

Joint Recommendation

CAP post 2020 – The Future of Food and Farming



Brussels, April 27th 2018



The Strategic Advisory Council for Agriculture and Fisheries (SALV) advises policy makers on every aspect of agriculture and fisheries. The recommendations are determined by the stakeholder organizations represented in the advisory board. They make part of a supported political decision-making process. The recommendations are primarily addressed to the Flemish Government and the Flemish Parliament.

The Minaraad is the advisory council on environmental and nature protection policy of the Flemish government.

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The present advice is a joint recommendation issued with the Flemish Environmental Council (Minaraad), which approved the recommendation on April 26th 2018.

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Inhoud

Inhoud	3
Introduction	4
Headlines	5
Recommendations	6
1 Governance.....	6
2 Research and innovation	7
3 Resilience of the agricultural sector	9
4 Environmental management and climate action	11
5 Strengthening the socio-economic fabric of rural communities.....	12
6 Agriculture in society	13
7 The global dimension of the CAP	14
Bibliography	16

Introduction

With the present recommendation the SALV and the Minaraad aims to offer general strategic advice to the Flemish Government and the Flemish Parliamentary Commission on Agriculture with respect to the vision of the future of agriculture communicated by the European Commission through its formal communication of November 29th 2017 (COM 2017 713 final)¹. On the one hand, the insights provide a general appreciation of this communication. On the other hand the views deliver Flemish policy makers a thorough overview of the opportunities, challenges, shortcomings and implications these Commission proposals entail for Flemish agriculture. This recommendation principally aims to enrich the formal viewpoints the Flemish Government will express during the creation of the new European legislation in the following months².

The starting point for the drafting of the present opinion was a sharp view of the European Common Agricultural Policy: the agricultural policy which has been held in recent years has not, as yet, produced sufficient results – neither in terms of income, nor in terms of market structure or the objectives of greening. Both councils achieved this common analysis, among other activities, in the course of 11 hearings in the course of 2017, with input from various experts. From this knowledge, the Commission's vision document was looked at uninhibited and critically. In the light of COM 2017 713 final from the European Commission on the CAP post 2020, and in view of the formal communication as a starting point for further discussion, the councils do not make any decision at this stage on the future European and Flemish implementation phases. With the following theorems the councils and member organizations only give recommendations on the current phase of the policy process.

The original recommendation in Dutch can be found here:

<http://www.salv.be/salv/publicatie/advies-toekomst-voeding-en-landbouw>.

¹ European Commission, November 29th 2017, The Future of Food and Farming, https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/sites/agriculture/files/future-of-cap/future_of_food_and_farming_communication_nl.pdf.

² With respect to the legislative proposals expected by June 2018.

Headlines

The agricultural policy that has been held in recent years has not, as yet, yielded sufficient results – neither in terms of agricultural income, nor in terms of market forces, nor in terms of the environmental and biodiversity objectives of the CAP. The advisory councils ask the Flemish Government to strive for a better European agricultural policy by joining the following positions on EC COM (2017) 713 final:

- The limited translation of the objectives of sustainable development (SDG's) and climate is a missed opportunity for an ambitious future of European agriculture. An integrated approach is necessary to this end.
- A higher level of subsidiarity implies opportunities for an improved agricultural policy, but hard guarantees are indispensable in order to achieve the various economic, environmental and social objectives in the Member States in an integrated way. Conclusive accountability procedures at European policy level should ensure the quality and effectiveness of subsidiarity
- Take urgent steps to improve farmers' income by means of an enhanced economic toolbox. The European Commission's current proposal is a missed opportunity to do so. The CAP should give the farmer a better income and a long-term perspective. This should be done by means of a more efficient instrument in the field of market forces, risk management, and a decent income from public services.
- A pluralist and proactive innovation policy must facilitate agricultural resilience against societal developments, economic challenges and climate objectives. The advisory councils demand that the European Commission avoids economic lock-in at firm level within the framework of its investment and innovation policy, and provides support where economic or environmental needs exist to break such lock-ins through reconversion or exnovation.
- The advisory councils demand a greater focus on young starters, in order to cope with the ageing of the sector and to meet their specific needs.
- The European Commission offers not enough tools to improve the position of agriculture in the wider society. In addition, the European consumer policy should encourage consumers to set a purchase behavior that valorizes high-quality and sustainable agricultural production. To this end, the different links within the food chain must also be informed of their responsibility.

