

The future of the EU sugar regime questioned

In its Communication to the Council of July, 14th, 2004, the European Commission proposes a reform of the sugar market organization.

We ask the member States to review this proposal thoroughly because it will lead to the liquidation of European producers for the sole benefit of the sugar using companies.

The Commission says that the reform will benefit to the consumers and taxpayers, whereas everything points to the opposite.

As for the expected benefits for the producers in poor countries (least developed countries, ACP countries), they could turn out to be a real loss.

A decrease of the sugar production is desirable if, contrary to the Commission's plans, it mainly concerns the exports and if it is negotiated with the interests of a maximum number of producers in mind, to the benefit of a sustainable model of agriculture.

● ● ● Our option for reform

Among the options proposed by the European Commission, the only option envisaged initially that has not been proposed is "coming back to fixed quotas", while this very proposal is the one that meets the principles mentioned on the right handside. Adopting this option means a return to a level of fixed quota, which also means to limit all the imports, including those from the LDCs, in order to achieve a certain balance on the European market.

However, this option, which would involve reverting to the original CMO, needs to be improved by taking the following measures :

- Elimination of direct and indirect export subsidies that cause dumping, including those financed by the producers themselves.
- Gradually end systematic exports (sugar outside the quota structurally produced and exported) of European surpluses, by reducing and regulating global production by means of supply management instruments.
- Proposing voluntary reductions of sugar production quotas at the national level, through a buy back of quotas organized by the Commission on the strict conditions of inter-trade agreement (inter-professional agreements).

Who are we ?

Our platforms are national, and composed of five "families" of stakeholders: farmers unions, consumers associations, development NGOs, workers unions and environmental organizations. These platforms exist in various EU countries, and our network, to date, consists in particular of eight platforms from France, Belgium, Austria, the Netherlands, Italy and Spain (see below the list of organizations). These platforms bring together more than 150 civil society organizations.

The common sugar market organization reform we want

It is useful to state here the principles on which we found our choices and which tend to reconcile the aspirations of the parties concerned: producers, consumers, environmentalists, taxpayers, and producers in developing countries. We thus stress the importance of a transparent and inclusive consultation process.

- This buy back should compensate the beet producers, and give the sugar industries the financial means to upgrade the factories with respect to the environment and to re-employ the workers.

- Transfer the reductions of sugar beet production quotas to other productions, in particular to vegetable oil and protein products for which the European Union has a large deficit.

● Considering the possibilities of using sugar beets for ethanol production, taking into account the environmental balance, the necessity of paying a remunerative price to sugar beet producers and to distribute this production in favour of family agriculture.

● Improving, if necessary, the distribution of the sugar production among producers, according to procedures agreed nationally, in order to promote sustainable family agriculture.

● Improving the distribution of the contingents conceded to the ACP countries based on social and environmental criteria.

● Allowing the LDC countries access in order to allow them to benefit from the internal European price, based on the respect of social and environmental criteria. It is particularly necessary to check the fair distribution of production among producers, the respect of the fundamental rights of the sugarcane workers and the payment of a worthy salary for their work.

● Creating an atmosphere of dialogue with the civil society and the social partners concerning the social responsibility of European companies, especially as regards their decisions to delocalize to developing countries. In this dialogue, the specific interests of the regions should be taken into account .

(1) Food Sovereignty is the right of peoples, communities, and countries to define their own agricultural, labor, fishing, food and land policies which are ecologically, socially, economically and culturally appropriate to their unique circumstances. It includes the true right to food and to produce food, which means that all people have the right to safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food and to food-producing resources and the ability to sustain themselves and their societies.

(2) This principle is currently being endorsed.

According to us, a new CAP should respect each of the following principles, jointly :

1. Respect for human rights and food sovereignty. (1)

2. Food and agriculture products are no mere merchandise. The market should be regulated and subjected to the principles mentioned below.

3. Maintaining socially, economically and ecologically sustainable family farming in all the European regions.

4. Promoting ecologically, economically and socially sustainable systems of production that produce healthy food and respect animal welfare.

5. Remunerative farm prices that cover all production costs and ensure a fair income to farmers.

6. A CAP based on adequate supply management tools to meet internal demand for basic products and to end dumping practices.

7. Favouring regional and local markets. In a new CAP the principle of community preference should apply to products under a supply management regime; the regional level is adequate for establishing agricultural policies in general.

