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Press release

Food, energy and climate: Challenges that engage maize growers and the European authorities

The European Maize Growers' Confederation, which brings together farmers' representatives from the 10 largest maize-growing countries in the EU, held its General Assembly by videoconference on Wednesday 25 May. In a period deeply marked by two years of sanitary crisis and the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, the issues of food and energy sovereignty are at the centre of concerns, while the fight against global warming remains at the top of the political, national and European agendas. The members of the CEPM have affirmed the EU's duty to produce, without lowering its guard on climate and environmental issues. They expect the European Union to be pragmatic in implementing the CAP and to give access to any innovation that will enable it to produce more and better.

At their General Assembly, the CEPM representatives expressed their full support for the Ukrainian people and farmers who have been deeply affected by three months of uninterrupted conflict and the uncertainty of its outcome.

In a context where Ukraine is not able to supply the EU, the European maize area is estimated to be reduced by 2% to 9 million hectares compared to 9.25 million in 2021. The drought situation observed in all countries and the rise in the price of production factors (energy and fertilisers) are worrying producers and markets. The CEPM directors also expressed their deep concern about their downstream partners, who are struggling to bear the cost of grain and to pass it on to the other links in the chain, right down to the already economically weakened consumer.

The CAP must take this into account

CEPM affirms the need to defend the political compromise of 25 June 2021 on the main elements of the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the essential preservation of maize in the national strategic plans currently under discussion with the European Commission. CEPM supports all the demands made by several Member States to "produce more and better", starting with the derogation on set-aside and the adaptation of crop rotation.

As a renewable alternative to fossil fuels, bioethanol helps to decarbonise petrol while providing a protein-rich feed that is useful for livestock. CEPM calls for the maintenance of the value-creating bioethanol sector by introducing, in the revision of RED2, a 7% ceiling for first-generation biofuels, to be shared at EU level.

CEPM supports the EU's ambition for biomethane and maize must have its place as an intermediate crop. These intermediate crops must be considered as having no impact on the demand for land in order to remove the obstacle to their contribution.

The CEPM also supports the desire to promote carbon farming, and the remuneration of farmers for their climate-friendly actions. In particular, the maize plant makes it possible to produce while emitting less greenhouse gas, but also to mobilise its extraordinary potential to store more carbon in the soil.

Indispensable factors of production

If European maize is a solution to the food, energy and climate challenges, access to production factors and innovations is essential and must be promoted. New breeding techniques are particularly promising, especially in terms of drought tolerance. It is urgent that the European Union rapidly adopts pragmatic regulations that are compatible with the ambitious deployment of these technologies.

CEPM President Daniel Peyraube said: "As maize growers, we have a responsibility to contribute even more to feeding a world under pressure and to participate in Europe's energy supply. Thanks to the advantages of the maize plant, this effort is compatible with the fight against global warming. Food, energy, climate: maize has the answers!"

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