

Advisory group on Rural Development
24 April 2012, Brussels
Draft Minutes

1. Approval of the Agenda and the minutes of the last meeting of 15th December 2011

Mr Peter Pascher, the Chairman, opened the meeting. The agenda and the minutes of the last meeting were approved.

Agreed: The agenda, the minutes of the last meeting and strategic agenda were approved.

2. Introduction

The Chairman highlighted that the Working Groups under the AG had been active and informed the members of a meeting that took place on 2 February 2012 between the Commission services, the Chairman of the AG and the Chairmen of the WGs to discuss the timetable, following steps and progress done in the WGs. The Chairman invited the WG Chairmen to give a progress report of the WGs.

Regarding WG 1 Mr Bicknell presented the key questions that the group is addressing: good and less good examples of measure within the RDP that strengthen competitiveness, why the examples are good or less good, what constitutes a good example what obstacle do you find in the regulation in order to enhance competitiveness and how can the two pillar of the CAP work together to achieve competitiveness.

Regarding WG 2 Ms Defossez presented the key questions that the group is addressing: how can measure better support the EU biodiversity strategy, how can we increase the use and uptake of more targeted and effective agri-environmental measures, what is the environmental effectiveness of current LFA measure and how can we raise levels of “collective” environmental action between farmers (and other land managers) to improve results?

Regarding WG 3 Ms Dzelzkalēja presented the key questions that the group is addressing: how rural areas could benefit from different EU funds, CSF- how good cooperation between different financial instruments could be encouraged, inter territorial and transnational links, cooperation, knowledge transfer and innovation in rural areas, what makes a Leader project successful, is Leader stat up kit a solution, what types of objectives are most effective for local development and how to strengthen the relationship between individual projects and local development strategies.

The Commission expressed their support to the WGs. The Chairman highlighted the need of the WGs to continue their active work and informed the members of the WG of the timeframe. Draft reports drafted by the Chairmen of the WGs are expected to be ready for discussion in September-October 2012.

3. General discussion on the Rural Development Policy after 2013 with focus on co-ordination with other structural funds

The Commission gave an update of the policy discussions in the Council, European Parliament and the Commission on the legal proposal for the rural development policy after 2013 and CSF. More detailed negotiations are expected to take place by end of the year. The Chairman opened the discussion. The AG members presented their views on the matter.

Producers were concerned of the timetable for MFF discussions and budget allocation between Member States, programming, timeframe for CSF and its implementation, risk management measures, reclassification of LFA payments, producer organisations, and possibility to have age restriction to target aid. NGOs raised the issue of co-financing, ex ante evaluation and rules for stakeholder participation. Others raised their concerns on funding between MS.

The Commission (DG REGIO) gave a presentation on their views on the coordination between the structural funds and future rural development policy. Aim is to have better linkages between European objectives of EU 2020 strategy and their better integration through different policy instruments enhancing result orientation.

The Chairman opened the discussion. Producers raised their concerns on how to differentiate which fund is focusing on which objectives, broadband, difficulties in changing investments between funds in the end of programming period, different co-financing rates between different funds and asked for project based approach. Others raised the concern how to bring added value, matter of simplification, their concern on how to improve local development tool and its link between Leader.

The Chairman concluded that partnership between funds is new approach and should bring new opportunities. In order to do this we need to create good partnerships between funds and solve the challenges related to Leader.

4. State of play with ENRD focus groups and their progress

The Commission gave a presentation on the work done in the ENRD focus groups (FG). Two groups have been created and all members of the AG are welcomed to join. FG on "Environmental services" has started in 2011 and will focus on how to implement policy and improve the programming. Background paper has been created on what are the objectives of the group. Good practices will be collected as well as discussion held on what needs to be improved to deliver environmental services. Two meetings have been organised in 2012. Another meeting is expected in May and on 14 June a report will be presented to ENRD Coordination Committee.

The second FG will be focusing on local strategies and their implementation. Conclusions will be presented in seminar taking place in week's time. Group has examined good practices and implementation of programmes. Report will be presented on 14 June to the ENRD Coordination Committee.

The Chairman opened the discussion and Others raised their concern on territorial strategies and budget, issue of using funds for loss of income and extension of Leader approach to urban areas. Furthermore they were concerned of the integrated approach on how to meet the expectations and how Leader approach would work in the cities. NGOs called for consistency and coordination between work in focus groups and WGs under AG RD.

5. Information on European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability and discussion on innovation

The Commission gave a presentation on EU innovation partnership possibilities for agriculture. Aim of the EP is to close innovation gaps between research and farming practises and increase the interaction between the two in order to feed research results into farming and farmers to give feedback to researchers. Under RD several measures would be targeting this such as cooperation (including pilot demonstration projects), business development, knowledge transfer and Advisory Services , quality schemes for agricultural products and investments in physical assets. The network function of the EIP aims to interlink innovation related activities of RDP and EU research and innovation framework and ensure effective flow of information. To give feedback on practise needs to the scientific community.

The Chairman opened the discussion. Trade raised their concern how EIP will apply to activities in rural areas that are not linked to agriculture. Workers asked for clear definition of farmer and highlighted that the business ownership aspects are missing. Innovation measures should cover the workers. Producers raised the problem of how to make sure information of new innovations is delivered to the farm level as well as the gap between farm, knowledge transfer and necessary applied research and raised their concern on need for having whole sector program and forestry not being included in the EIP. If various targets are to be reached together forestry sector should be included into the EIP. Furthermore producers raised their concern how EIP will be organised and how the governance will work, what is the definition of active farmer and asked for more information on fund allocation between different objectives e.g. compulsory role of innovation. NGOs wished to know how to ensure stakeholder participation at local level. Others raised their question on how the information sharing will be organised and called for inclusive growth, forestry and all actors in rural areas to be integrated into the EIP as well as making proper training available at farm level.

Agreed: AG agreed to continue discussion on the innovation and knowledge transfer in the next AG meeting.

6. Information on research –related funding

The Commission gave a presentation on funds available (e.g. Horizon 2020, bio-economy, CAP, EIP) for research and EU research projects related to RD and agricultural knowledge transfer and innovation systems. European Technology Platforms (ETPs) are expected to close the innovation gaps and identify research needs.

The Chairman opened the floor for discussion. Traders raised their question on the functioning of the platforms and possibilities to get involved into them. Producers raised their questions on how to link the sectors needs and the needs on the field to research, as well as concern on the difficulty to get involved into the projects. They highlighted the need to make easier to access into the projects.

7. Any other business

CEJA presented a document asking for support to young farmers and generation renewal in agriculture in the coming CAP reform. The Chairman highlighted the important role young farmers play in continuing farming in Europe also in the future. Copa-Cogeca informed the members of creation of Rural Coalition of Europe that strengthens the voice of Europe's rural population and aims to increase the competitiveness of EU agriculture and forestry sector. Position paper of the Rural Coalition was distributed to the members.

The Chairman informed the members that the WGs will meet again in the afternoon a day before the next AG meeting. ended the meeting by thanking the participants for active and constructive participation.

Agreed items:

- ***The agenda and the minutes of the last meeting were approved.***
- ***AG agreed to continue discussion on the innovation and knowledge transfer in the next AG meeting.***

Disclaimer

"The opinions expressed in this report represent the point of view of the meeting participants from agriculturally related NGOs at community level. These opinions cannot, under any circumstances, be attributed to the European Commission. Neither the European Commission nor any person acting on behalf of the Commission is responsible for the use which might be made of the here above information."