8. Solidarity with farmers within and outside the EU: rejection of dumping practices and maintenance the principle of preferential agreements for imports from developing countries in a way that respects their sustainable development. Dumping could be reduced greatly by prohibiting all direct and indirect export subsidies and by ending damaging food aid practices.

9. An underlying principle for the points mentioned above is the equal right to access to natural resources such as the soil, water and seeds. Because GMOs would not allow to guarantee this right, we are opposed to their introduction. (2)

● ● ● Instruments

Choosing this option involves maintaining and improving a series of instruments that should be implemented both within and outside the EU :

- A system of production quota with the possibility to transfer the bonus malus to the following year.
- A system of guaranteed prices.
- EU sugar production plus preferential imports should not exceed domestic consumption in the EU
- Import quotas at a European price level (their distribution should favor the family producers of the ACP, LDCs and other countries that benefit from agreements with the EU), depending on social and environmental criteria.
- A sufficiently high level of tariffs to guarantee remunerative prices, both for European production and for preferential imports
- Alternatives to sugar exports, such as production of oil and protein seeds and the development of bio-ethanol processing (as additional methods of supply management and of stabilization of the international markets). However, the production aimed at industrial use should be subjected to the same environmental standards as used in food production.
- An International agreement to regulate international sugar markets.
- Sustainable production methods such as crop rotation, respecting water resources and other good agricultural practices ⁽³⁾
- Implement guarantees of the rights of workers in the sugar industry, in the EU and in other exporting countries
- In the framework of the development policy, support production diversification for strongly dependent countries and support the respect of social and environmental criteria.

● ● ● Composition of the European CAP Platforms

FRANCE : Plate-forme pour des agricultures durables et solidaires

Coordination Sud - Comité Catholique contre la Faim et pour le Développement (CCFD) - Comité Français pour la Solidarité Internationale (CFSI) - Centre de Recherche et d'Information pour le Développement (CRID) - Groupe de Recherche et d'Echanges Technologiques (GRET) - Fédération Artisans du Monde - Agir ici - Réseau Foi et Justice Afrique Europe - Afrique Verte - Vétérinaires Sans Frontières-Centre International de Coopération Agricole (CICDA) - Max Havelaar France - Peuples Solidaires - Solidarité - Confédération Paysanne - Chrétiens dans le Monde Rural (CMR) - Mouvement Rural de Jeunesse Chrétienne (MRJC) - Association de Formation et d'Information pour le développement des Initiatives Rurales (AFIP) - Réseau Agriculture Durable - 4D (Dossiers et Débats pour le Développement Durable) - Les Amis de la Terre - Réseau Action Climat France - Réseau Cohérence - Confédération Syndicale des Familles - Alliance Paysans Ecologistes Consommateurs - A l'écoute de la nature - Accueil Paysan - Adéquations - Action Consommation - Action Information Ecologie 17 - Association pour un contrat mondial de l'eau - ATTAC - CEIPAL - Collectif Saône Doubs Vivant - Femmes et changements - Fondation France Libertés - Forum des Organisations de Solidarité Internationale Issues des Migrations (FORIM) - Initiative de Développement Stratégique - Institut de Recherche et d'Application des Méthodes de Développement (IRAM) - Mouvement National de Lutte pour l'Environnement - Mouvement pour les Droits et le Respect des Générations Futures - Rapsode

(3) We refer to good agricultural practices as defined by the FAO in its guidelines...

BELGIUM :

Plate-forme pour la Souveraineté Alimentaire

Action chrétienne rurale des femmes (ACRF) - Apiculture sans frontières - AVES - Centre d'études et de formation en écologie - Comité pour des accords de pêche équitables (CAPE) - Confédération belge des betteraviers - Conseil de la jeunesse catholique (CJC) - Centre national de coopération au développement (CNCD) - Collectif Stratégie Alimentaire (CSA) - Collectif d'échanges pour la technologie appropriée (COTA) - Entraide et fraternité - Foodfirst information and action network (FIAN) - Front uni des jeunes agriculteurs (FUJA) - Fédération des jeunes agriculteurs (FJA) - Fédération Wallonne de l'agriculture (FWA) - Guide nature - Institut d'éco-conseil - Inter environnement wallonie - Jeunesse et écologie - Les amis de la terre - Le monde selon les femmes - Ligue royale belge pour la protection des oiseaux (LRBPO) - Magasins du monde-Oxfam - MAP - Max Havelaar - Miel Maya - Mouvement chrétien pour la paix (MCP) - Nature et progrès - Oxfam-Solidarité - Pesticides Action Network (PAN) - Petit pas - Peuples solidaires - Réseau Foi et Justice Afrique Europe (AEFJN) - Réseaux des consommateurs responsables (RCR) - Solidarité Socialiste FCD - Sorghal - SOS-FAIM - SOS-pro gentibus (SOS-PG) - Vétérinaires sans frontières (VSF) - Vie féminine - Vredeseilanden

