European Economic and Social Committee

NAT/384
The link between climate change and agriculture

Brussels, 9 July 2008

OPINION

of the
European Economic and Social Committee
on
The link between climate change and agriculture at European level
(exploratory opinion)

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On 25 October 2007 the French Presidency of the Council wrote to the European Economic and Social Committee under Article 262 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, to request an exploratory opinion on

The link between climate change and agriculture at European level.

The Section for Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment, which was responsible for preparing the Committee's work on the subject, adopted its opinion on 4 June 2008. The rapporteur was Mr Ribbe and the co-rapporteur was Mr Wilms.

At its 446th plenary session, held on 9 and 10 July 2008 (meeting of 9 July), the European Economic and Social Committee adopted the following opinion by 94 votes to 30 with 13 abstentions.

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1. Summary of EESC conclusions and recommendations

1.1 The EESC was requested to draw up an exploratory opinion on *The link between climate change and agriculture at European level* by a letter from the French presidency of 25 October 2007. The Committee was specifically asked to discuss biofuels issues.

1.2 The EESC is extremely concerned by the negative effects of climate change on European agriculture and consequently on economic performance in many rural areas. Southern Europe is likely to be particularly hard-hit, in view of the expected long periods of drought and even water scarcity. At worst, these problems could result in total cessation of agricultural activities. However, farmers will also face serious problems in other parts of Europe due to climate change, for example in the form of major disruption to seasonal rainfall patterns. In addition, there is a risk of problems arising from new or more widespread plant diseases and pests.

1.3 Politicians must therefore act swiftly and incorporate climate policy into other policy areas.

1.4 Agriculture is not only a victim of climate change, but also contributes to greenhouse gas emissions; the main impact comes from emissions not of CO_2, but of methane and nitrous oxide resulting from changes in land use and agricultural production itself. The EESC urges the Commission to conduct a more detailed analysis of differences between various types of agricultural land use in terms of climate impact, so that policy options can be developed, for example in relation to support for farmers. In this context, it welcomes the Commission's declaration of its intention to integrate climate protection more closely into the future common agricultural policy.

1.5 Agriculture can significantly contribute to combating climate change, for example by ensuring that the remaining carbon sinks in soils are not only retained but also developed through systematic use of compost, by reducing energy consumption and by producing biomass for energy needs using environmental methods.

1.6 The EESC does not feel that the EU's emerging future biofuel strategy, which according to Commission statements will to a large extent involve imports of agricultural raw materials, is the right way to achieve climate change targets in an economically efficient way while creating new jobs in farming and generating additional revenue. Rather, a judicious new biomass strategy should be drawn up to replace the biofuel strategy; instead of focussing on imports, this would aim to substantially increase the conversion of agricultural by-products/waste into useable energy, and give farmers an active role in newly reorganised decentralised energy cycles.

2. Main elements and context of the opinion

2.1 Agriculture is probably the economic sector which is most strongly dependent on natural (including climate) conditions, and which uses, influences or changes them to the largest extent.

2.2 It is based on systematic use of the photosynthetic capabilities of plants to convert solar energy into energy that can be used by humans in the form of food or fodder. In addition, energy captured by photosynthesis has always been used for heating purposes (e.g. biomass in the form of wood).

2.3 Climate conditions, which have mainly been favourable for agriculture in Europe up till now, are a decisive factor reflected in the highly varied structures and diversity of European farming. What this means is that any change in conditions must affect agriculture and the associated environmental, economic and social regional structures.

3. General observations

Agriculture as a victim of climate change

3.1 Climate changes, in particular the predicted rise in temperature and, to an even greater extent, changes in the amount of rainfall, will have a devastating effect on agriculture in some parts of Europe. Especially in southern Europe, long periods without rain, or even droughts, and the resulting potential desertification could make agricultural production impossible. In addition to this, large-scale fires are a very serious threat to agricultural land[1]. Rural economies in such areas are seriously threatened. All scientific studies suggest that climate change will have an

1 e.g. fires in Greece in 2007 which destroyed olive plantations, among other things.

impact on pests and diseases, which will significantly reduce yields on the main food crops. Changes in the life cycle of pathogens will give rise to:

– changes in the geographical distribution of pathogens,
– changes in the incidence and severity of diseases,
– changes in the disease control strategy.

