

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate release

"We need a rural renaissance for sustainable farming and food for all"

Open letter to

José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission

Copies to:

Janusz Lewandowski, Commissioner for Financial Programming and Budget

Dacian Cioloș, Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner for the Environment

Maria Damanaki, Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries

Johannes Hahn, Commissioner for Regional Policy

Catherine Day, Secretary General European Commission

Brussels, 23 June 2011

The future of rural development policies and the financial perspectives 2014-2020

Dear Mr. President,

We are aware that current negotiations on a financial framework of the EU's 2014-2020 budget are a demanding exercise in a period of financial turbulences and public deficits across Europe. We appreciate the efforts of the Commission in trying to solve the economical and political crisis which is challenging our common European project.

On the eve of decisions to be taken at the College of Commissioners next week, we would like to draw your attention to the specific needs of European rural communities and the role they will play to make our environment, and farming and food systems fit for the future. We believe that the substantial cuts which you may be considering in the Rural Development Programme would endanger the much-needed reform of a policy which is so fundamental to the sustainable future of the European Union. Today, the European Parliament also voted with an extremely strong majority against any intentions to cut funding of the 2nd pillar.

What we need in the coming years is an agricultural and rural renaissance in order to achieve long term sustainable land use, farming and food systems in all Member States of the Union. We must encourage farmers, rural communities and urban consumers alike to respond to the challenges of climate change, loss of biodiversity and soil fertility, and to reduce abandonment of our culturally rich rural regions. The much-quoted goal of food security for Europe and the world depends strongly on our European capacities and engagement in innovative farming, making it less dependent on oil and to

strengthen rural economies by improving rural infrastructure, education and research in response to these key challenges.

Sustainable use of rural resources is a prime contributor to meeting the EU's commitment to reducing carbon emissions, conserving and managing water supplies, reducing transport costs, generating renewable energy, protecting biodiversity, and sustaining the health of the soil and resilience of natural systems.

Decentralised local and regional governance and development are essential for making rural areas attractive places for living, working and recreation. Rural development must contribute to empower rural communities so that they can take their destiny into their own hands.

Some rural regions already have strong and quite diversified economies. But others, particularly in remote areas or some new Member States, have been gravely weakened by the collapse of collective farming, the centralisation of industry and commerce, out-migration of young people, and rural poverty. The EU 2020 goal of inclusive growth will not be met if these weaker regions do not get substantial support for establishing long-term sustainable practices and better connections to urban areas, creating vibrant rural economies, making rural regions attractive and viable places to live and work.

All of Europe's citizens will benefit from a continued and substantial Rural Development Programme, operating in close harmony with Regional, Social and Fisheries Policies. Sustainable farm and food systems and rural renaissance are urgently needed to fulfil the EU's commitment to social, economic and territorial cohesion.

Dear Mr. President, dear Commissioners: Please take these arguments into account when you decide about your proposals for a new EU financial framework.

Sincerely yours,



For the members of the **Agricultural and Rural Convention 2020**

Arie van den Brand
President of Groupe de Bruges
Independent Network and Think Tank on
European Agricultural and Rural Development Policies

– ENDS –

See [Notes to Editors](#) attached

Notes to Editors

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 Grischa Hadjamu: contact@arc2020.eu or +32 2 549 55 37

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