

Conference report:

Is the EU on the right path towards long-term food security?

14 September, Expo Milano



Mikael Karlsson, EEB President, opened the conference by saying that climate change is a huge threat to the future of food security. He described how agriculture links human systems and natural systems together, making them inseparable.

“When we talk about sustainability, we must bring these two dimensions together. Any analysis which just looks at one side of the coin is not complete, we must have a systems perspective. Food security traditionally focuses on human capability, community resilience and livelihood capacity. Today we must include broader issues such as ecosystem services. We must not forget that regardless of whether we are talking about local or regional systems, they operate in a broader context and are influenced by global change, and trade and agricultural policies, for example. For sustainable and safe farming, we need an agriculture policy to support environmental policies, socioeconomic policy coherence is central. When it comes to environmental policy, it needs to stimulate a global development that brings human activity within planetary boundaries. Looking at the shortcomings, it is obvious that the EU is not on the right path to food security, irrespective of whether the frame of analysis is European or global. A fundamental policy reform is needed.”

Part 1:

Alarm bells are ringing: the declining state of our natural resources and the role of farming

Jan-Erik Petersen, European Environmental Agency (EEA)

[See presentation](#)



Jan-Erik Petersen highlighted the contradictions between words and actions when it comes to farming.

“Although we say we want to produce food in a sustainable way, we still produce more than is sustainable. It is vital that we are more persistent regarding Better Regulation. We are not on track to meet environmental targets or greenhouse gas reduction targets.

“Agriculture is a sector that we must target as a priority as it impacts on a great number of environmental issues. Agriculture is driven by society and socio-ecological challenges, it needs to respond to a large number of factors and demands. We must keep in mind that Europe produces and consumes a significant amount of food.

“The OECD reports that worldwide land use is changing. An increasing amount of land is used for growing crops for feed while forests are decreasing. We must take into account the role of agriculture in these changing land trends in order to make Europe’s food and farming system more resilient and increase its capacity to produce food in a more sustainable way. As farming in Europe is very diverse, we encounter different challenges in different regions when it comes to water use and soil pressure, for example. We see that intensive farming areas are expanding, while other types of farming are disappearing and land is being abandoned, such as by sheppards who support biodiversity. Today farms are increasingly efficient, yet while we need agriculture to evolve in line with economic realities this efficiency must be merged with sustainability.

“One major environmental issue is diffuse water pollution. We have a lot of work ahead of us if we are to achieve good results, we need to work with other societal actors.”

Laura Sutcliffe, IFAB

[See presentation](#)



Laura Sutcliffe presented the Institute for Agroecology and Biodiversity (IFAB) LISA study, which will be published shortly.

“The aim of the study is to compare ecological data between regions and over time as an inventory of the current farmland biodiversity situation, as well as to analyze what impact the new CAP greening measures have made after a repetition of the study in 2016. Because of the clear decline in farmland biodiversity, we need in-depth comparable data on the nature value of landscape elements in Europe, and this knowledge is of paramount importance as a baseline against which to monitor the impacts of the new Policy.

“The study aimed to measure multiple parameters relevant to farmland biodiversity in a rapid manner, reflecting the quantity and quality of agricultural land cover types. Special attention was paid to landscape element types eligible as Ecological Focus Areas, such as buffer strips, ditches and hedges. The quality of grassland and cropland for biodiversity was measured using the presence of key plant species (indicating high plant species richness), an estimation of the land use intensity, and an estimation of the nature value (based on visible species richness, potential habitat structures and signs of pesticide or fertilizer use).

“The study showed that on the vast majority of arable land there was almost no presence of flowers, which means fewer resources for pollinators, and there were no or very few key plant species present on most fields. A key finding is that the number of key species in grassland was greatest at medium land-use intensities: while these grasslands will not necessarily support rare and protected species, it does show that there is a potential balance between reasonable yields and high biodiversity. The study design also allows the comparison of regions either side of national borders that share the same climatic

and geological conditions, but differ in their national policies driving farmer decision-making.