Recommendations

The recommendations have been ordered according to the structure of EC COM (2017) 713 final.

1 Governance

Related to the following sections of the formal communication:

Section of EC COM (2017) 713 final	Page
1. A new context	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Back- and preview of the CAP.</i> • <i>Strategic role of the CAP, coupled with broader objectives frameworks (SDG, COP 21).</i> 	
2. Towards a new delivery model and a simpler CAP	9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>New delivery model with more subsidiarity, in the form of a national strategy</i> • <i>Performance, not compliance.</i> 	

[1] In creating the future agricultural policy, the coherent, comprehensive and ambitious transposition of the sustainable development objectives is necessary to ensure effective implementation. The advisory councils appreciate that the communication connects with the SDG's. However, they deplore the fact that the Commission does not recognize the interrelationship between the SDG's, and does not describe how this coherence is in line with its policy intentions³.

[2] The advisory councils note that the formal communication departs from the premise of a *continuation* rather than an acceleration of efforts and processes that address a number of sustainability issues. Nor does the European Commission discuss the ways in which the higher levels of sustainability of European agriculture and horticulture will be attained. The sustainability of the agricultural sector can improve through successive transformations (i.e. the gradual refinement of existing agricultural models and food systems) and through transition paths (by actively engaging in new models and production systems). The advisory councils expect the European Commission to deploy a more substantiated strategy on how the CAP will support farmers enabling the current transformations, and how the CAP will put the necessary transitions on track. The European Commission now only provides a framework with objectives, but does not make strategic choices as to the path through which it will be achieved.

[3] More subsidiarity for the Member States offers opportunities, but sound planning and accountability are currently lacking in EC COM (2017) 713 final. The advisory councils believe that the new policy model offers opportunities for Flanders to better respond to the specificity of Flemish agriculture, Flemish forestry and the broad societal challenges in rural areas. But the success of the new model depends to a large extent on its design. **At European**

³ Cf. UN, 2015, Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, section 33: "We recognize that social and economic development depends on the sustainable management of our planet's natural resources."

level, it is therefore necessary to advocate mechanisms that will ensure the quality and effectiveness of this extended subsidiarity:

- **A clearly defined and coherent framework of European objectives.**
- **Adequate European regulation and guidance**, with regard to the creation of an agricultural and forestry strategy at Member State level. This includes at least an integrated needs analysis, clear results-oriented policy objectives and good knowledge of distance-to-target and outcome indicators.
- **Validation procedures at European level and at Member State level, with guaranteed involvement of all stakeholders.** An ex-ante evaluation by the European Commission should address the following questions: (1) is the need assessment that the Member State actually made correct and adequate to meet the challenges? (2) are the preset objectives adequate, in view of the needs, measurable and mutually consistent? (3) will the objectives set contribute in an appropriate way to European general or specific objectives? At Member State level, stakeholders should be given the opportunity to continue and address the same questions in good time. These validation and control procedures are indispensable according to the advisory councils. They must ensure that a race to the bottom between the Member States is avoided, and that the level playing field is preserved⁴. They should also ensure the full implementation of the various objectives. This requires, inter alia, the need to ensure that individual objectives cannot be exchanged with each other (non-tradeable targets). The advisory councils therefore argue in favor of a system in which the flexibility of the Member States is properly aligned with European-wide validation mechanisms.
- **A sound basis and efficient monitoring systems that guarantee effectiveness, including at the implementation level.** In its vision of the future CAP, the European Commission attaches great importance to results-oriented policies. This implies that one can build on quality data and on organized knowledge exchange⁵. In addition to the reliability of the indicators, the effectiveness of the measures must also be properly monitored. The councils call on the European Commission to ensure that Member States will invest in efficient monitoring systems and in effectiveness analyses based on both output and outcome indicators.
- Prior to the implementation of new policy frameworks, an **integrated impact assessment** should be carried out, taking into consideration **all components of sustainable development**.

