

Baltic Sea Regional Conference

**QUO VADIS, FARMLAND
BIODIVERSITY?**

November 14th–15th, 2012, Estonia, Tartu



Mr. Herman Van Rompuy
President of the European Council
European Council
Rue de La Loi 175
B-1048 Brussels, Belgium

Statement from the Baltic Sea Region conference: “Quo Vadis, Farmland Biodiversity?”

Tartu, Estonia, November 19th 2012

Dear President Van Rompuy,

The Baltic Sea Region is characterised by strong seasonal climatic conditions that gave birth to a number of region-specific adaptations to growing food. These conditions and farming practices have created **the region’s farmland structure and nature that are unique in the world**. Due to the climate-limited low productivity, farming in the region and the biodiversity associated with it, highly depends on the **environmentally positive support channelled through the Rural Development Programme of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)**. This becomes extra important in times of high abandonment of the farmed area due to a decrease in the economic and social sustainability of the -often High Nature Value- farming systems. The best way to support these forms of agriculture is to recognize the public goods they deliver for society and apply therefore the principle of “**public money for public goods**”. In this way, the forms of agriculture that are supported by public money do not only deliver for the individual farmer but for the whole of society.

As the work on the **Multiannual-Financial Framework** continues and the Common Agricultural Policy plays a key role in these discussions, we would like to make the following statements:

1. Proposals have come to our attention that **Pillar 2 would be seriously under threat**. Seen the many challenges that this policy will have to solve, we urge you -together with all Heads of State- **not to cut money from Pillar 2 but instead to increase this very important funding stream**. In the light of the increased abandonment of agricultural land, including High Nature Value farmland, it is important that these funds remain available to ensure that farmers are not leaving the land and hence the management and traditional use of these areas is continued.
2. The final decision on the budget should not just limit itself to a number but **should include a strong insurance that the CAP decision makers in the Parliament and Agriculture Council take into account the public money for public goods principle** to the fullest. This includes:
 - a. The definition of pasture land (including meadows) reflects the reality of traditional land-use in the region.
 - b. Landscape heterogeneity and habitat mosaics are better recognized and valued because of their importance for preserving biodiversity. This should be done through Pillar 1 by having strong greening principles of Ecological Focus Areas and crop rotation and by Pillar 2 environmental measures.

- c. The general sustainability of the agricultural system is not just limited to the high biodiverse-, high nature value farming- or protected areas, but we also look at the sustainability of the whole landscape, including forests and the wider environment such as the marine ecosystem of the Baltic Sea.

We entrust that you will take into account these remarks during the final days of the negotiations.

Yours Sincerely,

Participants of the Baltic Sea Region Conference: "Quo Vadis, Farmland Biodiversity?"

**QUO VADIS, FARMLAND
BIODIVERSITY?**

November 14th–15th, 2012, Estonia, Tartu



To: Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development
The Cypriot Minister for Agriculture holding the presidency of the Agriculture Council
The Head of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Parliament

Statement from Baltic Sea Region conference: “Quo Vadis, Farmland Biodiversity?”

Tartu, Estonia, November 19th 2012

Dear Commissioner Çiolos, Minister Aletraris and Mr. De Castro,

The Baltic Sea Region (BSR) is characterised by strong seasonal climatic conditions that gave birth to a number of region-specific adaptations to growing food. These conditions and farming practices have created the **region’s farmland structure and nature that are unique in the world**. Since biodiversity is a comprehensive concept that does not stop at the end of the CAP subsidy eligible area, it is important therefore to look also at the whole landscape area when considering important land use policies such as the Common Agricultural Policy. Also, due to its climate-limited low productivity, farming in the region and biodiversity associated with it, highly depends on the **environmentally positive support channelled through Rural Development Programme**. This becomes extra important in times of high abandonment of the farmed area due to a decrease in the economic and social sustainability of the -often High Nature Value- farming systems. The best way to support these forms of agriculture is to recognize the public goods they deliver for society and apply therefore the principle of “**public money for public goods**”. In this way, the forms of agriculture that are supported by public money do not only deliver for the individual farmer but for the whole of society.