“The study also shows the importance of buffer strips and other landscape elements. Even if they are not very wide, their nature values are very good, highlighting the potential positive benefit of this Ecological Focus Area type for nature. The lack of landscape elements (hedges, banks, ponds, etc.) in some regions is alarming.

Laura Sutcliffe said that the aim is to continue the monitoring and compare the 2016 situation (after implementation of the new CAP) with the baseline they have established for 2014. However, she also noted that at present they have no funding to carry out this work.

Questions:

Nathaniel Page- ADEPT Fundation asked what criteria the researchers used to measure grassland intensity.

Laura Sutcliffe replied that they used visible criteria (vegetation height and density, signs of fertilizer or pesticide use). Due to time constraints, it was not possible to gather any input data from the individual farmers.

Nathaniel Page- ADEPT Fundatia asked the speakers for their views on the environmental impact of farm size.

Jan-Erik Petersen answered that farmers can now adapt their way of farming based on their size in order to be economically viable and respect the environment. On the other hand, with increasing farm size comes the need to become efficient. The solution is not to make farms bigger.

Jenna Hegarty (RSPB) asked how much the Commission had contributed financially to the LISA study and if it would be willing to fund the follow up monitoring.

Pierre Bascou, (Director, DG AGRI, European Commission) replied that this question actually raises other issues, notably the lack of reliable and comparable data regarding the environmental situation.

Jan-Erik Petersen added that we lack data on biodiversity and updated data on nutrients. He also highlighted the fact that we are in need of reliable recent studies on soil degradation, but that funding is a serious issue when it comes to gathering accurate data.

Part 2: Obstacles to long-term food security: policy contradictions

Faustine Bas-Defossez, European Environmental Bureau

[See presentation](#)



Faustine Bas-Defossez discussed how the new CAP's greening measures are likely to fail.

"Agriculture and environment are interlinked, without healthy, natural resources it is food production capacity that is at risk. The current CAP still has a budget of over 50 billion euros and we must remember that this is public money. This is a huge amount of money which should be used to help promote practices that protect natural resources, it should be used for the public good. Despite the huge amounts of money poured into the CAP, mounting evidence shows that the policy is not working. European citizens pay for agriculture three times over: they pay for their food, for farm subsidies, and then they pay to clean up the mess farming makes of our environment.

"In light of this reality the European Commission itself came up with the concept 'public money for public goods' throughout the last CAP revision. The European Commission proposed that 30% of Direct Payments should be linked to three environmental measures and that there should be a higher environmental baseline for pillar 2. It was a step in the right direction, but it didn't reflect the full extent of farming's current impact on the environment and hence needed to be improved. Unfortunately the European Parliament's participation in the process didn't help move things in the right direction and the co-decision process led to a greenwashing of the CAP revision.

"We face important issues following CAP revision. For instance the term Ecological Focus Area (EFA) is now misused as on EFAs farmers can grow crops and are allowed in most cases to use pesticides. We have even witnessed steps backwards in some Member States where Pillar 2 environmental ambition was weakened in comparison with the previous programming period. The high amount of flexibility afforded to member states from the European Institutions was a glimmer of hope, but very few countries used this opportunity to enhance the greening. For example, 16% of the Member States won't include landscape features in EFAs, despite the fact it was the first aim of this measure.

“Many environmental NGOs are not part of the assessment process which is part of the simplification process. This makes us wonder about the objective of this process: make sure the policy delivers better or move away from what is left from greening? It is of paramount importance that CAP payments are targeted in a more coherent way in the future.

“We should pay farmers for truly and measurable environmental services’ outcomes and we should look in a more coherent way at production and consumption as one cannot have one without the other.. These concepts should be at the heart of a new EU Sustainable Food and Farming Policy.”

Michael Carus, Nova institute:

[See presentation](#)



Mr Carus presented a forthcoming Nova Institute study on the conflicting demands on land. He focused his presentation on biomass.

