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Press Release

Copa and Cogeca adopt position on future EU rural development policy and underline importance of implementing the Cork 2.0 Declaration to ensure a better life in rural areas at major Conference

Copa and Cogeca underlined the importance of EU rural development policy and of implementing the Cork 2.0 Declaration to ensure a better life in rural areas at a major Conference organized by the European Economic and Social Committee in Brussels today.

The move comes after Copa and Cogeca unanimously agreed on a joint position paper on this.

Cork 2.0 Declaration highlights the importance of investing in rural areas and boosting innovation to preserve the rural environment, growth and jobs and to simplify policy.

Speaking at the event, Chief Policy Advisor Paulo Gouveia said “Rural Development policy is an important part of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and implementation of this Declaration is crucial for farming. Rural development policy needs to be strengthened by long-term and coherent EU legislation that supports rural areas by boosting the infrastructures and services needed there which will attract new blood and young people to the area”.

Our position paper focuses on three key elements – the 3S - sustainability, smart agriculture and forestry sector and simplification.

Sustainable agriculture and forestry enhances competitiveness, biodiversity and ensures green growth in rural areas. It includes active land management, efficient use of resources, climate change mitigation and adaptation. Another important aspect of sustainability are the investment measures that help us to improve the overall performance and sustainability of agricultural and forestry holdings. This must continue to be one of the main instruments of rural development policy. It is also fundamental to create conditions to attract younger people and new entrants and continue to support agri-cooperatives and producer organisations, he said.

The second S is the **Smart farming** and agri-food sector and I want to highlight some key points. First, the importance of research and innovation but also of advisory services and training for our sectors. A bottom-up and multi-actor approach must be the main guiding principle. Farmers cannot be considered as merely the “end-users” of research results. They are, in fact, the key actors at the start of the knowledge cycle. Consequently, innovation must be driven by farmers’. Smart agriculture and forestry also mean investments for better connected rural areas and a better connected farming sector – infrastructure, broadband, connectivity and interoperability, he added

The third S is **simplification** – simplification and a reduction in bureaucracy is one of the major issues that needs to be addressed in the rural development policy and that has a direct impact on farmers. The modernisation of the CAP including rural development policy – the second pillar of the CAP – will not be possible without making the policies, their implementation and their use simpler and more user-friendly. Both the control system and the sanctions system

are major issues that must be resolved during the simplification exercise and one that has a direct impact on farmers, he insisted.

We also believe that it's important to exchange experiences on implementation of rural development measures, synergies between policies, and what can be improved and simplified in the future. The EU and national rural networks play an essential role in creating the right framework for such exchanges, he claimed.

Wrapping up, he highlighted that only with a strong CAP budget we will be able to have a sustainable agriculture and forestry sector. We must make the best use of all available funds, and not only agricultural funds. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) including its rural development policy and the activities of rural networks are already delivering benefits to the rural community. But we also have to focus on the European Structural Funds and the European Fund for Strategic Investments that must contribute better to investments in rural areas to improve the infrastructures, education and better use of renewable raw materials.

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