



Mr Dacian Ciolos
Commissioner
European Commission
200, Rue de la Loi
BE-1049 Brussels

Brussels, 10th April 2014

Re: State aid guidelines for agriculture and forestry and rural areas

Dear Commissioner,

CEPF, Copa-Cogeca and ELO welcome the Commission decision to enhance the objectives of the Rural Development policy and to simplify the state aid rules by revising the State Aid Guidelines for agriculture and forestry and rural areas. The new guidelines will significantly regulate which kind of national schemes can be used to support the forestry sector during 2014-2020.

The draft new State Aid Guidelines as published by the European Commission for public consultation poses fundamental obstacles for the European forest owners.

CEPF, Copa-Cogeca and ELO consider that the proposed text, without clear equal competition justification, would unnecessarily narrow down funding options for future forestry measures, thus leading to tangible changes in national support schemes. The newly proposed State Aid would not allow national support schemes to fund forestry measures to the same extent as the EU Rural Development Regulation. This is against a coherent policy between EU funded support schemes and national funded schemes, which is highlighted in point 5 of the State Aid Guidelines. Consistency and continuity are essential for the forest sector, which is known for long-term actions and over-generational thinking.

The EU should allow appropriate national flexibility to enhance the viability of EU rural areas and ensure the sustainable management of European forests instead of weakening the sector with unjustified actions.

Enclosed to this letter, please find an overview of the major concerns addressed by CEPF, Copa-Cogeca and ELO, which we expect to be taken into account in the final development of the new State Aid Guidelines.

Yours faithfully,

Aljoscha Requardt
Secretary General of CEPF

Pekka Pesonen
Secretary General of Copa-Cogeca

Thierry de l'Escaille
Secretary General of ELO

Cc: Ms S. Obst; Mr R. Moegele; Ms N. Sauze-Vandevyver; Mr G. Thiele; Ms J. Loriz-Hoffmann

Enc: Comments on the "draft guidelines – State aid for the forest sector – 2014-2020"