

NewsletterCEPM

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CEPM takes a stand on the post-2020 CAP and is mobilising among European actors (p.2)

> Editorial

European lobbying: act and convince

For CEPM and its member organisations, the CAP reform is a high-priority issue. The European Commission plans to adopt its proposal for the post-2020 period in May. Matters are now at a very advanced stage and there have been leaks as to the content of the document.

We have learned from different sources that DG AGRI is moving towards incorporating a compulsory field rotation principle into the rules on conditionality. However, maize is distinguished by how sustainable it is in monoculture. In 2015, the Commission had already agreed to an equivalence measure initiated by CEPM for winter soil cover, with each Member State free to implement or not. The validity of this method is guaranteed by the acceptance of specifications that farmers apply under threat of penalty, that is to say the non-payment of greening premiums. With the requirement of field rotation, this option would disappear.

In response to this risk, we are embarking on a vast campaign of meetings in Brussels to explode the myths about corn monoculture.

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Our case does not rely on political or economic considerations, but rather on technical and environmental realities, supported by reputed scientific authorities and recent studies by official bodies.

These studies show that imposing rotation on certain soils in monoculture today would not only bring no benefit to the soil or the environment, but it would have the opposite effect.

We had the great satisfaction of seeing our interlocutors, without exception, discuss freely with us and suggest that the arguments presented would not remain unheard. This is the essence of our approach which is focused on results, environmental, social and economic effectiveness of the measures put in place by farmers with the desire to maintain a strong and vibrant European agriculture. European maize production can meet the challenges of sustainability and contribute to a winning European agriculture if scientific agronomy regains its rights. This is the key message of CEPM's action.

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CAP POST-2020: THE DEADLINE APPROCHES

Important steps for the future of the CAP will be taken during the second quarter of 2018. Indeed, the Commission will present its proposal for the new multiannual financial framework for the period 2021-2027 next May, and a project on the future CAP at the beginning of July. With that in mind, CEPM is communicating the position of European maize producers to the relevant stakeholders.

Debates relating to the next EU financial framework are taking place in a **tense political and economic atmosphere**: rise of extremism, Brexit and even new competences. This situation raises questions in view of the proposal that will be formulated by the Commission in May. The CAP is the only integrated European policy, with 408.3 billion euros for the 2014-2020 period, and accounts for 38 % of the EU budget. This number is too high for some people given the new issues that the EU must face (migration, defence), and too low for others due to difficulties encountered by European farmers who are also under pressure to meet new expectations. This is reflected by the 3 budget options announced by the European Commission last 14 February:

- The first scenario refers to maintaining the **status quo, i.e. keeping agricultural spending at its current level.**
- The second highlights a **30% reduction in the budgetary amount dedicated to the CAP**, which will reduce farm income by approximately 10%.
- The third proposes a **15% cut in the same budget**, also causing a relative decrease in farm income but that remains considerable.

As far as CEPM is concerned, it is clear that the CAP budget should be enhanced in order to meet the expected objectives. Income support has to remain a priority. CEPM therefore shares the position of a majority of MEPs who support a strong CAP budget; by underlining the need to increase the contribution beyond 1% of GDP and inviting the Commission to evaluate the topic of own resources. The fact remains that Commissioner Oettinger's statements are not reassuring as he has announced a 4% to 10% decrease in the CAP budget!

From a political standpoint, in his November 2017 communication Phil Hogan wanted to restore, a margin of flexibility to the EU Member States: the EU drafts the rules and the Member States draw up a plan of action in line with European ambitions.

The Commission declares that it is **not about renationalising the CAP** but rather **making the most of of the distinctive geographical features of each Member State and a modernising a CAP considered too complex and expensive.**

On 19 March 2018, Member States did not find a common position on the issue of convergence related to the level of direct support funding between Member States; EU agriculture ministers did not adopt common guidelines on the future of the CAP. The Bulgarian presidency of the Council had to content itself with the conclusions of the presidency. The 28 also struggled to agree on coupled aids. For the rest, they globally support the European Commission's proposal (expected by 29 May) to grant national administrations more subsidiarity in terms of implementing the future CAP.

Despite the "reassuring" comments of the Commission, **CEPM remains opposed to any excessive subsidiarity that is incompatible with the foundations of the European single market.**

For CEPM, the next CAP should enable farms to strengthen their competitiveness, sustainability and resilience. Four tools are available for doing so:

- **Crisis management tools**, to cope with market disruptions.
- **A decoupled payment** aimed at offsetting the European standard unpaid by the market.
- **Risks management tools, in particular an effective crop insurance**, capitalising on the progress of the Omnibus regulation.
- **Support for investments** aimed at improving the competitiveness and resilience of farms, particularly with regard to the creation of water resources.