2 Research and innovation

Related to the following sections of the formal communication:

⁴ This concern has been recently acknowledged in: European Council, March 20th 2018, Outcome of proceedings. Communication on “The future of food and farming” – Presidency conclusions, 7324/18, AGRI 143, p. 4. <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/33347/communication-on-the-future-of-food-and-farming-presidency-conclusions.pdf>.

⁵ As recognized by the Flemish Government: Vlaamse Regering, Witboek Bestuur 2017, p. 24f.

Section in EC COM (2017) 713 final	Page
3.1. Research and innovation	14
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>CAP should be more closely Research and innovation policy.</i> • <i>Towards an improved knowledge sharing of the lab to the field and the market.</i> • <i>Support for advisory services, innovation partnerships and knowledge exchange through producer organizations.</i> 	

[4] The advisory councils recognize that different kinds of sustainable innovation are possible, including system innovation. A forward-looking investment policy offers opportunities for different forms of sustainable innovation in agriculture, horticulture and forestry, both in production and in marketing. The advisory councils follow the European Commission's statement that smart farming offers potential to promote the economic and environmental performance of the sector. The advisory councils also note that the European Commission has not been explicitly included system innovation as a key aspect of the future innovation policy. Considering the strategic potential of system innovation to strengthen the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the sector, the SALV and the Minaraad ask to ensure that this type of innovation will receive the necessary attention in the legislative proposals.

[5] Make sure that the European framework for innovation policy can be pluralistic and proactive. The SALV and the Mina Council ask the Flemish government to argue for an innovation policy that will be able to support different paths of sustainability in a way that the objectives set out by it can be realized in an integrated and effective manner, and that these different paths do not operate against each other. The policy must be based on leaders and followers. The innovation policy must be able to opt for germinating alternatives early on, and to enable new opportunities for the sector. The advisory councils request that the European Commission, within the framework of its investment and innovation policy, avoids economic lock-in at the firm level, and provide support where economic or environmental needs urge to break such lock-ins through reconversion or exnovation⁶. Provide opportunities for more flexible businesses that simplify the conversion of production in function of changing market demands.

[6] Ensure that innovation and investment policies in the strategic plans of Member States will be coherent with the objectives to be pursued. The advisory councils consider it obvious that the full effectiveness of the future innovation policy will be monitored. For example, innovation support, as a whole, should not lead to investments that cause a significant increase in absolute environmental pressure⁷.

[7] Maximize access to innovation for starters in general and young farmers in particular. The European Commission wishes to improve the vitality of the agricultural sector. Therefore, it essential that starters can make the necessary innovations also.

⁶ On the concept of "exnovation", see MINARAAD, April 20th 2017, Recommendation on the Common Agricultural Policy post 2020, 201-10, sec. 27 en 28:
<https://www.minaraad.be/themas/biodiversiteit/glb-post-2020>.

⁷ Not only does it take into account the relative durability of the business area where an investment is requested, but also the impact of the investment on the environmental pressure in the surrounding area.

[8] Care for sufficient cross-fertilization between research and practice (research agendas, knowledge flow), and call for a strengthening of the position of the farmer. The advisory councils argue that a good interaction can be fruitful in two directions: researchers can inspire farmers and foresters and vice versa, research needs should also be transferred from the field to the lab⁸. The advisory councils call to ensure at the European policy level that the context for such interaction can arise and the results can be redeemed.