3.2 In this context, the EESC would refer to the Commission's various publications and initiatives on this subject, such as the communication on *Addressing the challenge of water scarcity and droughts in the European Union*[2] and the ideas and plans which it describes, the Green Paper on *Adapting to climate change in Europe*; indeed, the Commission has emphasised that there is a need to develop coherent land-use strategies. In addition, there are activities in progress in many countries.

3.3 Most Europeans and indeed political decision-makers are probably unable to imagine what would happen if, for example, farming had to be abandoned across large areas of southern Europe due to insufficient water supplies and extreme temperature conditions. This would also have negative repercussions for employment in the regions concerned owing to changes in land use.

3.4 The EESC therefore calls on all decision-makers to do everything they can to contain the negative impact on agriculture through a comprehensive and radical climate protection programme. It also essential that measures be taken to adapt agricultural activity to climate change. The agricultural sector will have to adapt efficiently and rapidly to future climate changes, since the success or failure of these measures will determine whether farming can continue.

3.4.1 According to the most recent OECD and FAO report, research and innovation must be key factors in combating climate change. Among the adaptation activities to be carried out, consideration should be given to promoting new plant species and varieties better adapted to climate change. Especially relevant here are advances in the improvement of plant and animal material.

The contribution of agriculture to climate change

3.5 For the EESC, it is necessary not only to discuss the negative repercussions of climate change for agriculture, but also to keep in mind that agriculture itself contributes to climate change and to take steps to reduce the climate-harming effects of agriculture. It is also important to take into account the various ways in which agriculture can help to combat climate change.

2 COM(2007) 414 final , 18.7.2007, EESC opinion CESE 988/2008 adopted on 29 May 2008..

3.6 The Committee therefore appreciates that the Commission has identified climate policy as one of four new challenges for the CAP in its communication on the CAP Health Check[3].

3.7 Based on the IPCC definition, emissions originating directly from agriculture account for 10-12% of total emissions. Altogether, it is estimated that agriculture contributes between 8.5-16.5 billion tonnes of CO_2e to global emissions of greenhouse gases[4], i.e. 17-32% of the total[5].

3.8 For Europe, the share of agriculture in greenhouse gas emissions is estimated to be much less than the corresponding figure for global emissions. The Commission mentions a figure of 9%, based on the methods of calculation used by the IPCC. Since 1990 agriculture in the EU-27 has cut emissions by 20%, and the EU-15 by 11%[6]. However, IPCC calculation methods do not take into account greenhouse gas emissions resulting from changes to land use, energy used to produce fertilisers and plant protection products, or tractor fuel. Thus, whereas e.g. the Commission puts the contribution of farming to German emissions at 6%, the German federal government has produced an estimate of 11-15%, taking into account all emissions resulting from agriculture.

The various implications of agricultural greenhouse gases

3.9 Agriculture only accounts for a small proportion of net CO_2 emissions. The main reason for this is that plants initially absorb CO_2 and convert it into organic matter. When biomass is used, the carbon which has been temporarily absorbed is released again as CO_2. Hence, the carbon cycle is to a large extent closed.

3.10 According to the Fourth Assessment Report by the IPCC[7], the main climate policy concern in agriculture should be methane and nitrous oxide emissions. In Europe, around 40% of total CH_4 and N_2O emissions originate from agriculture, and it is these greenhouse gases which have a particularly strong impact on climate; the global warming potentials of nitrous oxide and methane are about 296 and 23 times respectively that of CO_2.

3.11 There are basically four aspects of agriculture which are of particular relevance to climate change:

a) conversion of woodlands, peat bogs, wetlands or grassland into arable farmland,

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3 COM(2007) 722 final.

4 CO_2e = carbon dioxide equivalent.

5 Cool Farming: Climate impacts of agriculture and mitigation potential, Study by Greenpeace, December 2007.

6 Source: European Environment Agency, EEA Report 5/2007.

7 IPCC WG III Chapter 8 (2007), Agriculture.

b) greenhouse gas emissions from cultivated land and livestock,
c) energy use in farms and in upstream and downstream sectors, for example in the form of fuel, and energy used in the manufacture of chemical fertilisers, pesticides and other products[8], and
d) production of biomass for energy.