Finally, CEPM will throughout the debate be recalling the positive contribution of maize to climate, environmental and energy challenges, regardless of the production systems encountered in the EU.

REFORM OF EU SCIENTIFIC EVALUATION AT THE HEART OF CONCERNS

On 15 January 2018, the Commission published its **Fitness Check on the quality of Regulation 178/2002 on General Food Law (GFL)** which highlights the issue of transparency in risk assessments. A few months later, following the glyphosate saga, the resolution voted in October by the European Parliament confirmed this approach and the need to make EU scientific assessment more rational.

Between 23 January and 20 March 2018, the European Commission held a **public consultation on the transparency and sustainability of the EU food and feed safety risk assessment model** by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).

One of the issues raised in this context relates to **public access to information**. Although some information is already available, the studies provided by the agri-food industry, which serve as a basis for the work of EFSA, are not.

The Commission also points out **the issues of the quality of these studies, as well as their control and funding**. It suggests the adoption of additional measures (audit strengthening, allocation of funds to finance studies carried out by the EU itself).

Finally, it questions operators about EFSA's **independence and the involvement of Member States in its operation**, which may constitute an obstacle for those wishing to market their products in several Member States.

The replies put forward will allow the Commission to present a **legislative proposal to the European Parliament and the Council in May 2018**.

It is clear that the issue relating to EFSA's transparency is at the forefront of the General Food Law reform. However, despite the separation of EFSA's risk assessment from risk management (the latter falls under the Commission's responsibility) which are EFSA's *raison d'être* and the main guarantee of its independence, the evaluation is limited to the initial stage of the decision-making process.

On the European Parliament (EP) side, on 18 January 2018 the presidents of political groups proposed the creation of **the PEST Committee** (Special Committee on the Union's authorisation procedure for pesticides).

Spearheaded by MEPs Eric Andrieu (S&D, FR) and Marc Tarabella (S&D, BE), the initiative was unanimously endorsed by the Conference of Presidents on 6 February 2018. *"The glyphosate case has exposed the structural weaknesses of the European Commission...This committee will have to shed light*

on the "Monsanto Papers" and assess the potential conflicts of interest between the industry and the European agencies".

The proposal was favourably received by the EP. According to MEP Angélique Delahaye (PPE, FR), this Committee is the *"political response to a public questioning"*.

Following the constituent meeting on 12 March 2018, **the first working meeting will be held on 12 April** and the Committee will have a 9-month mandate to evaluate:

- The EU authorisation procedure for pesticides;
- Potential failures in the way the substances are scientifically evaluated and authorised;
- The role of the Commission in the renewal of the glyphosate authorisation;
- Possible conflicts of interest in the approval procedure;
- The role of EU agencies, and if they are adequately staffed and funded to fulfil their obligations.

It will issue a report presenting its findings and recommendations which will be approved by Parliament in plenary session.

The creation of this committee also results from the frustration and the loss of confidence of EU citizens in the European decision-making process which notably emerged through the Citizen's Initiative entitled *"Ban glyphosate"* and which gathered 1,070,865 signatures in 22 Member States.

In view of these results, the Commission's legislative proposal on increasing the credibility of evaluations will focus on several well-defined areas. It will be used to:

- **Improve the transparency and quality of the studies** used in the scientific assessments of active substances and thus highlight their potential failures; and
- Provide guidance on the **governance of EFSA**.

CEPM remains vigilant on this issue for which it is important to maintain an independent scientific expertise that must not lead to an over-enrichment of the dossiers developed in the plant protection field likely to slow down the provision of products to producers.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE: MERCOSUR AND THE UNITED STATES

The 32nd round of talks with Mercosur closed on 2 March (in Asunción) in a cautious climate.

On 29 January 2018, European Commissioners proposed an **improvement of the EU market access offer** put forward in December 2017.

Member States remain divided. On 29 January, during the meeting of the 28 Ministers of Agriculture, some ten Member States (IE, FR, AT, IT, EL, SK, SI, PL, HU, BE) reaffirmed their opposition to any new concession for sensitive products. By contrast, others (ES, DK, DE, NL, SE) felt that the time had come to conclude the talks.

But it is time for caution. Thus, the French Secretary of State to the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne, confirmed the vigilance of his country "*to sanitary and phytosanitary standards*" concerning agricultural products.

For CEPM, these negotiations clearly constitute a danger for the sustainability of a maize sector meeting the demands of European citizens. Needless to say, Brazil and Argentina enjoy undeniable competitive advantages, starting with access to technologies that European producers are deprived of: GMOs, atrazine, neonicotinoids - those are some examples of major distortions that CEPM cannot accept! If European producers are deprived of it, it is clear that the same must be applied to imports!