As the work with the reform of the CAP proceeds, we would like to make the following statements that were also communicated to Mr. Van Rompuy and the Heads of State from the Baltic Sea Region:

1. Proposals have come to our attention that **Pillar 2 would be seriously under threat**. Seen the challenges that this policy will have to solve, we urge that **no mechanisms are put in place to cut more money from Pillar 2 but instead to only allow for mechanisms to increase this very important funding stream**. In the light of the increased abandonment of agricultural land, including High Nature Value farmland, it is important that these funds remain available to ensure that farmers are not leaving the land and hence the management and traditional use of these areas is continued.
2. The definition of pasture land (including meadows), as formulated by the European Commission in the legal proposal, needs refining as it does not reflect the reality of land-use in the region. Currently not all of these pastures and meadows are eligible for direct support. The intention of any writing should be that **traditional agricultural land, kept in a state suitable for agricultural production, should be eligible for support under pillar I as well as pillar II**¹. Specific extra points that should be taken into account are:
 - a. All the management dependent habitats of the Habitat Directive should be eligible under this definition.

¹ A potential definition could be the one based on the proposal of EFNCP (<http://www.efncp.org/>): Pasture (including meadows) land is land that is used to grow grasses or other forage (self-seeded or sown), and that has not been ploughed or reseeded for 5 years or longer.

- b. The current guidelines on maximum amounts of trees do not correspond to agricultural practises in the BSR. The difference between a forest and pasture or meadow land can be defined as when it is grazed or mown or other traditional practices are used. Therefore there should not be a limit on the number of trees.
 - c. We do not see the necessity to remove small features (even larger than 100m2) from the eligible area as they are natural or semi-natural parts of farmland in the BSR and as such contribute largely to the biodiversity of the habitat.
 - d. Adequate [or minimum] amounts of forage may be solved through a minimum and maximum stocking density per habitat type or intensity of mowing per habitat type/region.
 3. We would like to stress that **landscape heterogeneity and habitat mosaics are important for preserving biodiversity**. There should be a better system to value these characteristics.
 - a. Also here, we do not see the necessity to remove small features (even larger than 100m2) from the eligible area as they are natural or semi-natural parts in the BSR and as such contribute largely to the biodiversity of the habitat.
 - b. We believe that Ecological Focus Areas (EFAs) are key contributors to the preservation and re-creation of these features' heterogeneity and mosaic throughout the landscape. Therefore it is important that they are present at farm or landscape level (the last one if it is within limited borders). This means that landscape elements should be counted as eligible elements and be paid for within the CAP.
 - c. Elements that should be included in these EFAs can be very different and should be open towards biodiversity valuable elements that are particular to the BSR. Specifically, patches of semi-natural vegetation must also be able to count towards EFAs. In the current proposal they do not while afforested land is counted and hence this could lead to afforestation on semi-natural areas with very bad effects for biodiversity.
 4. The general **sustainability of the agricultural system remains of key importance** and the legislator should avoid to leave it just to the current high biodiverse-, high nature value farming- or protected areas, but aim to look at the sustainability of the whole landscape. This includes forests (both inside and outside of Natura 2000 areas) and the wider environment such as the marine ecosystem of the Baltic Sea which is in a dire state partially because of certain polluting agricultural practices.

We entrust that you will take into account these remarks during your negotiations on the regulations and the drafting process of the implementing regulations and guidelines.

Yours Sincerely,

Participants of the Baltic Sea Region Conference: "Quo Vadis, Farmland Biodiversity?"



EUROPEAN
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SGS1Z/015156

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Brussels, 21 -12- 2012

Dear Participants of the Baltic Sea Region Conference,

On behalf of President Van Rompuy, I should like to thank you for your letter dated 19 November 2012.

The President took note of your statement regarding the MFF.

The negotiations are still ongoing with a view to find unanimity among the Member States on the MFF proposal.

The bilateral talks and the constructive discussion within the European Council on 22-23 November 2012 showed a sufficient degree of potential convergence to make an agreement possible in the beginning of next year.

Yours faithfully,

Davine Dujardin
Member of Cabinet

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