

## Summary of online webinar on The Role of Agriculture and Forestry in the EU Climate Law, 10 June 2020

Hosted by AGRI opinion rapporteur Asger Christensen (Renew Europe – Denmark), in collaboration with the farming organisations of Sweden (LRF), Finland (MTK), Denmark (DAFC) and Ireland (IFA).

On June 10<sup>th</sup> the four agricultural organisations, representing Denmark (DAFC), Finland (MTK), Ireland (IFA), and Sweden (LRF), organised an online webinar with the European Parliament ENVI and AGRI committees, on agriculture and forestry's role in the EU Climate Law; Opinions were shared and issues highlighted by various representatives from the European Parliament (MEP's), the Commission, farmers, and civil society stakeholders.

The dairy farmer and rapporteur of AGRI-opinion on the Climate law, **Asger Christensen** (Renew Europe - Denmark), emphasized that the webinar was an opportunity to receive and share important inputs from important stakeholders – The farming community was ready for change; The agriculture and forestry sectors wanted to contribute to the Green Deal and thus deliver positive results on climate and biodiversity; these sectors would play an important role for EU sustainable development, the Danish MEP emphasized. As AGRI-rapporteur on the Climate Law, Christensen stressed that the law needed to further **policy coherence** across all Green Deal initiatives, and for **all Member States** to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. Moreover, Christensen emphasized that the **Article 2.1.b of the Paris Agreement** should be fully included in the European Climate Law; There was a need for high ambitions within the EU, and in relation to that the farmers role should be recognized. In this respect, it was paramount to have a separate focus on **removals** EU Climate Policy; a ton of carbon taken out of the atmosphere had a different and higher value than a ton of carbon not emitted, Christensen said, who in his opinion has called for the possibility of a separate trading scheme for removals to be explored ahead of ETS reform. Furthermore, to reach the ambitious climate goals, farmers and forest owners depend on **innovation**, Christensen emphasised, whilst also making the case for **climate efficient farming** methods and the efforts of front runners to be properly valorised.

The shadow rapporteur on the Climate Law in the ENVI committee, Mairead **McGuinness** (EPP – Ireland), said she hoped to learn from participants in the event with practical experience; Climate neutrality was the overall goal towards which, the EU Climate Law should lead the way. However, it was important to determine role of different sectors within the law, and to enable farmers to contribute there was a **need for more clarity on how emission levels from agriculture** was calculated, expressed McGuinness – In the Climate Law proposal from the Commission it was stated that agriculture was responsible for app. 10% of all emissions too which a large part originated from livestock production; that had led to a larger discussion on herd-numbers and size; McGuinness called for a more **scientific approach** regarding emission levels from different greenhouse gasses, and how to mitigate such emissions. Another important aspect in that regard was the need for a clearer understanding of how to implement climate measures; EU agriculture was a proud sector, McGuinness pointed out, to which it was emphasized that a **dialogue** was needed to shed light on how to develop production methods in line with climate politics; “You should never tell farmers what to do” McGuinness said - The destination was climate neutrality to which, one needed to find a way to support and guide a sustainable approach, McGuinness said, underlining the need for **Article 2 1b of the Paris Agreement** to be fully included in the Climate Law. **All Member States** should contribute and reach climate neutrality by 2050, however, it was also important to remember that all Member States had different starting points.

The shadow rapporteur on the Climate Law in the ENVI committee, **Nils Torvalds** (Renew Europe - Finland), agreed with McGuinness that the differences of sectors and Member States varying situations should be recognised – The approach of **'one size fits all' was not applicable**, Torvalds stressed. Ever since the Lisbon Treaty, politics had become more and more complex; The more complex politics became, the harder it was to fulfil and implement, Torvalds emphasized, to which, the Parliament did not always realize the pros and cons related to a specific policy; The Member States influence needed to be upheld in the policy making, and the balance maintained, said Torvalds, since decisions regarding the Green Deal and thus the Climate Law would effect EU for the next 30 years. Trust was the key if EU wanted Member States to invest in a green future, and a **dialogue** was necessary to conclude the right decision on such an important topic, Torvalds emphasised.

