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13.10.2011 - CAP: The CoR president welcomes some progress proposed by the Commission, but feels it does not go far enough

The Committee of the Regions' (CoR) President, Mercedes Bresso, has announced that she is not satisfied with the proposals published yesterday by the European Commission on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). She nevertheless welcomed the conditionality associated with the payment of aid for environmentally-friendly farming practices.

"This is a healthy development which will bolster the CAP's move to take more account of environmental factors, as called for by the Committee of the Regions", stated Mercedes Bresso. She did, however, express regret at the fact that the proposals slowed down any rapid convergence between Member States. "The proposals do not go far enough and go nowhere near to securing the fairness between regions and farms which the Committee of the Regions has been calling for". She also indicated her disappointment at the much hoped-for, but overly broad, definition of "active" farmers.

Referring to previous CoR reports, René Souchon (FR/PES), President of Auvergne Regional Council and CoR rapporteur on the CAP, stressed the importance of a degressive scale for, and ceilings on, aid. "These are the only ways of speeding up aid convergence and securing greater justice and fairness between farmers. To do this, the thresholds proposed by the Commission absolutely must be brought down so as to free up more funds to help small farms and less developed regions". He announced that he was satisfied that the CoR's proposal to help farmers in less developed and mountainous regions had been taken on board.

On the thorny issue of market regulation, the Commission's lack of will in this area still constituted a problem in the eyes of the CoR President. "Public regulation instruments are essential tools for maintaining farms in all regions. Without regulation, the most vulnerable regions are over-exposed to the ups and downs of the markets", underlined Mercedes Bresso.

Similar mixed feelings were expressed about the European Agricultural Rural Development Fund (EAFRD) regulation which, like the Structural Funds and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, was now covered by the Common Strategic Framework.

"Apart from some positive progress in areas such as support for [local markets and short production loops](#), which the CoR strongly supports, [product quality](#), local development strategies involving small towns, cross-border cooperation and innovation," noted Mercedes Bresso. "I don't see many changes over the current rules. I have the impression that once again the sectoral, national and professional approach has won out over the regional and strategic one."

She also warned: "The EAFRD should not constitute an exception to the joint rules. The Committee of the Regions will bring all its weight to bear to ensure that rural development plans are genuine partnership contracts where local and regional authorities are closely involved from the outset, right through to implementation."

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