“We are using more biomass than we think, it is not just used for fuel. The EU is a global leader when it comes to producing and consuming biomass. Biomass is fresh matter such as food, crops and waste. Harvested agricultural biomass is the biggest biomass supply, exceeding supply from grazed biomass, wood or harvest residue biomass. Worldwide we are harvesting 11.4 billion tonnes of dry matter and the demand is for 12.1 billion tonnes of dry matter. Most of the demand is for feed (58%), then bioenergy as biofuels are being used more and more. In view of the increasing demand for biomass for various uses and in particular bioenergy, the amount of alternative renewable energy such as solar energy that will be needed to overtake biomass is extremely high.”

His new study ‘Global Bioeconomy in the Conflict Between Biomass Supply and Demand’ is now available for download: http://bio-based.eu/publication-search/?wpv_post_search=global+biomass+conflict&wpv_filter_submit=

Ursula Hudson- SlowFood:

[See presentation](#)



“We currently produce food for 12 billion people, yet malnutrition and obesity levels have gone up. Furthermore, about 1.3 billion tonnes of food are wasted every year worldwide which means that about a third of all food produced does not end up feeding the world. 95 to 115 kilograms of food per head per year is thrown out in households, including many food items which are perfectly edible and could be consumed. Analyzing the causes of waste at the various stages of the food production process leads to three simple but interesting considerations:

1. Waste in the food chain begins before planting, i.e. when food production is planned, as this often follows parameters other than actual food demand (for instance, contractual arrangements with retailers or food processors). Waste ends well after the last cooked and eaten dish, as its disposal requires further waste of resources.
2. Wastage highlights, at all stages of the food chain, the commodification of food and the loss of its value.
3. Not recognising the significance of this shift (from valuables to commodities) means not fully understanding the mechanism of wastage, and merely analysing the effects instead of addressing their cause.

“We need a new perspective on food wastage in addition to measures to reduce it. The lack of value attributed to the production of food and to food itself during all stages of the food chain is fundamental in a food system that treats food as a commodity and demands a vast product range, a high turnover of foodstuff and low prices. Currently, wastage is inherent to the system. It requires overproduction, since it demands an oversupplied amount of cheap raw material.

“Many national governments as well as the EU still look first at consumers first when it comes to waste. However, this does not reflect the waste that occurs along the whole food chain and does not address the fact that there is too much food in the system. Thus, food wastage can only be fought successfully by producing less and by producing and distributing more wisely. Slow Food is convinced that this, as part

of a better and fairer food system, can only be achieved by radically changing direction towards the creation of a common sustainable food policy for the EU. Civil society wants, and we all need, transformation from solely production - and quantity-based agricultural policies to a sustainable policy *now*, one which puts the environment, food and people in first place. It is high time for a common sustainable food policy.

Questions:

Olga Kikou (CiWF) raised a question about inefficiency in the world food system – isn't it inefficient to grow crops to feed animals rather than growing crops to feed people directly – isn't this a waste of food, land, and resources?

> In response Ursula Hudson highlighted the problems of a system which functions purely in economic terms. She added that we need to reduce meat production and consumption, especially from intensive industrial farming.

Trees Robijns (BirdLife) asked Michael Carus about the share of industrial farming and whether it is increasing. She also asked whether he had a deeper analysis of animal feed production in order to know more about the distribution of industrial versus traditional farming. She also asked whether there was a link between grassland and animal feed (production).

> Mr Carus answered that unfortunately the worldwide trend is for grasslands to be used more to grow agricultural crops destined to feed animals. He also discussed the efficiency issue, saying that even organic-grown beef has a higher impact than industrial beef, as there is a conflict between animal welfare and efficiency. He finally said that we need an increase in chicken and insect consumption and that we need to move away from beef consumption.