The Finish arable farmer and moderator of the event, **Max Shulman**, then introduced the purpose of debating the agriculture and forestry's role in the EU Climate law. The three MEPs had set the scene for a further discussion on the topic; The Commission and European farmers where invited to share their takes on the debate; Shulman later concluded that the Climate Law was not just an EU action; it would affect the whole world; It was a big effort, which needed to be done in a short amount of time.

**Artur Runge-Metzger**, director in DG CLIMA, European Commission, spoke about the Climate Law as a means to modernise the EU to which the Commission had considered the different sectors' role and opportunities to contribute to climate neutrality during the course of the next decades; **Livestock production** was the most challenging sector within agriculture, Runge-Metzger said, with a view to balancing emissions and **removals**. The so-called negative emissions had a bad sound to them, Runge-Metzger said, which in his opinion was unjust; negative emissions were in fact removals, which was a highly positive measure, and a future certification system related to carbon removals was to be expected in the coming years. However, such a system should first be tested through pilot studies. The proposed new **Eco Schemes in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)**, Runge-Metzger argued, served as a possible means of payment by society for such removals by means of nature-based solutions. - Efficient climate solutions would not build on national restrictions, Metzger stressed; However, flexibility was needed to be accessible at national levels.

From stakeholders and farmers, the debate had a far reach; **Liisa Pietola** (Finland), Director of Environmental Affairs, MTK, argued that it was strategically important for the EU to include and support farmers when mitigating climate change. Agriculture and forestry were the first sectors that were influenced by climate change and thus, the Climate law should be a platform from where farmers could contribute with e.g. **nature based solutions**, whilst at the same time securing that carbon leakage was avoided; **Tobias Gräs** (Denmark), Senior Policy Advisor, DAFC agreed that nature based solutions should be sufficiently valorised and, as the Christensen report on the Climate Law emphasized, it was important, including in future ETS reform, to consider the increasing societal demand for **removals**, sparked by the climate neutrality objective in the Climate Law, as opposed to traditional emissions reductions. It was paramount for farmers and cooperatives that there were business opportunities and incentives related to carbon farming, since nature-based solutions had a cost and did not come for cheap. Likewise, **Tim Cullinan** (Ireland), IFA President stressed that farm scale renewable-projects should be recognized, e.g. carbon sequestered in forestry. Furthermore, the new EU budget proposal was not adequate to support development on farm-level; the CAP contributions needed to be increased to pay for the increased demands on farmers, Cullinan stressed. The farmer, **Lennart Nilsson** (Sweden), LRF highlighted that there were differences in production methods and climate footprints within agriculture in the EU; Nilsson used his own grazing beef cattle as a positive example – However, improved breeding

techniques, technology and innovation could help improve production methods even more, the Nilsson said. Farmers welcomed the Climate Law, since farmers were the first to feel the consequences of climate change; However, whilst farmers the ones with the solutions, society too had to support farmers in this endeavour.

MEP **Pernille Weiss** (EPP - Denmark) put emphasis on the need to prevent **first movers** from being punished; the Green Deal was a platform to deliver on climate action and thus innovative front runners should not be punished for their positive contributions towards a joint EU goal. **Nils Meyer-Ohlendorf**, Ecologic Institute, Berlin, Head of International and European Governance, emphasised the importance of **removals** and the need to correctly quantify these.

**Max Shulman** concluded that changes required investments and thus there should be **incentives** to continue the sustainable development of agriculture and forestry in Europe. An important aspect of the webinar was that **first movers** should not be punished. However, politics were changing fast, Shulman emphasized, which previously had meant that farmers and forest owners long-term investments were not suitable for the continuously changing policies. Thus, policies should be based on science, Shulman concluded. It was important to find the right path for everyone and ensure an income – The farmers were ready for change and could deliver nature-based solutions such as **removals**. Yet their mission needed to be clear; with such clarity, long termed investments would be easier.