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Press Release

Crisis in agricultural markets: farmers' protests set to widen

Farmers and agri-cooperatives across Europe are increasingly concerned with the current crisis in the agricultural markets. Producer prices for many agricultural products have fallen substantially over recent months while the cost of production has risen sharply.

Jean Michel Lemétayer, President of Copa, said "We are seeing a crisis in European agriculture unfold before our eyes. A sharp drop in the price of agricultural products combined with a rise in production costs led to an almost 5% decline in farmers' real incomes in 2008. If nothing is done, the protests we have already seen in countries such as Greece, Bulgaria and the Baltic countries are almost certain to widen."

Copa and Cogeca have repeatedly drawn attention to the fact that global food markets have become much more volatile. If food security in Europe is to be maintained and supplies of sustainably-produced high-quality European food are to be assured, policy-makers must urgently introduce measures to help prevent the most extreme market fluctuations and make sure that the remaining market managing tools are used.

Gert van Dijk, President of Cogeca, stressed that "The European Commission should also urgently step up its efforts and take action against the imbalances of power in the food chain. How can consumers be expected to pay the same amount for their food in supermarkets, while farmers are being paid less? We clearly need more transparency in the food chain. The Commission should investigate the mechanisms of price transmission. Measures are needed to support and encourage farmers to fully use their cooperatives' potential. This will contribute to the smoother running of the food chain and fairer competition thus enabling farmers to obtain a larger proportion of the added value."

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