Mikael Karlsson (EEB) asked why the Nova Institute's studies focus on the parameter of biofuels, which represented a minor part of the biomass use, and not meat consumption, which stood for a much larger share of biomass use, and if there wouldn't be any environmental potential in reducing meat consumption?

> Michael Carus replied that lowering meat consumption would save a lot of biomass, which would be available for other uses. We see a tendency all over the world to reduce meat consumption – except in Asia, where it is increasing.

Woulter Van der Weijden (Center for Agriculture and Environment) asked the speakers if biodiversity loss was linked to food security. He also highlighted that we haven't spoken about soil quality yet, and in particular about phosphate. Europe is dependent on phosphate imports from places like Morocco. Agriculture is totally dependent on healthy soils, yet there is no European soil policy.

> Faustine Bas-Defosse (EEB) answered that food security is very much linked to biodiversity. Biodiversity is a vital prerequisite for food production. The best example is pollinators. However, as no member state has restricted the use of pesticides in Ecological Focus Areas, this will have an adverse effect on biodiversity and soil health, and as a result, on food security. Faustine added that CAP reform discussions and agriculture in general often oppose biodiversity and food security, agriculture and environment, as they make the environment responsible for a loss of competitiveness and production.

> Pierre Bascou, Director, DG AGRI, European Commission, said that phosphate question was mainly a trade issue and thus questioned whether it was for the CAP to address such an issue. He added that, although the Commission acknowledges that some of the new features of the CAP could be improved, it is important to recall that the new policy framework as it stands results from the co-decision process. In addition, the CAP cannot be held responsible for all the weaknesses and gaps related to the farm sector and the food supply chain as a whole. For examples, as regards to greening, the role of Member States in implementing the CAP measures and the existing environmental legislation is critical.

Erik Steen Jensen, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

[See presentation](#)



Mr Jensen's presentation focused on Agroecology. He talked about crop diversification and intercropping, and about how combining different crops in the same field helps farmers avoid the use of inputs and can enhance yields by an average 20 -30%. He also referred to education on the ecology of food and healthy diets, and paying for the real cost of food and reducing meat consumption.

"As food systems are evolving, agroecology is an important component on the path towards long-term food security, but an overall EU strategy integrating agroecological systems is required. In the short to medium term we will not have food security issues as we have enough food in Europe. In the long term, the issue will be the capacity of ecosystems to support our needs on food production. He defined food security as 'when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life'(FAO)."

"When it comes to land availability it takes 0.4-0.5 ha of land to feed one meat-eater, this means that a football pitch (0.7 ha) could feed 1.5 people having an average European diet; with a vegetarian diet the same area could feed 10 people. There are many challenges to our food security, and agroecology could help us increase agricultural production in a sustainable way. We must work together in order to develop agroecological systems that can participate in future sustainable agriculture by producing higher yields, promoting biodiversity and natural resources, and helping to reduce inputs, GHG emissions and energy use. It is difficult to change our way of life, but policies can stimulate agroecological methods and systems, and focus payments for ecosystem services and certification."

[See presentation](#)



Trees Robijns questioned the approach of delivering on environmental goals: should it continue being done via an integration approach or should rather a separate fund for nature be set up. The presentation was drawing to a large extent on a [discussion paper](#) by NABU, BirdLife in Germany. The example of the CAP that just had gone through a greening reform exercise, trying to integrate environmental concerns into the policy, where then also very pertinent in this discussion.

“The agricultural sector is one of the major threats to biodiversity because of trends of intensification and land abandonment. The integration of environmental considerations into EU legislation is part of the EU treaty, but its application is very weak.

“The annual cost for the preservation of the 26,000 Natura 2000 sites across Europe is around six billion euros. 10-20% of this money comes from EU financing, and around 20% comes from other national, regional or private sources. We find ourselves with a 50% finance gap for Natura 2000 sites protection. The question is raised, seen the relatively small amount of money actually needed and the big amounts of money wasted in the first pillar of the CAP, couldn't some of the money be better spent here?