Tensions between the EU and the US: maize, a strategic product?

US President Donald Trump took the decision on 8 March formally to increase duties on imports of steel (+ 25%) and aluminium (+ 10%) without distinction of origin in order to restrict the flow to the United States.

Following this decision, on 16 March the European Commission published on its website a list of products that may be subject to rebalancing measures in the form of increased import duties from the United States. These products include corn and sweetcorn. For the time being, the tension has calmed down, the EU coming under the exempted origins.

Corn and sweetcorn are therefore identified as vital products for transatlantic relations. Let us hope that the European authorities will adopt the same approach when the TTIP negotiations resume, perhaps as early as 2021, and preserve European maize!

RED II ON BIOFUELS : A HIGHLY CONTROVERSIAL FILE

In 2016, the European Commission proposed reducing the share of first-generation biofuels in transport from 7% to 3.8% by 2030. This proposal had raised two criticisms from the affected sectors. First, because there is a risk that their investments aimed at first-generation biofuels will be rendered useless. And secondly, because they see the Commission favouring a pseudo-general interest by promoting second-generation biofuels without being able to demonstrate their economic or environmental interest and their availability.

The European Parliament and the Council of Ministers as co-legislators clearly do not share the Commission's opinion and are discussing a common position centred around the following four points:

- The energy share produced from renewable sources in final consumption would increase to 35% in 2030 instead of 27%;
- In the transport sector, the percentage of renewable energies should reach 12% by 2030;
- The compromise must maintain the 7% ceiling;
- Should the use of palm oil be abolished in 2021 as the European Parliament wishes?

The file has been in the trilogue phase since February, where representatives of the three institutions meet to negotiate in extreme opacity. It is urgent and essential to continue our efforts.

THE NEONICOTINOIDS SITUATION FOLLOWING THE EFSA OPINION

On 28 February 2018, EFSA (the European Food Safety Agency) published its opinion on the use of neonicotinoids. It states that these substances present high risks for the health and survival of bees.

Widely expected by CEPM since 2015, this opinion will redefine the moratorium decision that deprives European maize producers of the use of active substances that are necessary in the fight against certain pests.

The opinion presents the risks for bees and other pollinators when they are exposed to such substances - residues of substances in pollen, nectar and in the water consumed by bees. The study, although carried out via in-depth work based on tangible data collection including the use of sophisticated literature and the use of its **“Bee guidance document” (BGD)** was criticised. Indeed, the Bee guidance document has no legal value since it has not been endorsed by the Standing Committee. Furthermore, it **includes parameters that are impossible to meet during field trials:**

*“It requires an **acceptable rate of bee mortality of 7% during the trials, far below the average rate of 15% under normal conditions.** The BGD has also set a minimum contiguous test area size - at least 168 km² – impossible to find in order to track bees”.*

This document, inapplicable, is therefore an inappropriate tool for declaring neonicotinoids particularly harmful to bees.

The opinion reaffirms that the protection of bees remains a priority. It echoes the restrictions put in place by the European Commission on 14 May 2013 concerning the use of three neonicotinoids (Thiamethoxam, Clothianidin and Imidacloprid).

The opinion should be compared to the report on the prospects and challenges for the EU beekeeping sector. This own-initiative report mentions the risks associated with neonicotinoids and was tabled in the European Parliament by M. Erdos (EPP, HU) on 25 July 2017.

Supported in the AGRI Committee on 23 January 2018, the report was debated in mini-plenary on 28 February 2018 and adopted on 1 March 2018 (560 votes for, 27 against and 28 abstentions).

Amendment §40bis - *“calls on the Commission to propose legislation banning the production, sale and use of all neonicotinoid-based pesticides [...], to protect bee populations”* was rejected (216 votes in favour, 364 votes against, 33 abstentions).

The EFSA **opinion was discussed within SCoPAFF on 22 and 23 March.** No vote is planned at the moment.

In any case, according to CEPM, the removal of all neonicotinoid products would constitute a full deadlock in the fight against many pests. It is therefore necessary to work both on derogations and research into research, whether it be tailored biocontrol, chemical control or adapted technical itineraries.

COURT OF JUSTICE: ADVOCATE GENERAL CONCLUSIONS ON NBT

According to M. Bobek's conclusions of 18 January 2018, New Breeding Techniques (NBT) are in principle not subject to the GMO Directive. The long-awaited decision of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) is expected in the coming months but no date has yet been set.

The question addressed in 2016 to the CJEU by the French *Conseil d'Etat* is whether organisms obtained by new breeding techniques that do not use transgenesis, sometimes referred to as “hidden GMOs”, are subject to the Directive of 12 March 2001 imposing precaution, evaluation and traceability measures for GMOs in the environment.

