CONSEIL EUROPEEN DES JEUNES AGRICULTEURS
European Council of Young Farmers - Europäischer Rat der Junglandwirte

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CEJA position on Agriculture and Climate Change

INTRODUCTION

In recent months, ahead of the UNFCCC Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, lively discussions have taken place with the climate change debate centred on the publication of the *Commission White Paper on Adapting to Climate Change*[1], as well as the *Commission Staff Working Documents on (i) the role of European Agriculture in Climate Change Mitigation*[2] and (ii) *the challenge for European agriculture and rural areas*[3].

In the framework of the CEJA environmental working group, European Young Farmers have closely followed these discussions and have reacted by commonly agreeing upon a series of proposals for climate change adaptation and mitigation. As the cooperation of the agricultural sector is fundamental to a successful outcome in Copenhagen, the views of European Young Farmers must be given careful consideration by negotiators at COP 15. In summary, European Young Farmers propose the following measures to counteract climate change:

- **Climate-smart farming practices** such as changing the composition of livestock nutrition, more efficient water use, carbon sequestration, crop rotation and reduced tillage, adaptation of planting and sowing dates, improved management of slurry, manure and fertilizer stocks, pest and disease monitoring, can help to address adaptation and mitigation concerns;
- **Shifting from crisis management to risk management practices** such as early warning systems and awareness initiatives;
- Easily **accessible tools** to promote adaptation and mitigation capacities;
- **Specifically targeting farmers in the dissemination of climate change information**, making key studies **easily available** and communicating **scientific and technical data on climate change in a clear and comprehensible way;**
- The provision of climate change **advisory services and vocational training to farmers;**
- **Further research and development on climate change and agriculture** and renewed partnerships between research institutes, industry, the private sector and farmers;
- **Financial support** such as the provision of **additional financial resources** for adaptation and mitigation – also outside of the CAP budget - **and aid for clean energy projects** such as the installation of biogas facilities and the production of renewable energy;
- A **secure legislative framework** governing large scale climate change investments.

[1] Commission White Paper entitled *"Adapting to Climate Change: Towards a European framework for action"* **SEC (2009) 386} 387} 388}.**
[2] Commission Staff Working Document entitled *"The role of European agriculture in climate change mitigation"* **SEC (2009) 1093 final**.
[3] Commission Staff Working Document accompanying the White Paper entitled *"Adapting to climate change: the challenge for European agriculture and rural areas*" **{COM (2009) 147}.**

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⇨ ON ADAPTATION

1. European Young Farmers stress that agriculture is and will continue to be the sector most adversely affected by climate change.

Climate change has already triggered higher average temperatures, increasing the frequency and severity of extreme weather conditions such as drought and flooding. This pattern, which has lead to premature ripening and the failing and destruction of crops, as well as increased cases of pests, parasites and diseases, is set to continue.
The impacts are **location-specific** and **diverse**. In some areas, such as Scandinavia, climate change may have some positive effects, such as longer growing seasons, milder climate conditions and greater crop yields. However, climate change will have a **predominantly negative impact on European agricultural productivity**. It will cause increased flooding, storms and pests in Northern Europe as well as heavy droughts, lower crop yields and a reduction in land capacity and suitability in Southern Europe, thus affecting the volume, quality and stability of food production.[4] Minor temperature variations could have devastating effects on crop production, with fruit, vegetable and perennial production subject to particular risk.

However, this is primarily a **global challenge** which also affects farmers beyond European borders. It will hinder the progress of farming in the developing world where farmers lack the financial and technological capacities to adapt as quickly as their European counterparts. On the African continent, countries such as Kenya have already suffered and continue to suffer extreme droughts and floods as result of climate change. Livestock is dying and crops are failing due to decreasing rainfall directly associated with changing climate patterns[5]. We, as **European Young Farmers, must take the lead in this initiative**. By establishing links with third countries and sharing our knowledge and expertise, European Young Farmers can help to ensure a more level playing field in climate change adaptation, can be the model of best practice in climate-smart farming and can help to counteract carbon leakage. Emission standards should eventually be implemented at global level. In the long term, EU-wide constraints alone would be unacceptable and counterproductive as such rules would simply shift greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with food production from Europe to third countries, thus shifting the problem rather than solving it.