“Unfortunately the greening didn't lift the baseline to what was needed and Pillar II can't compensate for the lack of delivery in Pillar 1. Moreover, we can't hope for other funds, as trends from social funds, LIFE, marine fisheries and regional development are not promising. On top of that, we are facing a very dangerous biodiversity crisis. NABU's discussion paper presents two different models: a new standalone EU fund for nature on the one hand and a proper integration of environment in the EU budget via a co-management of existing funds between the environmental and sectoral authorities, obligatory ring-fencing, etc.”

Part 4: Panel discussion



Nikolai Pushkarev, EPHA

Mr Pushkarev highlighted that food security is a crucial issue for public health.

“When the CAP was created it was quite successful at solving the problem of food insufficiency in Europe, but this is no longer the issue we need to tackle. From a public health perspective, it can be argued that we have not achieved food security. At least, if we take the definition of food security literally and seriously, namely that all people at all times have access to nutritious foods meeting dietary needs for an active and healthy life. The most striking indicator of this failure is overweight and obesity. Today’s food environments makes it too easy to eat highly processed, energy dense, nutrient poor foods - the main constituents of unhealthy diets. This most of all affects people from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, as healthy diets are often more expensive. Now, a quarter of the European population is at risk of falling into poverty. 9% of EU GDP is spent on healthcare, and much of this budget goes to treating chronic diseases linked to diet. A dietary transition towards more vegetables and fruits and reduced saturated fat intake from animal sources is both good for the environment and public health. Good health and a healthy environment play a similar role: both are indispensable for a flourishing society and economy.”

Matteo Bartolini, CEJA

Mr Bartolini’s key message was that we need to produce more with less, we must reduce waste, eat better, reward public goods, be more innovative, be more environmentally-friendly and apply agroecology.

“If we work together, if we link researchers with farmers and environmentalists, we can achieve these targets. He added that young farmers are not happy about the reform. But unfortunately young farmers often don’t want to talk to environmentalists because they find them too narrow-minded. Today farmers are much more educated and young farmers are also more conscience of environmental challenges such as water and climate change. We need more research on soil in order to avoid climate change having a negative impact on soil fertility.”

Bartolini added that “young farmers are the new environmentalists”.

Alessandro Triantafyllidis, IFOAM

“If you take the UN definition of food security, the EU should not have a problem, even in the long-term. However, if you talk about food quality, farm safety and the intensification of farming then there is an issue.

Our biggest challenge is to keep farmers on their farms and to have good quality soil. Food sovereignty and food security are linked so the EU should produce more for its own consumption. The EU has beautiful countryside and we need to preserve it. One of the best ways would be to have more small farmers. Unfortunately, they are currently being pushed aside by industrial farmers. In conclusion, yes we need the CAP, but a better one.

Beppe Croce, Legambiente

“The CAP is an opportunity, but I don’t believe that Pillar I or greening will work for the environment. Pillar II is better suited to the needs of ecological agriculture. Indeed, we must differentiate conventional and agroecological farming. And we should not accept to pay farmers to use pesticides or herbicides (as allowed in agro-envi-climate measure) when alternatives exist. It is possible to find a middle ground between organic and conservative agriculture, we can fight pests and bad herbs without herbicides. We must invest in training, information, waste management and pest management. We must make international programmes to develop research and training on agroecological farming. The EU also needs to develop legislation on soil that will recognise the multiple functions of soil. A network of European associations (Legambiente was the first proposer) wants to do a 1million signature campaign for soil conservation. The threat to food security is our way of life, not agriculture. Therefore, education on food and environment to explain the importance of agriculture is essential.”

Questions:

Dave Keating asked if other strategies could work if integrating biodiversity and soil protection into the CAP didn’t work.