In this case, M. Bobek considers that these new techniques developed since the 2001 GMO Directive must be exempted.

In other words, **the GMO Directive does not apply to mutagenesis techniques that lead to a result that could have been achieved by traditional breeding methods.**

He also considers that, in so far as they *“comply with their general obligations deriving from Union law, Member States may legislate on mutagenised organisms”*.

Mr. Bobek *“acknowledges that the legislator has the obligation to maintain its regulation reasonably up to date. This obligation becomes essential in the areas and issues covered by the precautionary principle”*. For example, the 17-year old Directive likely needs to be updated, as innovation is constant and breeding techniques largely evolve.

It should be noted that an Advocate-General's conclusions are not binding but are generally followed. CEPM therefore awaits the final opinion of the CJEU on this issue with key implications for the future of European agriculture.

CONVENTION OF ROMANIAN MAIZE PRODUCERS

On 25 January 2018, the Association of Romanian Maize Producers (APPR) held its General Assembly at the Intercontinental Hotel in Bucharest.

Guests included Céline Duroc, CEPM Permanent Delegate, Gilles Espagnol, maize specialist and representative of Arvalis and Daniel Guéguen, CEPM's consultant on European affairs.

The three guests were welcomed by a wide audience, including senior officials.

Céline Duroc presented at length the agenda and the programme of CEPM, essentially based on the CAP reform for which a proposal should be released at the end of May, bringing the risk of mandatory crop rotation against which the sector will have to mobilise. In this context, a series of contacts is planned at the level of European Union institutions, Member States and stakeholders. She especially insisted on the need to act collectively and to get involved as soon as possible.

This approach is also valid for the major issue related to neonicotinoids. On this, Romanian producers are mobilised in order to maintain the possibility of fighting against *Tanemicus* which entails catastrophic impacts on maize.

Daniel Guéguen, in turn, presented a panorama of lobbying in Brussels, underlining that the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty was supposed to have a simplifying effect but has in fact complicated and created opacity within a system originally more transparent. He said that lobbying requires technical knowledge that must be accompanied by a legal understanding of EU decision-making and a sharp sense of communication, including via social networks which are now unavoidable. This is the method that CEPM will mobilise for the discussions on the future CAP and on the thorny issue of monoculture.



CEPM members

GERMANY – *Deutsches Maiskomitee (DMK)*
BULGARIA – *National Grain Producers Association (NGPA) et Conseil des Organisations Agricoles*
SPAIN – *Asociacion General de Productores de Maíz de España (AGPME)*
FRANCE – *Association Générale des Producteurs de Maïs (AGPM)*
HUNGARY – *Vetőmag Szövetség Szakmaközi Szervezet és Terméktanacs (VSZT)*
ITALY – *Associazione Italiana Maiscoltori (AMI)*
POLAND – *Polski Związek Producentów Kukurydzy (PZPK)*
PORTUGAL – *ANPROMIS*
ROMANIA – *Association Roumaine des Producteurs de Maïs (APPR)*
SLOVAKIA – *Zväz pestovateľov a spracovateľov kukurice (ZPSK)*

Civil dialogue groups

01-06-2018: Arable crops – flax and hemp
24-05-2018: Arable crop - rice
22-05-2018: Environment and climate change
20-04-2018: CAP
19-03-2018: International aspects of agriculture
16-03-2018: Arable crops - sugar
09-03-2018: Directs payments and greening
06-02-2012: Arable crops – POC and seeds

Meetings of CEPM and its member organisations 1st quarter 2018

- ✓ **CEPM:**
 - **20 February 2018:** Board Meeting - Paris.
 - **5 June 2018 in Brussels:** European Congress on Maize (General Assembly + GA and public conference)
- ✓ **Portugal:**
 - **7 February 2018:** ANPROMIS organises its 9th symposium on maize in Póvoa do Varzim (25 km north of Porto), region specialised in dairy production.
 - **8 February 2018:** "field day" with a visit to the Portuguese Farm Germoplasme Végétal (2nd largest in the world) then visit to a permanent dairy farm of 1200 VL.
- ✓ **Romania:**
 - **25 January 2018:** General Assembly - APPR Annual Congress; Prix Maïs d'Or / Golden Maize 3rd edition, Bucharest.
- ✓ **Germany:**
 - **19-28 January 2018:** International Green Week, Berlin (DMK in hall 3.2, Stand 122).
 - **15 January 2018:** Working group on variety trials, Hanover.
 - **2 March 2018:** DMK Board meeting, Würzburg
 - **15-16 March 2018:** Working group on economy and farm management, Mannheim
 - **17-18 April 2018:** Working group on silage preservation and feed, Halle/Saale