

GPP INITIATIVES IN THE SPANISH SENATE AIMED AT IMPROVING THE CAP

The People's Parliamentary Group in the Spanish Senate is and will continue to be the voice and defender of Spanish farmers and stockbreeders. We consider agriculture to be a strategic sector that provides food security in Europe. The COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine reminded EU citizens that we cannot always take food security for granted. We stand for multifunctional agriculture, supported by our Common Agricultural Policy and focused primarily on farms across Europe. Our party represents a sustainable, forward-looking, innovative and competitive sector that produces safe, high-quality food in sufficient quantities and uses, as far as possible, sustainable energy, as guaranteed by the Renewable Energy Directive (RED), while responding to societal challenges and concerns about the environment, climate change and animal welfare.

A strong CAP that takes into account the following issues is necessary for our sector to continue in this direction:

1. We will need a stronger CAP to ensure European and international food security. We know that a strong CAP, endowed with the necessary budget, plays a key role in ensuring the sustainability of European agriculture from economic, environmental and social perspectives, while guaranteeing a decent income for farmers.
2. Support measures for young farmers are necessary, as generational renewal must take priority in order to maintain farming activity, which guarantees food security and life in the rural world. Measures to support women in agriculture are also essential for this, as well as for ensuring generational renewal and preventing land abandonment. In line with the EU's long-term vision for rural areas, we support the rural world with a view to it becoming an inclusive, resilient and well-connected area offering safe and high quality products and services to society at large.

3. The current CAP and its National Strategic Plan imposed by the Spanish Minister of Agriculture, Planas, imposes more environmental requirements, which lead to higher production costs, reduced production and a massive increase in paperwork. These environmental measures need to be made more flexible, especially if we take into account the climatic and agronomic diversity of the Iberian Peninsula.
4. We are in favour of the environment and of reducing inputs in agriculture such as plant protection products and fertilisers, but this is not the time to jeopardise food security in Europe. We therefore reject the proposal on the sustainable use of pesticides, as the chosen reduction targets are simply not feasible, and the proposal does not offer viable alternatives to farmers.
5. We also reject the proposed Nature Restoration Act. In too many regions or Member States, the implementation of existing nature legislation has led to a bureaucratic nightmare and a planning stalemate, jeopardising economic viability in rural areas, food security, renewable energy production, crucial infrastructure, etc. The Commission should first help Member States to overcome this impasse as a matter of urgency. Moreover, its retroactive application is a direct assault on private property rights. And we strongly reject its aim to take 10% of farmland out of production, as this would be irresponsible in the current context. Furthermore, we believe that the existing derogations to CAP cross-compliance should be extended to allow more land to be used for productive purposes to address potential shortfalls.
6. We call for a huge package of investment in research and innovation, which will be the only way to achieve a more sustainable and resilient agricultural sector. We see great potential, for example, in the use of new plant breeding techniques to develop more resilient plants that require less pesticides, less fertiliser and less water. We demand a new legislative framework to ensure that this innovative technology can be used in the EU, which would also stimulate research, investment and employment.

The benefits and risks of these techniques, in addition to their sound scientific basis, must be assessed in a transparent manner.

7. We also see great potential for farmers to diversify their income and deliver environmental benefits through voluntary, market-based carbon farming. We are committed to ensuring that such schemes are supported by as little paperwork as possible for farmers.
8. Climate change is causing severe droughts in Spain, so it is important for the CAP to have lines of support that contribute to more and better water storage and more efficient water use.
9. We strongly support traditional farming and stockbreeding, recognising its role in the conservation of biodiversity and the maintenance of agricultural activity throughout Europe. We therefore stress the urgent need to ensure that farming and tourism remain possible in these areas in the light of the challenges posed by a growing population of large carnivores. It is time for a balanced approach in which the protection status of the wolf is reconsidered.
10. Farmers and stockbreeders still fail to receive a fair share of the value chain. Measures need to be put in place to ensure that they can earn a decent income, building on the work we have done on the CAP and on the adoption of a directive aimed at eradicating unfair trading practices in the food supply chain.
11. The agricultural sector demands equal treatment with third countries and considers it essential that the same requirements are imposed on these third countries as on those producing within the European Union in terms of the use of plant protection products, working conditions and border controls. It is essential for border controls to be stepped up in order to ensure equal treatment.

12. It would also be interesting to review trade agreements with third countries to ensure that our farmers and stockbreeders are not at a disadvantage and are not used as a bargaining chip.

13. The European Green Pact is implementing measures that will lead to less production and this is a mistake because agricultural policy should be aimed at guaranteeing European food sovereignty, something that we in the PP are strongly defending. That is why we must provide our farmers and stockbreeders with more protection so that they can comply with food security, both in terms of quantity and quality, for Spanish and European citizens.