



European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism

5/8 Elishadder,
Culnancnoc
PORTREE
IV51 9JE
United Kingdom

06/03/13

Dear Member of the European Parliament

Support for amendments supporting permanent pasture farmers

Amendments to the CAP reform legislative package recently adopted by Committee of Agriculture and Rural Development (ComAgri) are soon to be debated and voted on in the Plenary of the European Parliament.

We would like to draw you attention to three amendments that have clear benefits both for the environment and for farmers. They need to be upheld by the Plenary vote and we therefore strongly urge you to give them your support.

They concern rules for permanent pastures and for determining the eligibility of farmland for CAP support. Current CAP rules and their misguided implementation are causing great problems by reducing the support to livestock farmers working marginal land, and leading to considerable and perverse impacts on the environment. A petition calling for is to be addressed in the current reform (attached to the same email as this document), was signed by over 80 farmers' and environmental NGOs. The amendments in question would help to solve these problems.

In relation to the Regulation on the financing, management and monitoring of the CAP (**Horizontal Regulation**) we are asking you to support **Amendment 128**:

Text proposed by the Commission is following:

(b) provisions required for a harmonised definition of the basis for calculation of aid, including rules on how to deal with certain cases where eligible areas contain landscape features or trees

The amendment agreed by ComAgri adds the following wording to the paragraph:

“without prejudice to Article 9 of Regulation (EU) No xxx/xxx [DP], eligibility rules shall be consistent with meeting the challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss, and shall not, therefore, penalise high nature value farming or grazed agro-forestry systems, or cause decreases in environmental quality; flexibility, justified on agronomic or ecological grounds, shall be allowed on the basis of the customary standards of the Member State or region concerned;”

This amendment is critically important to survival of agricultural activity in many marginal areas of EU, and especially to sustainability of High Nature Value livestock farming.

The European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism brings together ecologists, nature conservationists, farmers and policy makers. This non-profit network exists to increase understanding of the high nature conservation and cultural value of certain farming systems and to inform work on their maintenance.

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Regd. Office: 97 Oakwell Court, Derwentside, Co. Durham NE17 7BE, U K

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In relation to the Regulation establishing rules for **direct payments** to farmers under support schemes within the framework of the common agricultural policy, Amendments 28 to 31 need your support, but we draw your particular attention to:

Amendment 28, regarding Article 4 – paragraph 1 – point c – indent 3:

*carrying out a minimum activity, **based where appropriate on a minimum stocking density**, to be established by Member States, on agricultural areas naturally kept in a state suitable for grazing or cultivation.*

The addition, indicated in bold italics, would help to encourage the continuation of active livestock farming and avoid supporting unsustainable and non-productive practices such as the annual mowing of the grass (without harvesting) as the minimum activity required to receive CAP payments.

Amendment 31, regarding Article 4 – paragraph 1 – point h:

*(h) “permanent grassland **and permanent pasture**” means land used to grow for forage **herbaceous plants, shrubs and/or trees or any other species suitable for grazing**, naturally (self-seeded) or through cultivation (sown), and that **is not** included in the crop rotation of the holding **and not ploughed for seven years or longer**; it may include other **features of importance for the characterisation of the land as permanent pasture***

This amendment is a significant step forward for protection of European permanent grassland and pasture compared both to the current period and to the original reform proposals by the Commission, lending support to High Nature Value farming on traditional meadows and pastures while removing unnecessary obstacles from some farming systems that use long-term cultivated grasslands as part of their crop rotation practices.

Regards

Guy Beaufoy

Senior Policy Manager

Email: guy@efncp.org

Tel: +34 60 92 34 571

Enc:

- *Petition on permanent pasture*
- *Background report with country case studies*

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