

Position statement with regards to EC proposals for a *future CAP*

AUGUST 2018

Key points

- PURPLE welcomes the overarching objectives of the November 2017 European Commission *Proposals on the Future of Food and Farming* and subsequent Proposals in calling for **CAP simplification, modernisation, greater accountability** with regard to the achievement of those objectives, and in looking to make a more explicit contribution to the EU's broader commitments in terms of climate change and SDGs
- At the same time, it notes with some dismay **the strong focus in the Commission documents on food and farming (pillar 1) to the detriment of rural development more broadly (pillar 2)**¹. The absence of the broader rural - and peri-urban - dimension comes as a disappointment in the face of previous assurances that broader rural development would be fully integrated into any future CAP. The agricultural sector should be viewed in the context of place, not vice versa, PURPLE would argue
- PURPLE applauds recognition of the need to better link rural areas (however inadequately defined) and the agricultural sector with **human capital development and R&D** for innovation as set out at Page 11 of the original Communication, but notes with disappointment that much of that same section of the report goes on to concern itself solely with farmers and agriculture
- More broadly, PURPLE notes with concern **the lack of any meaningful territorial dimension** to what is contained in the proposals. Nowhere is it acknowledged that rural areas exist in anything other than isolation from peri-urban or urban areas. Indeed the words "urban" and "peri-urban" do not appear anywhere in the text of the Communication and the phrase "rural-urban links" or similar is regrettably wholly absent
- One key plank of the Proposals is the need to modernise CAP – that can only happen in the context of an accurate understanding of current **territorial reality**, that reality goes well beyond what a "rural-only" analysis can capture. It needs to take explicit account of the peri-urban where urban and rural co-exist and to recognise the hugely complex web of everyday relations between urban and rural areas
- All references to the **Cork 2.0 Declaration** of 2016 are welcome but we read these as arms length reportage and the endorsement level remains unclear

¹ As the initial Communication points out the majority of EU citizens live in rural and intermediate areas and these serve as "major bases for employment, recreation and tourism" (page 3). Yet, thereafter, the broader interests of this majority of the EU populace are very much subjugated to those of the agricultural sector

- Phrases like “the wider rural context” appear in the texts but PURPLE notes at the same time the regrettable **absence of explicit reference to a “Rural Agenda” (or alternative term)** within the framework of which a broader and more balanced focus upon current and future challenges and opportunities for peri-urban and rural areas might be achieved. In light of that, PURPLE wonders how helpful the “rural lens” will be as part of what appears a territory-blind process
- PURPLE warmly **welcomes the reference to “rural-proofing”** in line with the Cork 2.0 Declaration but at the same time wonders how this is to be implemented in practice without a broader territorial context
- In particular, there is a **lack of focus on the interests of small businesses** – and again – especially on those not engaged in the agricultural sector. This is a bizarre omission in light of the Commission’s own calls for greater coherence with other policy areas
- There is also a regrettable **lack of cross-reference and hence coherence with other instruments such as the 7th (and potential 8th) Environmental Action Programme** – this is an unpromising approach to take to achieving the sort of “integration with other policy areas” which the proposals aspire to
- PURPLE has concerns that much of what is portrayed as simplification is in reality a proposed **shift towards greater subsidiarity at the national level and beyond**. Our concern is that rather than simplifying the process it will rather shift the complexity from one level and set of organisations to another
- As might be expected from a network comprising regional and local authorities, PURPLE supports the proposed shift of management to the Member State level with the strong caveat that **decision making should happen at the sub-national level as much as well as at the national one where this will result in better local implementation**
- At the same time PURPLE wants to emphasise that the national level **“CAP strategic plans”** will only ensure the sort of “coherence with other policies” which is being sought, if it is recognised that such plans are not only about preserving “... a functioning agricultural internal market” as the Commission documents infer
- Such plans should be clearly **based on a genuinely broad and deep understanding of places and their economic, environmental and social characteristics**. That in turn implied a multi-dimensional joined-up approach at both policy and programme levels
- In that particular context, PURPLE calls for the **implications of the uncoupling of EAFRD and the Common Provisions Regulation to be very carefully considered** and provided for so that there is no negative impact upon funding beneficiaries as we fear will inevitably be the case if such a separation takes place
- That development (**separation of EAFRD and CPR**) runs strictly counter to the stated aims of strengthening the socio-economic fabric of rural areas and is to be deplored as is any measure that hinders a more coherent set of funding arrangements at the local level. It is especially surprising in the context of the statement on Page 20 of the Proposals that “The CAP is one of several EU policies that contribute to prosperous rural areas and it must improve its complementarity with other EU policies such as Cohesion Policy - which also provides substantial EU funding in rural areas”