3 Resilience of the agricultural sector

Related to the following sections of the formal communication:

Section in EC COM (2017) 713 final	Page
3.2. Fostering a smart and resilient agricultural sector	14
3.2.1. Income support	14
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>It is justified to use a reasonable income support for farmers of a To provide acceptable income.</i> • <i>Towards a more efficient and effective use of income support.</i> • <i>Internal and external convergence.</i> 	
3.2.2. Investing for a better remuneration	16
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Towards better remuneration for farmers on the market, through improved producer organizations, diversification.</i> 	
3.2.3. Risk management	17
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Towards a further development of the existing instruments, exploring new ways</i> 	

Income support

[9] The Advisory councils note that direct income support (Pillar 1) does not succeed in achieving economic, social and environmental objectives adequately. The average Flemish and European agricultural income is (still) much lower and more volatile than the average income in Flanders and in Europe. In addition, the remuneration system for social services does not lead to the ecological results that have been set. **The councils believe that the European Commission is doing too little with these findings and regrets that there is no intention of developing a more efficient alternative to these three challenges.**

[10] Take urgent steps to strengthen the farmer's income through an improved economic toolbox. The current proposal of the European Commission is a missed opportunity to do so. The CAP should give the farmer a better income and a long-term perspective. In the first order, this should be possible through a more efficient instrument in the field of market forces, risk management, and a decent income from social services. In the first

⁸ For a number of recommendations to promote this practical focus through increased interaction see: SCAR, 2013, Agricultural knowledge and innovation systems towards 2020 – an orientation paper on linking innovation and research, p. 75. <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/41e77b27-5202-42af-9a0e-d70447b3bc1b/language-en>.

place, farmers must be able to be reimbursed for the products supplied by the market. However, as long as the market cannot properly refine its products, additional measures are necessary.

The councils therefore have the following recommendations:

- Call for more efficient instruments in the areas of risk management and markets, which goes beyond mere bundling of 'best practices'.
- Call for better coordination between DG AGRI and DG COMP, in order to improve the farmer's market position, and to allow exceptions to the general competition rules, which strengthen the farmer's position as well.
- Advocate degrees of freedom for the Member States wishing to take further steps in the shifting of the instruments.
- Ensure an adequate remuneration system for high-performance fringe social services, which encourages alternative revenue models aimed at providing public services on top of agricultural production.

[11] Provide appropriate support measures for young farmers. Young starters do not have the necessary reserves in the first years after the start of their business to make investments or to guarantee the solvency of their businesses. A young and resilient company with capabilities to invest and a long future ahead guarantees the continuity of the agricultural sector and the services it supplies. Therefore, call for sufficient acknowledgement of the specific needs and challenges of young farmers, and for appropriate instruments.

[12] The ultimate goal is to achieve a more sustainable composition of agricultural income. In principle, a sustainable agricultural income is largely based on adequate price-setting in the market, where all factor costs can be reimbursed – including those needed to comply with standard environmental and nature regulations. This income can then be supplemented by a correct remuneration for additional social services.

Markets

[13] The European Commission aims to improve the markets, but the intentions proposed are inadequate, the advisory councils find. The position of the farmer in the food chain is generally rather weak. Something similar applies to the position of the forester in the wood chain. According to the SALV and the Minaraad, the proposed strengthening of the market-based instruments (for the short food supply chain, producer organizations,...) is indispensable to improve that position. Yet at the same time, the proposals do not suffice. **Call for European regulation that is aimed at improving market forces significantly through:**

- improving market transparency
- extending the possibilities of producer organizations, for instance, inter alia, by reconsidering the rules related to the application of extended supply control and standardization. This implies good coordination between DG Comp and DG Trade.

- strengthening the position of the farmer in the agro-food chain and in contract relations.

Risk management

[14] The advisory councils expect a policy framework for risk management to be comprehensive and balanced. In doing so, the different types of risk are weighed with a set of objective criteria, such as the degree of exposure and the financial cost of insurance coverage. The framework should entail a balanced combination of public, collective and individual responsibilities, based on acceptable principles and conditions (including avoidable risks) and taking into account all components of sustainable development. Risk prevention must form one of the key aspects of the European risk management policy framework.

