

PURPLE and CAP reform

Position paper

The vital role of peri urban regions

The Peri Urban Regions Platform, PURPLE, calls upon the European Union institutions and the Member States to fully recognise the importance of peri urban regions. The urban pressure felt by all peri urban regions in the European Union constitutes sufficient reason on its own to justify a special position in policy, in any policy at all levels. However, to consider peri urban regions merely as areas under urban pressure would not do justice to the vital role peri urban areas play as interfaces between the urban and the rural world; they have a crucial position in bringing these worlds together. In this sense peri urban regions can usually be characterised by their duality: on the one hand a high dynamic as a result from the pressure from the nearby cities while on the other hand representing valuable qualities of the countryside with their open spaces, attractive landscapes, bio diversity and rural communities. Agriculture also still plays a major part, on the one hand representing highly modern and efficient sectors producing for world markets, while other sectors fulfil a crucial role in maintaining the landscape and offering products and services for the nearby city population.

This duality also implies that peri urban regions more often than not are facing a continuous struggle to find a balance between the needs and wishes of the cities and preserving and reinforcing the multi-functional qualities of the countryside, its agriculture and the socio-economic vitality of its rural communities. The intermediate position therefore offers both challenges and opportunities.

A new vision is needed that better includes the role of peri urban regions

PURPLE feels that both these challenges and opportunities are insufficiently met in current policy. This is also true for the Common Agricultural Policy, considering that peri urban regions play a vital role in planning and managing the transition towards multi-functional land use and a sustainable and competitive agriculture.

In this light PURPLE welcomes the European Union's initiative to organise a mid-term review of the latest reform of the CAP. This offers an opportunity to evaluate if and to what extent the CAP is contributing to strengthen agriculture and rural communities in peri urban areas. There is, however, reason for some caution, since the last reform is still in the process of implementation, implying that the effects of this reform will not be visible throughout.

Nonetheless, PURPLE feels, based on an internal assessment and consultation that there is a need for a clearer vision on the future of European agriculture and countryside. Rather than looking back, PURPLE urges the Commission to develop a coherent long term vision for the future, now lacking, in which there will be a specific attention for peri urban regions, their challenges and their opportunities. Both the Mid Term Review and new proposals to reform the CAP post 2013 should be viewed in the light of this vision.

Basic principles for a new vision and a new policy

Such a vision should be founded on a number of principles that together constitute the basis of a future CAP:

1. A Common Agricultural Policy will remain necessary and must be maintained after 2013;
2. The challenges European agriculture and European countryside are facing and the products and services, both private and public, they have to provide for are manifold and certainly not of lesser importance than those of the last decades. The budget for the CAP, both Pillar I and II, should therefore be based on these challenges;
3. The future CAP should have more coherence with the Goteborg and Lisbon Agenda
4. The CAP should set common rules for all of the EU, but should also leave enough room for specific national and regional ambitions.
5. The political and societal legitimacy of the CAP will largely depend on the way and extent in which CAP support will contribute to the realisation of goals concerning:
 - the transition towards an economical, environmental and socially sustainable agriculture and towards competitive holdings
 - supporting the development of all types of agriculture respectful of the environment
 - providing the highest standards in food quality
 - respecting animal welfare
 - combating climate change and increasing the production of renewable energy
 - the improvement of public health, both through food and on farm health care
 - the preservation of vulnerable agro-ecosystems and valuable landscapes by farmers and other land owners, working together with rural entrepreneurs and institutions
 - the protection of these agro-ecosystems, landscapes and bio diversity against urban sprawl and infrastructures.
 - the support of the socio-economic vitality of rural areas
 - improving innovation in and development of new products and services that respond to the needs of the urban population such as health care and leisure
 - the improvement of water management and encouraging a more efficient water use; the preservation of the quality of water resources through preventive measures.
6. These goals and objectives should be founded on the notion of the multifunctional role of agriculture, the multifunctional role of rural areas and specifically on the role of peri-urban regions in relation to the nearby urban environment;
7. Support should not only be based on historic entitlements but also on output criteria related to the societal legitimacy and the objectives as mentioned under point 5.