>**Beppe Croce** said we need a sustainable food policy and to change our consumption patterns, our food waste, and above all our way of farming. There is only a way to make agriculture more sustainable: adapting to climate change and avoiding all pollution and erosion, embracing agroecological agriculture. If CAP doesn’t work, there is fortunately a growing pressure of civil society (also the Pope) in this direction and it will also affect the policies. He also reminded the audience that distribution is also an important issue.

Dave Keating highlighted that when most people think about agriculture, they don’t think about consumption. He asked Matteo if it is how are we suppose to think?

>**Matteo Bartolini** suggested that young farmers can help by educating consumers through activities and visits. The consumer can also help to solve the food chain problem if we can create a new approach with consumers to make them understand about food waste, consumption, and diet. If the consumer understands that even if the product is not pretty, it is good, the waste that we witness directly at the farm could be reduced. Consumers could also be tempted to buy goods with a shorter supply chain.

Dave Keating asked if the panelists thought that information on health and consumption were easily available enough for consumers.

>**Nikolai Pushkarev** answered that education is always good, but never enough. That we need a whole process of actions and to look at financial incentive and marketing in order to change the “demand” system we are in. If we manage to link people to food, products and farmers it could change the quality of eating habits and shorter food chains leading to lower consumption of processed food.

Faustine Bas Defossez (EEB) on better integration of policies highlighted that despite the facts that environment was at the heart of the reform, the opinion of COMENVI was completely ignored by COMAGRI and the Council of Environment Ministers was not officially involved either. Maybe a way to go is to better integrate the work of COMENVI and the Council of environment ministers in the next reform. Furthermore, regarding food and consumers, the problem is that good food is more expensive nowadays for consumers, but in reality it is bad food that costs a lot to society (negative externalities) and that is not reflected in the price. It is more efficient to have a policy that truly pays for public goods in the first place and ensure that good food is eventually cheaper for consumers not the other way around. This could be done through results based payments. She asked the panelists their views on this approach.

Matteo Bartolini answered that for him nutrition could be a solution in order to achieve what Faustine said. We need to bring students to farms and not just farms into schools. He didn't pretend to have a solution or a recipe, but he thinks that in the future the direct payment approach will completely change. He highlights the complexity of the issue because of the differences in the agriculture sector among the 28 countries. He also said that he found it essential that we are much more market-oriented, as Europe has rules which are not the same outside of Europe and that could hamper European competitiveness or boost it. Hence we have to try to understand and reshape agricultural policy, also in terms of land use. Indeed, land is so expensive that it is hard for new generations to enter the sector. Finally, he said that we have to find a way to link each position and try to understand each other better in order to avoid conflicts between everyone's point of view. The Common Agricultural Policy shouldn't just be common in policy it should be common in results.

Wouter Van der Weijden- the Center for Agriculture and Environment feels he is an optimist when it comes to what the EU can achieve, but he is less so when he considers the ongoing TTIP negotiations and the risks for food security – i.e. EU poultry sector, the distance between producer and consumer becomes much bigger, environmental standards will be lowered, unhealthy food culture is introduced. He asked the panelists and the European Commission if an environmental impact assessment and a health impact assessment would be made regarding TTIP.

Beppe Croce said that he agrees with his concerns. The problem is that this partnership is not a partnership, we know nothing. Fortunately also in the US there is a growing civil society movement demanding more safe and quality food.

Response and concluding remarks from European Commission

Pierre Bascou, Director, DG AGRI, European Commission

[See presentation](#)



Mr Bascou first reacted to a question on TTIP by recalling that “any legislation in the EU should be going through impact assessments, with in particular an assessment of the implications on the economic, social and environmental, health and civil society conditions”. He also mentioned that TTIP should be seen also as an opportunity. We are the largest agri-food exporter in the world, so it is an opportunity for EU farmers.

He then replied to comments made about DG ENVI integration during the CAP revision procedure. He disagreed with the statement made and declared that the Commission internal procedural rules ensure that all services concerned are consulted and integrated into the discussions. In this respect, they have close contacts and discussions with all the Directorates.