4 Environmental management and climate action

Related to the following sections of the formal communication:

Section of EC COM (2017) 713 final	Page
3.3. Intensifying environmental management and climate action	18
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Towards better results on resource efficiency, environmental care, and climate action</i> <i>Strategic and measurable contribution of the CAP to societal objectives</i> <i>Through a new green architecture</i> <i>Through more tailor-made measures</i> <i>Through a combination of voluntary and compulsory measures in Pillar 1 & 2</i> <i>Through a better collaboration between different partners</i> 	

[15] Not unlike the Commission, the advisory councils believe that the current cap has not yet produced sufficient results in terms of climate, environment and nature. The European Commission states that "*any new CAP should reflect more ambition*" and put greater emphasis "*on results as regards resource efficiency, environmental protection and climate action*". The Commission recalls that the current CAP is based on the "*three distinct policy instruments – cross-compliance, green direct payments and voluntary agri-environmental and climate measures*", and steps should be taken to swift away from this architecture. Allegedly, a "*more targeted, more ambitious yet flexible approach*" will be deployed. These statements give the impression that the European Commission similarly believes that the current CAP has not yet produced sufficient results in terms of climate, environment and biodiversity.

[16] Consider the goals and acknowledge the challenges with respect to existing international and European engagements. In line with the European Commission's assertion that it must be an appropriate contribution to the objectives agreed at EU level, the advisory councils recall the goals related to nature and environment⁹. The councils recommend that the

⁹ As expressed by the SDG's, in the Paris climate treaty and in existing European directives on water policy, air quality policy, nature policy and the European biodiversity strategy.

Commission convert these objectives and challenges in a measurable and reasonable manner through the strategic plans to agricultural targets in the various member states.

[17] Subsidiarity requires clear accountability mechanisms. The strategic plans to be made by the Member States provide scope for customization in order to address "*climate and environmental needs at local level*". In the current CAP, however, subsidiarity has sometimes given rise to a downward spiral of achievement or to cherry-picking¹⁰. The European Commission pledges that it will "*explore ... how to cater for measures that yield high EU environmental added value*", and that "*all actions and targets put forward by the Member State will be approved by the Commission*". But clear accountability mechanisms are needed so that the member states will pursue the goals related to climate, nature and environment in an integrated and cohesive way.

[18] Ensure that the new combination of mandatory and voluntary measures leads to effective results in terms of environment and climate. The European Commission's point of departure is that "*the granting of income support... will depend on their undertaking of environmental and climate practices*". In addition, "*Additional environmental / climate benefits will be achieved through voluntary entry-level schemes ... that will allow Member States / regions to target their specific concerns*". For the advisory councils, the implications of these two-tier approach are yet unclear. In any case, it should be borne in mind that the engagement to and efforts emanating from the aforementioned international and European commitments are not static or fixed. For example, with respect to climate or to water and air quality, the European governments subscribed to permanent long term processes of improvement. Hence, the strategic plans of the member states will need to clarify as to how the mandatory and voluntary measures will evolve accordingly.

[19] Ensure that member states use suitable and acceptable indicators and monitoring schemes. The European Commission says that the member states "*would have to ensure that the agreed targets are achieved*" and that they should "*monitor performance in a robust and credible way.*" The statement "*that the contribution of the CAP to these objectives is strategic and measurable*" is equally invaluable. The CAP cannot solve everything, but it can be an important tool to steer in the right direction. Therefore, if, at the end of a period, it is established that the targets have not been achieved, it is important to consider the causes and whether a better outcome may result from changes to the instruments and their deployment, to the objectives, to the target groups, to the eligibility rules of the measures, or to the payment methods.

5 Strengthening the socio-economic fabric of rural communities

Related to the following sections of the formal communication:

Section of EC COM (2017) 713 final	Page
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¹⁰ Member States establish environmental objectives and measures by reviewing their competitive position with regard to other Member States, which in turn do the same.