Current issues to be addressed by the European Commission on short term

Based on these principles PURPLE urges the European Commission to urgently address the following issues:

- **Peri urban areas indispensable for competitive urban development**
For urban regions to become and/or stay competitive and innovative, awareness must be raised that an attractive peri urban environment is an indispensable amenity in urban development strategies to attract business and skilled work force. From the rural perspective this means that the CAP should offer more room to include the urban environment in rural development plans. Specifically the Leader approach should offer more opportunities to come to integrated urban-rural development strategies. This means that within the framework of Rural Development Plans and Local Action Plans investments in the urban environment are also eligible for support.
- **More emphasis on Pillar II**
In most cases, contrary to original objectives, budget for Rural Developments has been reduced. Specifically for peri urban regions this means that they have less means to encourage rural development, to protect its qualities from urban pressure and to preserve its diversity in landscapes and bio diversity and to promote its culture and culinary diversity. It also implies that there is less budget to promote and support the agricultural sector to become more competitive. PURPLE therefore strongly urges the Commission to convince to enlarge the budgets for Pillar II, also to promote innovation and increase competitiveness of the agricultural sector.
- **More protection of diversity**
One of the main characteristics of rural Europe is its rich diversity, both naturally and culturally. This same is true for peri urban regions. United as they are in their intermediate position between urban and rural areas, they also represent a large variety in landscapes, culture and localised food production system. This still existing diversity should be valued more strongly and utilised as assets in developing integrated rural development strategies.
- **Peri urban regions can contribute to combating climate change**
Large scale production of bio energy crops, generally, does not offer an economically valid option for most peri urban regions, as a result of the higher land prices. Peri urban regions, however, can contribute to the goals to reduce CO₂ emissions in a numerous of other ways, by maintaining open spaces and agricultural use, by reforestation programmes, processing of bio mass and promotion of the localisation of quality production and consumption to reduce food miles
- **More attention on installation of young farmers.**
The farming community is ageing rapidly and the number of young farmers is decreasing. Although this phenomenon can be witnessed all over Europe, this is especially critical in peri-urban areas where instalment cost are higher because of high land prices and where there is a larger offer in alternative employment. Young farmers are key for the future of agriculture and are key to make the transition towards a sustainable, multifunctional and competitive agriculture. Policy should not only be aimed at offering young farmers assistance in taking over or starting a farming business, but also at presenting farming and farm work as an attractive career opportunity. Increased support should be based

however on business plans, showing the farmer's willingness and capacities to become competitive and sustainable.

- **More policy room for payment of green and blue agricultural services based on market prices**

There is a greater need for protection and maintenance of valuable landscapes, eco systems and bio diversity, especially in peri urban areas where these qualities are under constant threat from urban pressure. There is at the same time a greater potential to organise protection and maintenance of these public goods in the form of so called green (landscape, eco systems, bio diversity) and blue (management of water quantity and quality) services offered by farmers and other land owners. Payment, both public and private, for these services should no longer be based on compensating land owners for production losses, but on real market prices

- **More attention to health**

Health problems, problems of overweight and obesitas resulting from bad diets and poor nutrition are rapidly increasing, especially among the young. If these problems are not addressed urgently and sufficiently, they will have severe implications for public health and for public health care budgets. Since these problems are most felt in cities, peri urban regions offer excellent opportunities to help address these problems by offering local, fresh and healthy food to urban consumers. This means that the Commission should create more room for public bodies, such as schools and hospitals to cater their food locally. Healthy diets and lifestyles can also be encouraged through awareness programmes in which the urban population, especially school children can be introduced to food production. By making peri urban regions more accessible to the urban population for recreational purposes, would offer possibilities to encourage people to become more active

- **More emphasis on the Leader approach**

Over the last 1.5 decade the Leader approach has proven its value in rural development by encouraging private and public cooperation and cross-sectoral cooperation. The Leader approach also has shown to be an excellent tool in facilitating innovation. Originally introduced as an instrument for rural development in less favoured areas, under the Leader+ programme it has also shown to have an added value in most peri urban regions. Nonetheless we feel that the Leader approach is embraced only half heartedly by Member States, spurred by the realisation that in most cases budgets for Rural Development have declined rather than increased. Raising the budget for Pillar II would offer more room to implement the Leader approach on a wider scale for those Member States and regions willing to do so.