He then started his presentation by affirming that the most critical challenge for the European agriculture sector is to further improve its sustainability and competitiveness to ensure the long-term food security of the EU. He declared that, contrary to some of the previous speakers, he was more optimistic about the CAP’s contribution to the sustainable management of natural resources, even if he agrees that things could be improved. He highlighted that some critics about the greening of the CAP were based on an incorrect interpretation of the policy framework and its implementation. He assured that sustainability objectives are at the heart of the new reform policy framework.

Mr. Bascou recalled that the last reform of the CAP has put the onus on the environmental dimension of this policy. The cross compliance system has been consolidated and slightly reinforced. On top of cross compliance, the new CAP has introduced the green direct payments, with the obligation for farmers to diversify their crops, to protect their permanent pastures and to manage a part of their arable area as Ecological Focus Areas. Both cross compliance and the green direct payments, then form the baseline for the voluntary environmental measures under rural development. Some cross cutting instruments were also reinforced such as the agricultural research, the new European Innovation Partnership and the Farm Advisory System (FAS).

All these instruments should concur to the greening of the CAP and reinforce its ambition as compared to the previous period. However the most debated instrument is certainly the new green direct payments. They have been implemented for the first time by farmers in 2015. Member States have a wide margin of choice within a common framework to adapt the requirements to their needs. On this basis one can say that MSs have tried to offer to their farmers many options to facilitate the implementation of the green direct payments. Yet, it is too early to measure the impact of the greening as we still do not know the choices made by the farmers themselves. Data of farmers' declarations will be known only in December. As promised in 2014, the Commission will come forward in the course of 2016 with an analysis of the implementation of the greening in the first year. In any case, greening is about long term impact on soil and water quality, biodiversity and carbon sequestration.

Finally, Pierre Bascou reiterated that we cannot expect the CAP to solve all the issues, as there are a large corpus of legislative acts (including environmental Directives) that need to be put in place correctly by Member States in order to optimize the performance of the CAP. Yet, improvements of the policy framework can be brought in. Technological improvement should also play a role in allowing to design more ambitious measures than the existing ones: this could be the case for crop rotation (as compared to crop diversification). According to the European Commission and contrary to what is often said, most of the agricultural land in the EU is subject to the greening obligations (crop diversification, EFA and permanent grassland): e.g. this concerns more than 80% of the EU arable land. Yet, it is true that a significant number of EU farms may be exempted due to their small size. As far as the permanent grassland measure is concerned, the European Commission is very optimistic that the environmentally sensitive permanent grassland (ESPG) will deliver significant benefits in terms of environment and climate change; in this respect he noted that four Member States decided to identify ESPG outside Natura 2000 areas. To conclude, he said the new CAP should play a key role in ensuring and supporting farmers in the transition towards more sustainable agricultural models in the EU in order to ensure its long-term food security.

Response and concluding remarks from NGO

Mikael Karlsson, EEB President summed up the conference.

“We’ve heard a lot of interesting perspectives during this conference, and we’ve been reminded about how much money we are talking about when it comes to the CAP. We’ve also heard about different studies on failures of the CAP. We highlighted the need to develop a sustainable food and farming policy that avoids food waste, promotes agroecology and rewards public goods. A main issue brought up is that the environment is not protected enough, which is negative in the perspective of food security. We tended to agree that a lot of improvements can be achieved with what we already know. However, it was also said that we could have more data by promoting research like the LISA study. We are all aware that food habits can and must change, including reducing our meat consumption, paying the real price of food and for the productions of ecosystem services, as well as internalising environmental costs. He concluded by saying that we unfortunately risk to see a huge failure of the new CAP policy, as it is not taking on the challenges concerning environmental and socioeconomic aspects, as well as long-term food security in Europe and globally.”

Moderator **Dave Keating**, concluded by saying that a tremendous range of perspectives were heard. He said that while the conference’s central question remains unanswered there were certainly many possible ways to move forward.

