

Brussels, 15<sup>th</sup> May 2019

**Re: The future of the agricultural policy**

Dear Spitzenkandidaten:

Nicola Beer, Emma Bonino, Violeta Bulc, Katalin Cseh, Luis Garicano, Guy Verhofstadt, Margrethe Vestager (ALDE)

Jan Zahradil (ECR)

Oriol Junqueras (EFA)

Manfred Weber (EPP)

Nico Cué, Violeta Tomič (GUE)

Ska Keller, Bas Eickhout (GREENS)

Frans Timmermans (PES)

Ahead of the important debate to be held on 15<sup>th</sup> May and the European elections, Copa and Cogeca wish to express their views on the future of the farming policy and its corresponding institutional aspects.

Copa and Cogeca are the united voice of EU farmers and their cooperatives. Copa represents over 23 million farmers and their families, whilst Cogeca represents the interests of 22,000 agricultural cooperatives.

For Copa and Cogeca, the coming political cycle in Europe has the potential to define the very shape of Europe for generations to come. We will face difficult debates on generation renewal, low farm income, market volatility and climate change. We, as European farmers and cooperatives, are aware of and ready to navigate these difficult issues and to face the changes in store. We, as European farmers and cooperatives, seek to deliver the type of agriculture that our citizens expect and demand: agriculture which provides a high level of food security and high standards of quality, welfare, sustainability and environmental protection.

We call upon you to keep agriculture and forestry at the top of all EU agendas. This is essential considering agriculture's cross-cutting potential. How can Europe become a bio-based economy and a carbon sequestration champion without its agricultural and forestry sectors? How can we keep rural Europe vibrant and ensure a dynamic trade balance without the farmers and cooperatives of Europe?

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is, and must continue to be, the policy that supports European farmers in delivering these objectives. Family farms, agricultural cooperatives and other agricultural and forestry undertakings in all their diversity play a key role in this process.

The CAP, as a cornerstone of the EU's policies, is a partnership between agriculture and society, and between Europe and its farmers.

In this context, the Commission department for agriculture and rural development (DG AGRI) should retain its strategic responsibility for EU agricultural and rural development policies and continue as the leading DG in all aspects of the CAP.

Contrary to some suggestions, we believe that DG AGRI's role and responsibilities should be strengthened in order to enhance the coordination of European Union policies that impact European farmers' and agri-cooperatives' activities. Indeed, DG AGRI contributes significantly to several of the Commission's political priorities, including trade, jobs, growth and investment, and the internal market. It plays a central role in ensuring effective and coordinated implementation of these policies.

Copa and Cogeca appeal to the future EU leaders to deliver the institutional and policy framework that will feed Europe's future. For the past 60 years, the Common Agricultural Policy has been the glue that holds the European project and agriculture together.

A strong Europe needs strong agriculture, and strong agriculture needs Europe!

Yours sincerely,



Joachim Rukwied  
President of Copa



Thomas Magnusson  
President of Cogeca