

Call for a truly sustainable CAP

Brussels/Bari 26/03/2006 - European experts call for the upcoming CAP Health check to put sustainability properly at the centre of European agriculture. The meeting of European experts at the CAP Seminar "Organic Farming and Nature Protection to Allow Sustainable Growth" showed the importance of efficient and coherent (CAP) Rural Development programmes in the Member States to further develop organic farming and nature protection.

About thirty European experts of the organic and environmental sectors were invited to the seminar "Organic Farming and Nature Protection to Allow Sustainable Growth" (1). Delegates discussed the mutual positive effects of organic farming and nature protection on a wide range of CAP and other policies.

"In climate change, biodiversity and soil protection, organic farming and nature protection deliver a unique combination of positive effects on the environment," said Ariel Brunner, seminar speaker and Policy Officer of Birdlife International. "The CAP Health Check 2008 – the evaluation of the first pillar of the CAP – must be used to further develop European agriculture towards sustainable land use and protection of resources. Because of its contribution to achieve these goals, the support of organic farming and nature protection should be a priority."

"Recent decisions in the European Union, such as the CAP reform 2003, the new Rural Development regulation, the Soil Strategy, the Biodiversity Communication, have been steps in the right direction", added Francis Blake, president of the IFOAM EU Group, "but there is still a big mis-match between where spending is directed and where public goods are delivered".

The host of the seminar was the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute Bari, the main research and training institute for organic agriculture in the Mediterranean region. The positive results from their research have benefited the development of organic farming in the region. It is important that investment in organic farming research is prioritised by the EU's 7th Framework Programme to support the further development of sustainable farming practice in Europe.

During a discussion about the implementing rules of the proposed new organic regulation, delegates emphasised the importance strengthening consumer confidence and ensuring that organic farming can continue to deliver high quality food and public benefits.

The seminar identified a range of opportunities for organic agriculture and nature protection to work for the future health of European agriculture, landscape and biodiversity.

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