3.12 Overall, conversion of hitherto uncultivated areas to agricultural use is of by far the greatest importance, and is a far greater cause of greenhouse gases than agricultural production and energy use. Every time that arable fields are created, greenhouse gases are released, as arable land stores the lowest average amount of carbon dioxide in its soil, except for deserts, semideserts and built-up areas[9].

3.13 The debate on the destruction of rainforests in the Amazon Basin or Indonesia is therefore seen as being of fundamental importance. The EESC would point out that Europe and European agriculture have something to do with large-scale deforestation in those parts of the world[10].

Changes in land use/carbon sinks

3.14 One major problem is that large areas of land are built on and hence lost to agricultural production and as carbon sinks. The EESC is disappointed that the planned directive on soil protection, which could make a substantial contribution here, has not yet been adopted.

3.15 Climate policy is concerned with six main carbon sinks[11]. Of these, surface biomass and soils are of the most relevance to agriculture. Given that agriculture is based on annual harvests of the biomass which it produces, it does not create any new relevant surface carbon sinks in the form of biomass.

3.16 As a result of converting woodland, peat bogs and grassland into arable farmland, carbon stored in the soil is released. Hence, it is important for European farming that areas which still retain large reserves of carbon are preserved. To this end, incentives must be developed through appropriate support instruments to encourage the right farming methods.

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8 Including fodder.

9 Soils are the second-largest stores of carbon dioxide, after the seas. The EESC is aware that the there are some quite major discrepancies in figures from different sources, but the following are some statistics: arable land contains about 60 tonnes of carbon dioxide per hectare, grassland and woodland soils contain twice as much (in woodlands, additional carbon dioxide is also stored in trees), and a hectare of moorland can store up to 1 600 tonnes of carbon dioxide.

10 For example, production of soya as fodder for European livestock and palm or jatropha oil production for energy purposes ("bio" fuels).

11 Oil, coal and gas reserves, surface biomass, carbon stored in soils, and oceans.

3.17 Based on our current knowledge, climate change alone is sufficient reason to impose an immediate ban on conversion of peat bogs and woodland.

3.18 Over the past few decades in Europe, there has been large-scale conversion of grassland into arable land; despite various restrictions[12], this process is not yet over, and is indeed regaining momentum in some regions due to increased energy farming.

3.19 The reason for increased conversion of grassland to arable land is that farmers' profit margins on arable land are significantly higher. Using land for grazing is more labour-intensive, and grass alone is no longer sufficient to enable cattle to achieve the "desired" high yields. Livestock is therefore dependent on energy feedstuffs, production of which requires a significantly higher energy input.

3.20 The EESC will play close attention to how environmental and agricultural policies deal with this situation, for example in the context of legislative proposals relating to the CAP Health Check. The Committee calls for an intensive debate on ways of making land use which is climate-friendly and compatible with nature conservation economically attractive to farmers once again.

Greenhouse gases from agricultural production

3.20.1 The use of nitrogen fertilisers of both synthetic and organic origin is the main culprit for emissions of nitrous oxide. Whenever there is intensive use of nitrogen fertilisers, there is always a risk of plants not being able to absorb them quickly or fully enough, thus releasing nitrous oxide into the atmosphere. Up until now, environmental policy was mainly concerned with the resulting pollution of ground and surface water, but now climate change is an additional reason for a more critical look at nutrient cycles.

3.20.2 In a study on nitrous oxide emissions, climate researcher Professor Crutzen analysed nitrous oxide emissions in the production chain from rape to biodiesel[13], and reached the conclusion that in certain conditions rape methyl ester can have a more harmful effect on climate than diesel from crude oil, precisely because of its high nitrous oxide emissions resulting from the use of chemical fertilisers.

3.20.3 Another source of agricultural nitrous oxide emissions, which is less significant in quantitative terms, is the decomposition of organic matter in soils, particularly in arable farming.

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12 Such as cross-compliance criteria.

13 "N_2O release from agro-biofuel production negates global warming reduction by replacing fossil fuels", in: Atmos. Chem. Phys. Discuss., 7, 11191–11205, 2007.

3.20.4 Most agricultural methane emissions in Europe are caused by ruminant livestock, and cattle in particular. The EESC is aware that methane emissions from ruminant animals are of growing international importance[14], and that at global level the problem will become more serious as numbers of cattle rise. It is true that cattle stocks in Europe have decreased over the last few years[15], but it should also be borne in mind that Europe is a net importer in this field.