Plate-forme flamande pour la souveraineté alimentaire

Vredeseilanden - FIAN Belgium - Wervel - Oxfam-Solidariteit - Oxfam Wereldwinkels - Vereniging voor Ecologische Leef- en Teeltwijzen (VELT) - Voor Moeder Aarde - 11.11.11

AUSTRIA : Agrarbündnis Österreich

AGEZ (Arbeitsgemeinschaft EntwicklungsZusammenarbeit) - Arche Noah - ARGE Schöpfungsverantwortung - ATTAC Österreich - Bio Ernte Austria - DemeterBund Österreich - die Umweltberatung Österreich - EVI St.Pölten - FIAN Österreich - FreundInnen der Bundesanstalt für Bergbauernfragen - Klimabündnis NÖ und Kärnten - ÖIG (Österr. Interessengemeinschaft für die Biologische Landwirtschaft) - Ökologie und Lebensstil - Ökowitz / Informationsservice - Österreichische Bergbauern und Bergbäuerinnen Vereinigung - Österreichischer Unabhängiger Bauernverband - SOL / Menschen für Solidarität - Südwind - WWOOF (We're Welcome on Organic Farms)

THE NETHERLANDS : Platform ander landbouwbeleid (PAL)

Platform Aarde Boer Consument -Nederlandse Akkerbouwvakbond (NAV) - Nederlandse Melkveehouders Vakbond (NMV) - Nederlands Agrarisch Jongeren Kontakt (NAJK) - Kritisch Landbouw Beraad (KLB) - Werkgroep Landbouw en Armoede (WLA) - Stichting Handen af van Melkleasen (SHAfM) - Steunpunt Landelijke Boerinnenbelangen (LBB) - Vereniging voor Biologisch-Dynamische Landbouw en Voeding (BD-vereniging) - Stichting Aarde - Goede Waar en Co - Milieudefensie/ Friends of the Earth Netherlands - FairFood - Novib / Oxfam Netherlands - Stichting Duurzame Solidariteit - XminY solidariteitsfonds - Afrika-Europa Network

SPAIN : La Plataforma Rural

Amigos de la Tierra - Cáritas Española - CAS (Colectivos de Acción Solidaria) - CAS (Colectivos de Acción Solidaria) - CECU (Confederación de Española de Consumidores y Usuarios) - CERAI - Ciconia - COAG (coordinadora de Organizaciones Agrarias y Ganaderas) - COCEDER (Confederación de Centros de Desarrollo Rural) - Coordinadora Catalana de Comercio Justo - Ecologistas en Acción - Entrepueblos - Movimiento de Jóvenes Rurales Cristianos (MIJARC) - Movimiento Rural Cristiano (FIMARC) - SEAE (Sociedad Española de Agricultura Ecológica) - SL (Sindicato Labrego) - SOC (Sindicato de Obreros del Campo) - Sodepaz-Sodepau - Veterinarios Sin Fronteras

ITALY : Campagna italiana per la sovranità alimentare

ACLI (Associazioni Cristiane Lavoratori Italiani) - AIAB (Associazione Italiana per l'Agricoltura Biologica) - ARCI (Associazione Ricreativa Culturale Italiana) - ARI (Associazione Rurale Italiana) - CDG (Consiglio dei Diritti Genetici) - FLAI-CGIL (Federazione Lavoratori Agro-Industria - Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro) - FAI-CISL (Federazione Agricola alimentare ambientale industriale -Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori) - UILA-UIL (Unione Italiana Lavoratori Agroalimentari - Unione Italiana Lavoratori) - CIC (Centro Internazionale Crocevia) - Legambiente - Volontari del mondo - FOCSIV (Federazione Organismi Cristiani Servizio - Internazionale Volontario)