The CAP after 2013: the ideas of the regions count

European regional and local authorities participate in 11 networks or organisations involved in the EU debate on the future of the CAP. They have decided to join forces under the umbrella of an informal platform called **Agriregio**, in which a total of 425 regions are represented, 302 of those belonging to the EU.

**Organisations:**

- European Association of Elected Representatives from Mountain Regions (AEEM) - [www.promontaem.net](http://www.promontaem.net)
- Assembly of European Regions (AER) - [www.aer.eu](http://www.aer.eu)
- Fruit, Vegetable and Horticultural European Regions Assembly (AREFLH) - [www.areflh.org](http://www.areflh.org)
- European Association of Geographical Indications (AREPO) – [www.arepoquality.eu](http://www.arepoquality.eu)
- Assembly of European Wine Regions (AREV) - [www.arev.org](http://www.arev.org)
- Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) - [www.ccre.org](http://www.ccre.org)
- Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR) - [www.crpm.org](http://www.crpm.org)
- Conference of Presidents of the Outermost Regions
- GMO Free - [www.gmo-free-regions.org](http://www.gmo-free-regions.org)
- Peri-urban Regions Platform Europe (PURPLE) - [www.purple-eu.org](http://www.purple-eu.org)
- RUR@CT - [www.ruract.eu](http://www.ruract.eu)

**Agriregio**’s members each have their own priorities. Some are sector-based organisations bringing together regions producing one type of product, for whom maintaining a common market organisation is essential.

Others represent certain types of territory, either in terms of geography or topography. Others are more broad-based and focus on the governance of public policies. Some are united around other characteristics and a number of them respond to several of these criteria. **However, all these organisations are seizing the opportunity of the run-up to the forthcoming CAP reform to deliver together the following messages.**
Europe needs a common agricultural policy that enhances the value of each of its territories

Rural areas make up an essential component of the European Union and play a part in its cultural identity. Over 90% of the European territory is rural and home to 50% of the population. Agriculture occupies almost 50% of Europe’s territory and plays a key role in its economy by providing direct employment to some 30 million people in full or part time jobs.

The Common Agricultural Policy has primarily contributed towards introducing and maintaining a diversified European agricultural model based on an innovative agri-food industry, ensuring the production of sufficient amounts of varied, high-quality food. This model takes into consideration the environment and regional management in order to foster a populated and active rural community connected with the rest of society.

European agriculture and livestock farming are characterised by a wide diversity in production as well as in the structure and size of farms, and shape a specific and original agrarian model. These characteristics might penalise the commercial competitiveness of European products, but they also generate social and economic values, i.e. job creation, environmental protection and a balanced distribution of population across the territory.

In a world with a growing population, the CAP must at least ensure Europe’s food security, while also playing its role in feeding the world’s populations.

This could be achieved by fostering a sustainable and competitive agriculture throughout the European territory and especially in regions that are less favoured where farmers’ incomes are irregular and often insufficient without public support.

In other words, the CAP should play an essential role in regional development. In many territories agriculture is an efficient and sustainable way to maintain the landscape and services. Territories without a farming industry are territories that go into decline, where the landscapes lose their attractiveness, and where maintenance costs to avoid the loss of biodiversity and the occurrence of natural disasters are borne entirely by civil society. The intervention of the CAP to maintain, or even develop a viable agricultural business is surely less costly for citizens than the costs incurred if the farming industry is lost.

The CAP should also support agriculture in productive territories, which are vital for ensuring food security, but where the demands of sustainability imply additional costs that non European producers do not have to bear. Furthermore, enhancing historic landscapes and farm buildings can be a profitable source of economic diversification, both for farmers as well as for other actors in rural territories.

This is one of the challenges of the forthcoming reform: to apply to the CAP the principle of territorial cohesion introduced in the Lisbon Treaty.
The CAP must support high-quality and geographical indication products

Another challenge for European agriculture in a context of global competition is to defend the quality of agri-food products, especially those linked to a geographic origin. The European Union must defend its production both within and outside its borders, notably with regard to the WTO.