3.21 Eating meat has an impact on climate. Around 10 plant-derived calories are needed to produce one animal-derived calorie. Rising consumption of meat requires increased cultivation of fodder, which in turn requires more energy and increases the pressure for higher yields from agricultural land. With relatively high levels of meat consumption, Europe imports a large part of its fodder requirements, cultivation of which is often responsible for very serious problems (e.g. soya in the Amazon Basin). The EESC is therefore in favour of framing and implementing a European strategy on proteins.

3.22 Not only the volume of meat produced but also livestock farming methods are relevant here. For example, meat and milk may derive from energy-extensive pasture farming, with cows using grassland – whose importance for climate protection has been underestimated – during the growing season. However, meat and milk also originate from energy-intensive farms which do not use grassland and in which cattle are mainly fed corn silage or other energy-rich arable fodder crops.

Energy use in agriculture

3.23 The advantage of agriculture is that it directly converts solar energy into useable crop-based energy; however, the greater the input of energy from fossil fuels into the production process, and the fewer plant products which are consumed directly by people and instead are "upgraded" to animal products, the less significant this advantage becomes.

3.24 Whereas organic farms refrain from using industrially manufactured, water-soluble chemical fertilisers and plant protection products, for example, the energy consumption and climate impact of conventional farming is exacerbated by the use of such substances.

3.24.1 Some comparative studies of agricultural performance in terms of general energy and materials consumption, as well as carbon sequestration, show that average energy and nitrogen inputs are less for organic farming than conventional agriculture. Even if the higher yields of conventional agriculture are taken into account, the global warming potential of

14 Around 3.3 billion tons CO_2e/ year.

15 Global cattle stocks: 1 297 million head of cattle (in 1990), 1 339 million (2004), EU (25): 111.2 million (in 1990), 86.4 million (2004), China: 79.5 million (in 1990), 106.5 million (in 2004).

organic farming is less[16]. This is, for example, why the German federal government considers support for organic farming as a contribution to climate protection[17].

3.24.2 Some other studies have reached different conclusions.

3.25 Therefore, information on certain aspects of the problem is still sparse and contradictory; partly in view of this, the EESC urges the Commission to conduct a detailed analysis of how the various forms of agricultural and non-agricultural land use differ in terms of climate impact, so that policy options can then be developed, for example in the field of support for farmers.

Contribution of agriculture to solving climate change problems

3.26 Thus agriculture can contribute in many different ways to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from current levels. This includes things like not converting forest, moorland, wetlands and grassland into arable land, and reducing nitrous oxide and methane emissions through sustainable land management and if possible long-term land cover (catch crop cultivation), multiple crop rotation (e.g. to minimise pest problems), appropriate fertiliser use, etc.

3.27 For a long time, energy inputs were not really regarded as problematic, especially as energy was available very cheaply. The EESC sees an urgent need to focus more in the future on particularly energy-efficient forms of management and to promote these. Organic farming and so-called low-input production (e.g. extensive pasturing) can make a contribution here.

3.28 Experiments in the field of so-called mixed cultivation have produced promising results. For instance, different types of crop are cultivated in the same field with pulses and oil plants, which means less use of fertilisers and pesticides, as well as increased biodiversity and promotion of compost.

3.29 Compost use is crucially important for climate change. In future, there should be more of a focus on achieving the most stable and highest compost content on agricultural land in particular, which often necessitates changes in crop rotation. The EESC calls on the Commission to evaluate studies available jointly with research institutes in the Member States and if necessary to commission further studies, in order to seek and support optimum procedures.

16 For example, see the feature on "Klimaschutz und Öko-Landbau" (Climate protection and organic farming) in: Ökologie & Landbau, 1/ 2008.

17 The federal government's reply to the parliamentary question put by the BÜNDNIS 90/ Die Grünen Group on "agriculture and climate protection", Parliamentary Paper 16/ 5346, paragraph 13.

3.30 This also means considering the importance should be given to solid dung use. It must also be clarified whether whole-plant utilisation, as planned for second-generation biofuels, might not undermine the objectives of humus creation.

4. Bioenergy/biofuels from agriculture

4.1 The French presidency has requested the EESC to look at the subject of biofuels in conjunction with this opinion. Obviously, the Committee is happy to oblige, but would also refer to its existing opinions on the subject[18] setting out in detail its critical position on the current biofuels strategy.