4. Strengthening the socio-economic fabric of rural areas	20
4.1. Growth and jobs in rural areas	20
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Improving the socio-economic structure through:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Investments in infrastructure and knowledge sharing</i> - <i>Stimulating new value chains, business models</i> • <i>Interaction of different European funds</i> • <i>Rural proofing as a review mechanism for rural areas</i> 	
4.2. Attracting new farmers	22
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Attracting new farmers</i> • <i>Generational renewal</i> 	

[20] Make sure that subsidiarity will enable the creation of tailor-made measures to the benefit of Flemish agriculture and forestry. The advisory councils believe that the proposed subsidiarity should also be framed as an opportunity to differentiate between the opportunities and needs of the urbanized or rather rural nature of the agricultural landscape.

[21] Ensure that synergies between different European Structural and Investment Funds can strengthen the socio-economic development of rural areas.

[22] The advisory councils demand a greater focus on young farmers in order to combat the ageing of the sector. In addition to the aforementioned need for specific tailored support for this group of farmers, the implementation of the following premises is also indispensable to ensure the vitality of the sector:

- ▀ Improve farmer's income.
- ▀ Improve the access to factors of production in the context of generational renewal.

[23] Ensure that sufficient instruments are developed at European level to meet the various needs of different types of start-ups. Different types of starters can be distinguished, based on age, background in the sector, production model and business continuity. These different types of starters all have needs that are shared or specific. One of the challenges is the difficult access to land that weighs on the development of a resilient business. An integrated start-up policy provides instruments for the different types of starters.

6 Agriculture in society

Related to the following sections of the formal communication:

Section of EC COM (2017) 713 final	Page
5. Addressing citizens' concerns regarding sustainable production	23
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>standards for food safety, food quality, the environment and animal welfare</i> • <i>foods with great benefits for society (bio, local specialities)</i> 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>helping farmers in applying rules regarding animal welfare and in subscribing to voluntary initiatives</i> • <i>promoting healthier food</i> 	
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[24] The advisory councils argue that the European Commission does not include sufficient incentives to reduce the distance between producers and consumers. This gap should be covered by measures that...

- Increase public affinity with today's and future agricultural systems, inter alia by stimulating the interaction between the farmer and the citizen.
- Foster the recognition of the relationship between agriculture and forestry on the one hand and the various ecosystem services on the other.
- Respond to the amenities of goods and services delivered

[25] Call for the different links of the food chain to take their (social) responsibility: a fair remuneration for agriculture and horticulture is an essential part of this. Specifically, the supermarkets have a key role to play here. Due to the hourglass model in the agricultural/food sector, it can be very efficient to involve major retail companies in potentially interesting innovations. Consultation and cooperation between the various actors in the agricultural/food chain should be encouraged as well. To this end, the advisory councils consider a good coordination between DG Agri and DG Growth indispensable.

[26] Enable the creation of a European consumer policy that encourages consumers to adopt a sustainable behavior of purchase and consumption. The internalization of external costs associated with the sustainability of the sector cannot be achieved by merely conducting a targeted policy on the production side of the food system. With an adapted consumer policy, the European Commission should also make the consumer take his responsibility. Standards come with a price. To meet this end, a good coordination between DG Agri and DG Comp is obligatory.

7 The global dimension of the CAP

Related to the following sections of the formal communication:

Section of EC COM (2017) 713 final	Page
6. The global dimension of the CAP	25
6.1. Trade	25
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Promoting fair, open trade, but taking into account the specific nature of every agricultural sector</i> 	
6.2. Migration	26
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>CAP must play a role in migration: integration and cooperation</i> 	

[27] At European policy level, ensure that imports from the world market do not inhibit the sustainable development of European agriculture and forestry. At the same time, make

sure that the CAP export policy does not render agricultural development and fair income in third world countries more difficult.

[28] Put the focus of the international trade policy on local production and regional trade. The advisory councils believe that each country has the right to protect and develop its basic agricultural economy. When this condition has been reached, a trade policy aimed at completing demand markets with added value can be appropriate.

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