

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate release

The Agricultural and Rural Convention agrees on a new European Food, Agriculture and Rural Policy

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BRUSSELS, November 5, 2010 – The **Agricultural and Rural Convention 2020 (ARC)** is calling for a new **European Food, Agriculture and Rural Policy**. Its objectives have to go beyond those stated in the Treaty of Rome. They would embrace food security, food quality and public health as well as sustainable standards in agriculture, protection of the environment, mitigation of climate change, strengthening of the rural economy, and the well-being of rural communities.

Gathered in Brussels for a two-day conference, the ARC network has put the final touches on its **Communication of Civil Society to the European Union on the Future of Agriculture and Rural Policies**. In a common statement, the Civil Society organisations assembled in Brussels describe the two funds through which this new policy should be implemented: the **European Agricultural Fund** focused on food and farming; and the **European Rural Fund**, focused on the wider rural economy and territorial development.

ARC's proposals for agriculture centre on a key demand: **sustainable farming everywhere**. The current mainstream system of agriculture in Europe is inherently unsustainable.

ARC is thus calling for a **paradigm shift** from industrialised agriculture towards a more sustainable form of farming which sustains productive farming everywhere, builds on the regional and local diversity of farming and economies, makes far lighter use of non-renewable resources, respects animal welfare, puts good agronomic sense and agro-ecological innovation at the heart of farming decisions, and achieves a wide range of positive environmental, social and economic outcomes.

This shift must guide the future pattern of support to farmers. General subsidies, decoupled from production and unrelated to sustainable farming systems or public goods, cannot be politically justified beyond 2013. Financial support in future should relate to outcomes that Europe needs and which will not be achieved by market forces alone. Namely sustainable practice, environmental stewardship, support for small and family farms and for those in difficult areas, and diversification of farm economies and rural economies.

ARC's Communication also highlights the need for a **Rural Renaissance**. Rural regions in Europe vary greatly in the structure and strength of their economy. Some have strong and diversified economies. Many others have been gravely weakened by collapse of collective farming, centralisation of commerce, out-migration of young people, and other forces. The result is gross and growing disparity between regions, mass migration without perspectives for decent income and loss of social capital. In some regions, valuable farmland is abandoned and the environmental and cultural values which were created and sustained by farming are lost.

This rural renaissance should focus on both economic and social development, and on innovation and applied knowledge. It should also draw upon wider EU policies and resources. Through the Rural Fund, it should support the strengthening of rural communities, services and infrastructure. This support should largely be delivered through well-funded sub-regional partnership of the public, private, and civil sectors.

As the Common Agriculture Policy comes into review for the next ten years, ARC asks that this new European Food, Agriculture and Rural Policy should be allotted broadly the same share of the EU budget as is now allocated to the two pillars of the CAP. But ARC insists that rural areas should also draw resources from other EU Funds, national, regional and local authorities, as well as the corporate and civil sectors.

The Agricultural and Rural Convention (ARC 2020) has been created as a platform to enable concerned citizens and their organisations to advocate a sustainable reform of the agricultural and rural development policies of the European Union. Active within the platform is a growing number of civil society organisations, at European, national, regional and local level. They represent a wide variety of interests, including human rights, farmers, consumers, rural communities, nature protection, cultural heritage, animal welfare, minorities, public health, organic food and many others – see list below.

The European Commission is expected to issue its Communication *The CAP towards 2020* on 17 November. The day before, on 16 November, ARC will submit its final statement to EU representatives and present it to the public at a special event in Brussels.

– ENDS –

See Notes to Editors attached

Notes to Editors

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

The full Communication of Civil Society to the European Union on the Future of Agriculture and Rural Policies is available on <http://www.arc2020.eu/communication.php>.

The ARC Statement of Principles, submitted to the July Conference, is available on http://www.arc2020.eu/doc/press/ARC_summary_of_principles.pdf.

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ARC is supported by AGORA - Working Group for Sustainable Development • AGRIREGIONIEUROPA • AGROLINK Association • AGROM-RO Association Sangeorgiu de Mures, Romania • ALKA Center for Sustainable Development • Alliance of Associations Polish Green Network • Armenian Women for Health & Healthy Environment NGO • Associação IN LOCO - intervenção, formação, estudos p/o desenvolvimento local • Association des Chambres d'Agriculture de Pyrénées • Association for Rural Development in Mountain Areas • Association for the Support and Promotion of Rural Initiatives • Associazione "Alessandro Bartola" Austrian Green Farmers Association • BIOAVIROM - Asociatia Bioavicultorilor din Romania • Avalon Foundation • Buzau Local Action Group • Carpathian Foundation - Poland • CEEweb for Biodiversity • CIVITAS Foundation for Civil Society • Collectif Stratégies Alimentaires • Compassion in World Farming • Demeter International • Die Gruene Liga - network of ecological organisations • Dolina Strugu - Struga valley • Eco Ruralis Association • Ecologica • ECOVAST - European Council for the Village and Small Town • ELARD - European LEADER Association for Rural Development • EUROMONTANA • EUROPE DIRECT - Carrefour europeo Emilia • Europe Direct CEIPREX – Extremadura • European Milk Board (EMB) • European Public Health and Agriculture Consortium (EPHAC) • European Rural Alliance (ERA) • Fédération Nationale d'Agriculture Biologique des Régions de France • Fondation Charles Léopold Mayer pour le Progrès de l'Homme • Fondation Sciences Citoyennes • Foundation on Future Farming • Forum Synergies • Franco-Romanian Tourism Association "Tirgu Neamt-St. Just St. Rambert" • Fundatia ADEPT • Fundacja Partnerstwo Dorzecze Słupi • Groupe de Bruges • Groupe de Recherche en Agriculture Biologique (GRAB) • Groupe PAC 2013 • Heimatbund Thüringen • IESA FORUM ON TERRITORIAL COHESSION • IFOAM - EU Group • IFZ - Inter-university Research Centre for Technology, Work and Culture • Institute for Sustainable Development-Poland • Intercommunity Association "Tinutul Padurenilor" • LAG Kromme Rijn • LAM Foundation • LEADER Local Action Group • LAPAR - League of Romanian Agricultural Producer Associations • Lithuanian Centre for LEADER and Agricultural Training • Lithuanian Institute of Agrarian Economy • Local Employers' Association for SMEs (PLIMM) - Calafat • Munlochy Vigil • Nexus Foundation • Pesticide Action Network Europe • Portuguese-GM Free Coalition • PREPARE Partnership for Rural Europe • REDR - Spanish Network for Rural Development • Research Institute for Vegetable and Flower Production • Risteco Italy - sustainable restaurant platform • Romanian Association for Equal Opportunities - APES • RURALMED Zeletin AFJ • SoyAlliance • Terra Nostra Accademic Foundation for Rural Progress, Iasi • Tobacco Farmers Group 'Centre' - Romania • Umweltbund - Alliance of Beekeepers, Farmers and Consumers • University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro - CETRAD • VODO Flemish Sustainable Development Platform • Vredeseilanden (VECO) • World Vision Romania •

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