4.2 Given the high CO_2 emissions of coal, oil and gas, thought is rightly being given to using more energy produced directly by plants The EESC has on several occasions essentially approved the use of bioenergy, but would like to point out some basic principles that it considers indispensable.

4.2.1 The EESC stresses that the right to adequate food is explicitly recognised as an important part of the broader human rights. The production of basic foodstuffs has to take priority over energy production.

4.2.2 It is also important that no land should be used for growing energy crops that is currently either a major carbon sink or of key importance for biodiversity. The EESC is pleased that the Commission has acknowledged the need for energy crops to be subject to sustainability criteria. The EESC's opinion on the proposed directive on renewable energies will include a detailed discussion of whether the directive's sustainability criteria are sufficient or not. The EESC is in favour of applying appropriate sustainability criteria to fuels in general, irrespective of where they come from, as well as to animal feed.

4.2.3 Using agricultural waste products and, for example, biomass from landscape management provides high energy potential in Europe, but this is only being harnessed to a limited extent because specialised (i.e. more energy-intensive) cultivation of energy crops is more cost-effective. Assistance policy has so far sent out the wrong signals here.

4.2.4 When using bioenergy, it is important to ensure maximum efficiency. For example, there is no point in making biogas from maize produced by energy-intensive cultivation if the heat produced through electricity generation cannot be sold, as in this case about two thirds of the energy actually produced is immediately lost again.

4.2.5 Current production of energy crops often requires an initial high energy input, and the resulting plants or oils must undergo further energy-intensive industrial processing. This leads

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18 OJ C 44, 16.2..2008, p. 34, and opinion TEN 338 on the proposal for a directive on renewable energy (COM(2008)019), under preparation.

to poor or even negative net energy and climate balances of many biofuels that can be ruinous.

4.2.6 For this reason the Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) was doubtful in its study *Biofuels in the European Context* about the possibility of achieving even the Commission's own goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by having a 10% share of biofuels in the energy mix. Other studies[19] have come to the same conclusion.

4.2.7 The JRC study also raises a crucial point, which the EESC believes must become a principle of policy-making. The biomass produced should be used where it is most needed. The watchword is "efficiency"[20]. Why should the molecular structures of energy-intensive crops be changed by industrial processing, if they can be used to produce energy directly? The JRC notes that stationary heating and power generation uses as much oil as diesel vehicle engines in the EU. If energy crops were used here, 1 MJ of biomass could replace about 0.95 MJ of fossil fuel. But 1 MJ of biomass replaces only about 0.35 to 0.45 MJ of crude oil when used in the transport sector.

4.2.8 However, greenhouse gas emissions from the transport sector can be reduced by using electric vehicles running on energy produced by the burning of biomass.

4.3 In its opinion *Energy mix in transport*[21] the EESC notes that the internal combustion engine will be replaced by electric traction in the transport sector. It makes no sense to manage crop-based energy as inefficiently as is the case now for biofuels.

4.4 A comparative study carried out by Empa[22] calculated that for a VW Golf to go 10 000 km using biodiesel, rape would have to be cultivated over an area of 2 062 square metres. By contrast, solar cells could produce the energy needed for a journey of 10 000 km on an area of 37 m^2, which is around 1/60th of the area required with rape.

4.5 It must also be questioned whether it is worth refining plant oils for use in internal combustion engines. Why are engines not adapted to the plant oils' molecular structure? Engines have already been developed, e.g. for tractors and trucks, that can run on pure plant oil and meet all the emissions limits set and planned by the EU. More support is needed for such innovations.

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19 e.g. that of the Scientific Advisory Board of the German Federal Ministry for Agriculture.

20 OJ C 162, 25.6.2008, p.72

21 OJ C 162, 25.6.2008, p.52

22 Empa is a research institute for materials science and technology belonging to the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) in Zurich.

4.6 The oils required for such engines can be cultivated in a mixture with other crops, processed in the region, and used locally. This means that farmers could, with environment- and climate-friendly low-input processes, not only produce their own motive power, but also initiate new, regional energy cycles. This would bypass energy-intensive further industrial processing.

4.7 The EESC therefore feels that what Europe needs is not so much a simple biofuels strategy as a well-thought-out European biomass strategy; this could be far more climate-friendly and productive of new jobs than the currently emerging biofuels strategy, which is likely to rely heavily on imports of energy crops.