2. European Young Farmers highlight the importance and difficulty of adapting to climate change in farming.

Adaptation to changing climatic conditions has always taken place in agriculture; however, the challenge today is the fast pace at which climate change is taking place. This makes adaptation more difficult and the need for **early adaptation** more important.
It is essential that young farmers adjust their agricultural practices to ensure their **resilience** to climate change. By applying their expertise in food cultivation, European Young Farmers can implement a series of practical adaptation measures such as modifying planting and sowing dates for crop production, crop rotation, pest and disease monitoring, efficient water use and maintaining local ecosystems.
As agriculture is directly and heavily dependent on the existing temperatures and weather conditions, **adaptation planning** is crucial. Temperatures and weather conditions will become increasingly changeable and unpredictable as a result of climate change, and extreme weather conditions and temperatures will increase in their frequency. As the impacts of climate change are often region-specific, adaptation planning measures must be adjusted accordingly, requiring technical and scientific expertise. **European Young Farmers call for more targeted research**

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[4] *Idem. at p.2.*
[5] IPCC Third Assessment Report *(TAR)*, *Climate Change 2001: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability* at 10.2.2.3 – 10.2.2.5.

in this area, further partnerships between farmers and specialised research institutes, and more accessible and comprehensible information and advice on regional impacts and adaptation strategies.

⇨ ON MITIGATION

1. European Young Farmers believe that agriculture has already made significant steps in reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and are committed to further reducing emissions to the extent possible, without significantly compromising their primary role as food producers.

We, as European Young Farmers, are key to any future climate change strategy. In fact, European agriculture has already made significant strides towards lowering greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. For the period 1990 – 2007, EU-27 agricultural emissions of methane and nitrous oxide declined by 20.2%. However, agriculture still makes a notable contribution to GHG emissions at the present time, representing 9.2% of total EU-27 emissions[6]. European Young Farmers are aware of this and are ready to play their part in mitigating the effects of climate change.

However, we must not forget the pivotal role of agriculture in ensuring **global food security and production**. European agriculture is fundamental to sustainable food production for future generations. With a global population increase of 50% expected by 2050, agricultural producers and processors face real supply challenges. **Despite Europe's limited land area, the continent's climatic conditions will continue to make it a key contributor to food production in the years ahead.** European Young Farmers insist that attempts to reduce GHG emissions must not interfere with European production.

European Young Farmers call for **consumer awareness initiatives**, aimed at raising public awareness of the importance of climate-friendly food production. A **clear labelling system** for climate-smart food products would allow farmers to distinguish their produce and give consumers a clear and well informed choice for their future wellbeing. The certification of products under such a system has to be credible and transparent and should not become too burdensome or bureaucratic for farmers.

European Young Farmers believe agriculture should remain **outside of the Emission Trading Scheme (ETS)** and see no benefit in a system which requires farmers to pay for their emissions. As the agricultural sector consists of many small emitters and as emissions are often a result of naturally occurring biological processes, ETS would penalise farmers for non-management related factors which are beyond their control. It is asserted that any resulting emissions verification would be difficult, the costs of such a system would be prohibitively high and the administrative burden would be excessive, resulting in additional form-filling and regulatory pressures at farm level.

European Young Farmers see the Commission decision on "effort sharing", which includes non ETS sectors such as agriculture, as a better alternative to an allowance-based trading scheme and emphasise that **the focus should be on positive encouragement** whereby farmers are rewarded for their efforts in cutting emissions and recognised for their implementation of climate-friendly farming practices.

European Young Farmers call for **consistent accounting standards in the monitoring of emissions and removals resulting from land use**. It is only in this way that we accurately

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[6] Commission staff working document entitled *"The role of European agriculture in climate change mitigation"* **SEC(2009) 1093 final** ,p.7.

assess progress made by the agricultural sector and ensure consistency and uniformity of reporting on Land-Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) activities.