There are many factors that determine the quality of products and their renown among consumers. These include not only their intrinsic qualities (taste being one of them), but also their geographic origin and farming practices that are respectful of the environment, farm animals and social rules.

Geographical indication products are the only economic productions that cannot be relocated and which are able to attract processing activities that create jobs in rural areas.

With the European Commission’s reform process on quality policy under way, Agriregio is calling for EU legislative proposals to strengthen the position of high-quality and geographical indication products as instruments of competitiveness. A low carbon footprint could also be part of the “quality profile” of these products, especially in the context of the fight against climate change.

Moreover it is essential that EU rules allow capital gain to be shared more evenly between actors in the food chain and especially in favour of front end agriculture in the face of the excessive share taken up by big supermarket chains.

Citizens expect the regions to have shared leadership in delivering the CAP

It would not make sense to talk about territories, geographical indication products, geographic handicaps or territorial cohesion without referring to the public authorities responsible for the smooth and sustainable development of the agricultural sector at regional and local level.

Of course regionalisation processes vary in terms of their state of advancement in the 27 EU Member States, but this cannot be used as an argument to keep the regions out of the European decisions that concern them. EU cohesion policy is being shaped together with the regions and that is one of the reasons for its success.

Agriregio is calling for high-level dialogue between regional and local government and the EU institutions on the future of the CAP and is willing and prepared to organise this. This could take different forms (technical meetings, annual conference, etc.), but should not be limited simply to participating (and not always systematically besides) as stakeholders in advisory groups to the European Commission. The Belgian Presidency of the EU in the second half of 2010 constitutes an opportunity to promote this principle.

While they intend to take part in the European debate, the regions must also be able to have a say in the choices to be made at regional level for delivering the CAP. Agriregio belongs to the school of thought that no longer recognises historic references as an exclusive basis for calculating direct aid for farmers in the medium term. The amount of direct subsidies should be the subject of debates open to new allocation criteria, and Agriregio members are taking part in these, each with their own vision. However, together they stress the need for the overhauled EAGF (or instrument that will succeed it) to be flexible enough to allow each Region to use it to support the development of its own agri-food strategy. A peri-urban region, a mountain region, an outermost and/or island region, a “mass tourism”
region and a maritime region all have different assets and limitations. The EU can provide assistance for rural development (cf. point below) but it must also help rural areas by making the first pillar of the CAP more flexible and adaptable.

**Rural development should be a task for the regions**

Although the involvement of regions in the first pillar is limited at present, this is less true in the case of rural development. They are already involved in the rural strands of programmes supported by the ERDF and – in regionalised States – in programmes supported by the EAFRD (second pillar of the CAP).

The simultaneous overhaul of cohesion policy and the CAP, and the review of corresponding regulations for after 2013 provide the opportunity to streamline EU instruments designed to aid rural development.

Agriregio’s members are taking part in these preliminary discussions and are developing useful contacts with the institutions. **They will take action together to ensure that the future regulations providing a framework for rural development establish the regional sphere as the level for programming and cooperation between sectoral or local approaches, and rightfully include the regional or, where appropriate, the local authorities in the governance thereof.**

**The future CAP can be more competitive thanks to the regions**

In the preparation of the future CAP, the regions have a certain number of demands that we have set out above. They also have extensive means of action to help agriculture meet the technical challenges that lie ahead, i.e. improving productivity and quality, better use of water resources, protecting soils and guaranteeing biodiversity.

**Agriregio** members agree to put together their thoughts and views in three particular areas where regional and local authorities have responsibility and resources. These are:

- Agricultural and agronomic practical and field oriented research, already organised into European networks where regional institutes occupy a specific place;
- Training of farmers and promoting the agricultural sector for young employees, areas where there needs to be stronger European networking;
- Short distribution circuits (regional/local) where experience and knowhow deserve to be pooled within a transnational framework.