5. New jobs with climate-friendly agriculture and agricultural policy

5.1 It is true that climate change is threatening agriculture in parts of Europe, but at the same time it can also represent an opportunity for agriculture and for Europe's workforce, if agriculture is serious enough about its role in relation to the new trends in climate policy and promotes that role.

5.2 Agriculture remains an important source of employment in the European Union. One Commission communication contains a detailed discussion of employment trends in rural areas[23]. It points out that despite being a relatively small employer, agriculture is very important in rural areas. The Commission expects jobs in agriculture (full-time equivalents) to decrease from the current 10 million by 4-6 million.

5.3 At the same time, a shortage of skilled labour is forecast for many European countries, especially of workers who are able to take up leadership roles or operate complex technology. In addition, shortages of skilled labour are aggravated by the fact that existing jobs are unattractive. The Committee has already explicitly commented on this development and pointed out that a discussion of job quality is necessary[24].

Job-creating potential of bioenergy

5.4 The potential for environment friendly production of biomass for energy in Europe was investigated in a 2006 report carried out by the European Environment Agency. If biomass from waste (e.g. household waste) and forestry is included, 15-16% of estimated primary energy needs of the EU-25 could be produced in this way in 2030. This could guarantee or even create 500 000 to 600 000 jobs in rural areas.

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23 COM(2006) 857 final, *Employment in rural areas: closing the jobs gap.*

24 OJ C 120, 16.5.2008, p. 25

5.5 Whether bioenergy creates new jobs and if so, how many, closely depends on the strategy adopted. The Scientific Advisory Board of the German Federal Ministry for Agriculture forecasts that the most beneficial effect in terms of climate protection and job creation will be achieved if the focus is on "producing bioenergy in heat-led cogeneration systems or heating systems based on woodchips or on biogas derived from liquid manure and waste materials". However, if support for bioenergy means a shift from livestock farming or, as current trends suggest, a reliance on imported biofuels, the employment impact on rural areas will be negative.

5.6 Examples of successful transition to closed-loop bioenergy systems show certain types of bioenergy production to be economically, environmentally and socially advantageous, for both agriculture and regional labour markets. (The municipalities of Mureck and Güssing (both in Austria) as well as Jühnde (Germany) have achieved renewable energy supply levels of up to 170%). This impressive environmental performance is accompanied by a positive impact on the local labour market (local crafts), without even counting jobs for farmers delivering raw material[25].

5.7 Since income and wealth differentials between urban and rural areas can be expected to widen further, particular attention must be paid to rural areas in employment policy. Sustainable production of energy crops and their conversion into energy can secure and create jobs in rural areas, if value added then remains in the region.

Guaranteeing high-quality jobs in agriculture

5.8 The goal of climate protection can be achieved only with the help of skilled labour. Businesses must provide the right training framework for them to achieve this.

Setting and guaranteeing social standards

5.9 It is generally assumed that demand for imported biomass from developing countries and emerging economies will increase further. In this situation, potential cost advantages must not be used if that means destroying the environmental and social fabric in producer countries. The production of bioenergy must therefore comply with the ILO Core Labour Standards and its employment protection standards[26].

Involvement of workers and trade unions

5.10 Structural change in agriculture will have a considerable impact on the quality of jobs and incomes. Workers and trade unions must therefore participate in this process of change. Since

25 For more information, see www.seeg.at.

26 http://www.ilo.org/global/What_we_do/InternationalLabourStandards/lang--en/index.htm.

models of worker involvement vary widely within Europe, more consideration must be given to the participation concerns of agricultural workers within the current European and national structures. This is particularly important because these forms of communication and idea-sharing can protect and preserve jobs.

5.11 The European social dialogue committee for agriculture, which was set up in 1999, is a representative grouping of social partners for questions of employment and future development of the new role of agriculture, serving as a qualified expert and advisory body. The EESC recommends that the Commission strengthen the role of this body, not least in relation to climate policy. As experts on climate-related issues in agriculture, the social partners should have more say at national level on the committees that monitor the development of rural areas.

Brussels, 9 July 2008.

The President of the European Economic and Social Committee	The Secretary-General of the European Economic and Social Committee
Dimitris Dimitriadis	Patrick Venturini