

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate release

EU Agriculture Ministers must seriously face the challenges ahead

BRUSSELS, March 18, 2011 – At the occasion of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council, the **Agricultural and Rural Convention (ARC 2020)** renewed its call to support an ambitious reform of the Common Agricultural Policy.

Yesterday's **Council of Ministers** could not even agree on a weak compromise text, drafted by the Hungarian Presidency. It does not even remotely stand up to the urgency needed to tackle the long list of European and global challenges related to agriculture. But a reform that does not go beyond keeping the status-quo with only small adjustments will not live up to its name. Instead, the European Union should take the lead on a global scale and strive for a bold reform. The reform of the CAP cannot take a back seat to other EU policies.

The **direct payments** of the 1st pillar need to be oriented towards promoting a **paradigm shift in agriculture**, focusing on social and ecological goals. It is high time to introduce a more equitable distribution of direct income support between Member States, and to reward sustainable farming with a truly ambitious greening component.

The direct payments regime must be complemented by a **radical change in market measures** to help farmers cope with the increasing price fluctuations on the food markets. Farmers must be enabled to create trading groups, in order to increase their bargaining power in the food chain. We also call for the creation of an **EU Food Market Monitoring Agency** to monitor continuously the movement of demand, supply, prices and production costs of food and take appropriate action if needed.

Many **Rural Development programmes** of the past have been successful, but the 2nd pillar needs more solid funding and a clear orientation towards ecological sustainability to launch a Rural Renaissance which turns around the worrying economic, social and environmental trends in many rural areas. **Michael Dower**, Member of the ARC Core group, said that “there is a clear **need for effective harmonising**, at both EU and national levels, of policies and regulations related to the rural, fisheries, regional and social funds. The creation of **sub-regional partnerships**, bringing together the skills and resources of the public, private and civil sectors, helps to efficiently invest these funds and needs to be expanded on a larger scale”.

– ENDS –

See [Notes to Editors](#) attached

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ARC, the Agricultural and Rural Convention 2020, was created in early 2010 as a platform to enable concerned citizens and their organisations to advocate a sustainable reform of the Common Agricultural and Rural Development policies of the European Union. Active within the platform is a wide array of civil society organisations, at European, national, regional and local level. They represent a great variety of interests, including human rights, farmers, consumers, rural communities, nature protection, cultural heritage, animal welfare, minorities, public health, organic food and many others.

For more information on ARC, please visit <http://www.arc2020.eu/front/press/> or contact Zoé de York: zoe@arc2020.eu or +32 2 549 55 37, mobile: +32 473 22 44 84

The ARC Communication, which sets out the full range of policies advocated by the alliance, is available on <http://www.arc2020.eu/>.