



22/3/17

Press Release

The importance of implementing Cork 2.0 Declaration to ensure an innovative EU Rural Development Policy and a better life in rural areas underlined at major workshop

The importance of implementing the Cork 2.0 Declaration to ensure an innovative EU Rural Development Policy and a better life in rural areas in the future was underlined at a major workshop organized by Ceja, Cefp, Copa and Cogeca and attended by MEPs and EU Farm Commissioner Phil Hogan.

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

“Farmers and their cooperatives are the cornerstone of rural development. They are already applying smart technologies and practices which enable them to produce more sustainably, better manage resources and adapt to challenges. And they need to be able to continue to do this in the future. They need to be able to invest and innovate to fulfil their potential. Acting big for rural development is the responsibility of us all. Good infrastructures in rural areas and broadband with a good connectivity are also vital so that we can develop our businesses and benefit from smart farming and digital technology. We need a strong and common CAP and strong synergies with other EU policies such as the EU’s Cohesion Policy to ensure that rural areas remain viable », Copa Vice-President Maira Dzelzkaleja Burmestre said.

CEJA President Alan Jagoe said “We have heard a lot of people speak about generational renewal, but it is time for these words to become actions. Policy makers are aware of the need for debate, and for change, but we need to do more . We currently find ourselves in a situation where good farm land is scarce, where the best case scenario for many young farmers depends on the transfer of land from family members. Those unable to take over family land – due to an older sibling doing so – or those looking to get into farming without the family connection face even greater barriers just to start. Even those who do gain land are struggling in areas lacking the basic necessities afforded to those living in more developed areas.”

CEPF President Hubert Schorlemer highlighted that “Forests play a crucial and multifunctional role in rural areas, boosting the socio-economic well-being. The recognition of forestry as key for fighting climate change, especially through carbon sequestration and the delivery of sustainable renewable energy and bio-materials is a new element in this second Cork Declaration. This is very much welcomed and a crucial aspect moving forward. A strong political recognition and promotion of the potential of the forestry sector is needed to meet today’s and tomorrow’s challenges”.

MEP Paolo de Castro went on to stress that this workshop provided an opportunity to trigger the debate on the legacy of Cork 2.0 with a view to a new Common Agricultural

Policy (CAP) where rural development programmes will have to be able to protect the rural areas and foster generation renewal.

EU Farm Commissioner Hogan said “The Cork 2.0 Declaration has triggered a high level of expectation, because it has put into words what many people have been thinking for years: that when it comes to addressing many of the big challenges of our era, our rural and agricultural communities are part of the solution, not part of the problem. The objective of rural communities and stakeholders must be to ensure that EU policies reflect this truth.”

In a panel debate, MEP Jan Huitema said the Cork 2.0 Declaration will provide a good way to exploit the new opportunities arising from new techniques and digitalisation. MEP Elisabeth Kostinger meanwhile underlined the importance of farmers and foresters and of implementing Cork 2.0 to further develop the bioeconomy and for growth and jobs in rural areas.

The move comes in the run up to upcoming plans on the future Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in which the Cork 2.0 Declaration is expected to be taken strongly into account. The joint event “Cork 2.0 Declaration – Acting big for rural development”, hosted by MEPs Paulo de Castro, Elisabeth Kostinger, Jan Huitema, was attended by Commissioner Phil Hogan and many high-level officials and European organisations, enabling a good debate amongst key stakeholders on the future of the EU agriculture and forestry sectors and of the rural areas as a whole.

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