Treaty objectives, particularly with regard to stabilising agricultural markets, must be implemented effectively so as to prevent crisis situations in agriculture.

We urge to establish a common and united system of national and regional subsidies across EU Member States. The different level of these payments leads to a disruption of the fair environment in the single EU market.

We underline the need to ensure smooth, transparent and efficient transition to the post 2020 rules, both for farmers and national administrations.

Double standard and unfair commercial practices in the food supply chain

We declare that access to safe, good quality and healthy foods is an equal right for all EU citizens.

Selling identical or misleadingly identical products with a deliberately different composition to customers in the different parts of the Union constitutes an unfair manufacturing and commercial practice, which is in our opinion unacceptable.

We consider it necessary to introduce EU-level measures in order to put an end to unfair commercial practices vis-à-vis the consumers. In this respect we welcome the fact that the European Commission has heard the voice of the Visegrad countries and continues to deal with this issue at a high level.

Beside the steps taken by the European Commission so far and with a view to guaranteeing equal rights and protection to consumers within the Union, we consider it most appropriate to develop EU level legislation as a rapid and firm course of action, which would guarantee access to products of the same quality and forbids any differentiation lacking objective arguments.

We welcome the interpretative guidelines developed by the European Commission about the application of relevant EU legislation, however, it is needed to clarify the issues raised at the application of this guideline. We support the development by the Joint Research Centre of a protocol about harmonized sampling and testing methods.

We emphasize the importance to increase consumer awareness with respect to access to quality food products. We request the support of the European Commission and the appropriation of EU funds in order to shape social and consumer awareness.

Signed in Budapest, on 15 February 2018

On behalf of:



*Committee on National Economy, Agriculture and Transport
Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic*



*Committee on Agriculture
Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic*

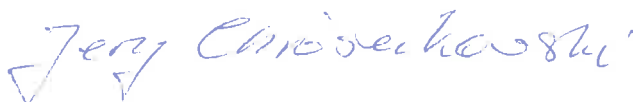


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