

RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY: GETTING IT RIGHT

A special roundtable debate took place at the European Parliament in Strasbourg on 13 June to discuss the future Rural Development Policy. So far, Rural Development Policy has helped maintain a viable social fabric in rural areas throughout the EU and contributed considerable environmental benefits.

Under the patronage and chair of **MEP Véronique Mathieu**, **MEP Luis Manuel Capoulas Santos,** MEPs from 7 countries gathered with European landowners, farmers, hunters and other conservationists to perspectives on the European Commission’s Proposal for Rural Development Regulation’s six priorities. Specifically, the priorities relating to competitiveness, ecosystems and resource efficiency were discussed, with British MEP Robert Sturdy making a number of contributions. FACE President Gilbert de Turckheim was present with Goddert von Wülfing, FACE Delegate from the German Hunters’ Association and FACE’s Conservation Manager Gabor von Bethlenfalvy. This exceptional exchange is prompted by the fundamental decisions taking place at the moment in the EU for Rural Development.

**Calling for competitiveness**

Co-chairing the meeting, **MEP Luis Manuel Capoulas Santos** stated:“There is no rural development if agriculture is not competitive”. He added that “non-agricultural activities which can be another source of income to farmers, such as hunting activities and tourism should be eligible under Rural Development”. This point was echoed by **Bernhard Budil, Confederation of European Forest Owners (CEPF):** “Competitiveness, as one of the priorities in Rural Development is crucial, also in the forestry sector. The bureaucratic burden for Forestry measures however should be avoided in order to encourage their application.”

With the Official Parliamentary Report being presented next week and key decisions being taken on the future Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the panellists discussed whether these priorities can work together and address the need for adequate financing and effectiveness of the Rural Development Regulation in light of current debates on the CAP, in particular the Greening of Pillar 1.

**Biodiversity’s place**

The Second Pillar of the CAP was also a focus, with FACE’s Chief Executive Angus Middleton noting that “the Second Pillar should not exclusively concentrate on the Natura 2000 network, which only accounts for less 20% of the EU. The ‘more ordinary’ biodiversity outside the designated areas needs to be adequately addressed. Measures supporting those should operate on a larger geographical scale, as opposed to individual farms.”

Trees Robijns of BirdLife Europe explained that “the Second Pillar is the one mostly delivering biodiversity. Therefore its funding needs to be substantially increased. Also funding for targeted and well implemented environmental schemes need to be increased and ring-fenced.”

Indeed, The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is of vital importance for hunters for many reasons – from wild game and land management to hunting rights connected to land ownership and the implications of rural development for biodiversity. European hunters represented by FACE have been very active both through the **Rural Coalition of Europe\***, The **FACE Biodiversity Manifesto\*\*** and the **FACE AGRI Expert Group\*\*\*.**

MEP Véronique Mathieu closed the Roundtable with a reflection for all the diverse groups present: “The key word is therefore balance: balance amongst priorities, balance amongst regions, balance amongst allocations and resources. But, in a world with economic restrictions, this last point is difficult and sensitive”.

**\*\*\*ENDS\*\***

NOTES TO EDITORS

** FACE** (**Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation of the EU**)represents and promotes the interests of over 7 million European hunters in accordance with sustainable use of wildlife. It is an international non-profit making NGO whose Members are the national hunters' associations within 38 states of the Council of Europe, including the EU27, as well as 4 Associate Members. [www.face.eu](http://www.face.eu)

**LINKS & ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

**\*The Rural Coalition of Europe**, made up of leading European organisations and FACE partners such as Copa-Cogeca, the European Council of Young Farmers (CEJA), the European Landowners’ Organization (ELO), the Confederation of European Forest Owners (CEPF) have recently released a strong joint position on the future of **EU Rural Development Policy post 2012**. FACE’s involvement with the Coalition has allowed hunters to strengthen their partnerships and position at the EU level.

<http://www.face.eu/Communication/Position%20papers/Rural%20Coalition%202012/CDP%20EN%20Rural%20Coalition%20April%202012.pdf>

**\*\*The FACE Biodiversity Manifesto** reflects the rigourous and active commitment made by FACE, its Members and the 7 million European hunters they represent to ensure that hunting is sustainable and contributes positively to biodiversity conservation.

The FACE Biodiversity Manifesto aligns itself with the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020, directly addressing four of its six targets[[1]](#footnote-1) feeding into the 2020 headline target[[2]](#footnote-2). The 34 action points address a host of EU biodiversity priority areas and promote cooperation with other sectors and stakeholders such as farmers, land and forest owners, conservation NGOs and public authorities. Rural development is directly addressed under the **Habitats** section of the Manifesto. <http://www.face.eu/CONS_biodiversity-en.htm>

\*\*\* As a bridge builder between farmers, land managers and conservationists, FACE is deepening its connections with all main countryside stakeholders, bringing its expertise and that of hunters to the table through the **FACE Agri Expert Group,** chaired by former German Agriculture Minister and German Hunters’ Association DJV-President, Jochen Borchert.

**EU TIMELINE:**

**October 2011:** Commission presented a set of legal proposals designed to make the Common Agriculture Policy more effective - for competitive and sustainable agriculture and vibrant rural areas. This includes a proposal on rural development.

<http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-post-2013/legal-proposals/index_en.htm>

**2011**: MEP Luis Manuel Capoulas Santos is nominated as the *Rapporteur* for the Parliament Report on the Commission proposal on rural development

**April 2012:** Rural Coalition releases its position on rural development

**June 2012:** MEP Luis Manuel Capoulas Santosis scheduled to present the official Parliament Report on rural development.

**July 2012:** MEPs are expected to table amendments to the Commission’s Proposal

**Early 2014:** Scheduled implementation of the new EU Rural Development Policy

**PHOTOS:** <http://www.flickr.com/photos/face_eu/sets/72157630134199760/>

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, INTERVIEWS, QUOTES, PHOTOS, PLEASE CONTACT:**

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1. Commission Communication COM(2011) 244 final <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/11/st09/st09658.en11.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “Halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, and restoring them in so far as feasible, while stepping up the EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss.” [↑](#footnote-ref-2)