

Summary report of the 6th meeting of the Agricultural Markets Task Force on 15 September 2016 – Climate change – challenges and opportunities for farmers¹

The meeting featured three presentations that explained the links between climate change, the respective framework of governance in the EU and agriculture.

Mr Soussana, director at INRA², gave a [presentation](#) entitled "Climate change and agriculture: from challenges to solutions". He concluded that climate smart agriculture, combining mitigation of and resilience to climate change, is urgently needed in Europe and elsewhere. Dedicated policies were required. The advantage of sequestration over emission reduction approaches lay in the neutral impact of sequestration on the food production potential. However, the current EU policy framework may limit the options for developing carbon sequestration. In the ensuing discussion Soil Organic Carbon (SOC) accounting so as to enable a result-based policy was seen as a key challenge. It needed to be accurate and cost-effective at the same time.

Mr Lesschen, researcher at Wageningen University³, gave a presentation entitled "[Soil Organic Carbon \(SOC\) sequestration potential in EU agriculture and the future CAP](#)". The policy goal should be to convert the current negative SOC balance in agriculture to a net sequestration on arable land (incl. organic soils). Farmers should be rewarded for carbon storage in their soils, e.g. through specific payments under a post 2020 CAP. However, the SOC sequestration potential was relatively low in EU compared to other world regions.

Ms Singla (APAD⁴) presented the practical advantages and consequences of conservation agriculture (no till, permanent soil cover, diversified rotation). She underscored that conservation agriculture worked everywhere and that it augmented the quality of the soil and of yields. It thus reduced costs for fertiliser and machines.

The ensuing discussion highlighted the interest in more data and pilot projects and the need to consider cost-effective ways of monitoring and measuring outcomes of climate-smart measures like carbon sequestration in agricultural soils. Current agricultural policy measures sometimes faced criticism concerning their actual effect on the desirable environmental benefits (better targeting was desirable). While not immediately operational such empirical data should be built up in time so as to be able to underpin tomorrow's policy. While no panacea, measures that remunerate farmers for building up SOC could be contemplated as part of a policy depending ultimately on the carbon price. Agriculture could become part of the solution.

A presentation by a representative of the European Commission explained the **European Innovation Partnership (EIP) and Horizon 2020** and emphasised the strategic approach to EU agricultural research and innovation also in areas that could be interesting for the climate change agenda. Under Horizon 2020, funds were available for research concerning "Food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry, marine and maritime research and the bio-economy". The useful role programmes like EIP play at the level of bringing together various actors and stakeholders was commended by the members of the TF and the positive potential of policy measures concerning innovation and competitiveness of farmers were underscored. At the same time, it was stressed that too much administrative obstacles to access such programmes and projects were having a dampening effect on actual participation by farmers.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/agri-markets-task-force/meetings/index_en.htm

² <http://www.inra.fr/en>

³ <https://www.wur.nl/en/Expertise-Services/Research-Institutes/Environmental-Research.htm>

⁴ <http://www.apad.asso.fr/>

A presentation given by Mr Beulin from Copa/Cogeca asked whether today's CAP policy mix was still in line with the increasing challenges the EU's agriculture faces. Workable tools for farmers needed to be in place to protect farmers against the contingencies due to events beyond farmers' control such as climate change or price volatility due to globalisation.