2. European Young Farmers stress that agriculture can be part of the solution to climate change.

European Young Farmers **believe that agriculture will play an integral role in tackling climate change** and are dedicated to mitigating its effects through a series of **practical, cost-effective and economically viable solutions**. This can be achieved through the implementation of **climate-smart farming practices** such as:

a) Changing the composition of livestock nutrition;
b) Making more efficient use of water on agricultural land;
c) Providing carbon sinks by means of carbon sequestration in vegetation and soils i.e. increasing the amount of organic matter on agricultural land so as to decrease carbon dioxide levels. This would enable European Young Farmers to adapt to specific climatic, agronomic and geographic conditions so as to mitigate GHG emissions;
d) Crop rotation and reduced tillage practices on farmland;
e) Improved management of slurry, manure and fertilizer stocks;
f) Shifting the focus away from crisis management towards **risk management** practices such as the implementation of **early warning systems** and **awareness initiatives**. Sustainable soil management, for example, would increase the water retention in soil and thus reduce the risk of flooding and landslides on agricultural lands.

⇨ ON SUPPORTS FOR EUROPEAN YOUNG FARMERS IN THE CAP POST 2013

European Young Farmers agree that there are clear gaps in the current CAP and that the CAP post 2013 must look to better integrate climate change adaptation and mitigation concerns. The most fundamental issue, however, is the **absence of financial resources** to support farmers in their efforts to adapt to and mitigate climate change. European Young Farmers have identified several points that should be integrated into the future CAP to ensure successful adaptation and mitigation in agriculture:

1. Easily **accessible tools** to promote adaptation and mitigation capacities;
2. **Communication and information measures**: European Young Farmers are generally aware of the impact of agriculture on climate change but are not always aware of how their *own* farms contribute to GHG emissions. **Farmers need to be specifically targeted** in the dissemination of climate change information, key findings and studies should be made **freely available** to farmers and **scientific and technical data on climate change must be communicated to farmers in a clear and comprehensible way,** to ensure integrated approaches to climate change in the farming sector.
3. The provision of **advisory and vocational training**: Climate change topics must become an integral part of **farm advisory services**, vocational and professional training should be readily **available** and easily **accessible to farmers**.

4. **Further research and development, in consultation with farmers**:
   European Young Farmers call for additional investment in **R&D** to enhance climate-smart farming practices going forward and believe that partnerships involving research institutes, industry, the private sector and farmers are key to **innovation** in this area.

5. **Financial support** for the implementation of climate-friendly farming:
   a) Renewed investment in **clean energy sources**:
      i. European Young Farmers recognise the importance of using **agro-energy**, such as biomass. Biogas installations established in rural areas could be used to generate power on farm holdings and even fuel farm machinery. This would also have the add-on benefit of creating employment in rural areas. Such technologies should be free from excise duty in order to promote widespread use and should bear a uniform label of sustainability.
      ii. European Young Farmers encourage the use of all available sources of **renewable energy** at farm gate level such as the integrated use of water, solar energy and wind turbines.
      iii. **Government start-up supports**, such as the provision of permits and additional **installation aid**, would allow for a **competitive agro-energy sector** where farmers would make significant energy savings though efficiency gains, and could sell surplus energy back into the national grid at an equitable price.
   b) The provision of **additional financial resources** for adaptation and mitigation **outside of the CAP budget**.

6. A **secure legislative framework** governing large scale climate change investments: European Young Farmers need **stability and certainty** before making the long-term investments in the technology and infrastructure needed to tackle climate change. In a time of economic uncertainty, farmers wish to take prudent actions to ensure the financial viability of their operations.

CONCLUSIONS

European Young Farmers believe that the agricultural sector must be included in any agreement reached during the UNFCCC conference in Copenhagen. **Agriculture is fundamental to any global agreement on climate change** as not only is the sector strongly affected by climate change, due to its dependence on weather conditions, but because **agriculture can play an important role in cutting emissions and producing renewable energies**.

The specificity of the agricultural sector, whereby **GHG emissions are primarily the result of biological processes which occur naturally**, as opposed to management practices, must be taken into account by world leaders at the COP15 conference so as not to penalise farmers for factors which are largely beyond their control.

European Young Farmers support calls from, amongst others, the FAO and the World Bank to treat agriculture as an independent sector in any climate change accord reached by the COP15. **Agriculture is unique** as it is the **only sector capable of sequestering carbon in soils during the production process**. Plants, which absorb carbon dioxide, are aided by agricultural practices such as reduced tillage and sustainable management of water and grasslands, as these activities allow carbon sequestration to occur naturally. Therefore it is essential to **avoid a "one size fits all" approach** to climate change adaptation and mitigation at COP15 and instead **tailor climate change solutions to specific sectors such as agriculture.**

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