

The future of the CAP: Commissioner Ciolos visits Malta and meets rural stakeholders

The Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs had the exclusive opportunity to host a one-day visit of the European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Dacian Ciolos on 28th October 2011.



As Commissioner Ciolos highlighted, such a visit came at a turning point in one of the most important and widely debated policies of the European Union: the Common Agricultural Policy. Ongoing efforts exist to make the CAP more aware of the new realities, the diversity of farming, different climates and overall rural development needs across Europe.

It is within this specific scope that a need was felt to discuss the potential impacts of the CAP reform proposals on the Maltese farming community. High-level officials from the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs and stakeholders from the various sectors of agriculture actively participated in the discussions during a meeting organised by the National Rural Network Malta which falls under the cap of the Managing Authority, Rural Development.



Through the newly proposed CAP reform, the European Commission aims to instil a new partnership between Europe and farmers, including Maltese ones. Whereas productivity and product quality need to improve, these objectives must be achieved with fewer resources and in a more environmentally-friendly manner to adapt and mitigate the impacts of climate change. This secures the long-term sustainability of the agricultural sector. Moreover, the CAP 2014-2020 aims to further support the development of shorter supply chains between producers and consumers with mutual benefits.

To address the demographic challenge in Malta, that of having a significant number of farmers over 65 years, the CAP post 2013 proposes a targeted aid to incentivise young farmers.

In essence, the vitality of the National Rural Network has been re-inforced throughout the discussions in Malta, particularly for bolstering innovation in agriculture and rural development. Indeed, the Commissioner hinted that in the next programming period, the National Rural Network will be further strengthened.

Throughout the visit in Malta, Commissioner Ciolos visited a number of agricultural holdings which benefited through the measures within the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013.

These include;

- i) a visit to a pig farm in Żebbuġ



ii) a visit to an innovative cow farm in San Gwann



iii) a visit to an agricultural holding in Kercem and the Magro Brothers Factory in Xewkija, Gozo which is a leading company in the processing of tomatoes.



In the Maltese context, the CAP must continue integrating our unique characteristics, needs and limitations, particularly in terms of the specific area, water and soil limitations. Malta sees the role of CAP post 2013 as being ever more strongly oriented towards strengthening the bond between agricultural activity and environmental challenges.

Just like in other Member States, there are ongoing negotiations in Malta on how the CAP can help improve the farmer's ability to supply food by ensuring an adequate level of income support. It would be highly beneficial for Maltese farmers if the investment under rural development is matched by a similarly effective level of direct support towards the various sectors of agriculture.