"Development of the agri-food sector and employment"

Contributions from the Workers' Group
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1. The EESC welcomes the communication of the European Commission on a European Innovation Partnership (EIP) on Water, but would suggest clarifications and improvements to help eliminate obstacles to the proper development of innovation in the water sector.

2. Innovation for water in Europe should be based on an integral approach that takes account of the entire water cycle, the priority being to achieve “good status of surface water and groundwater” throughout Europe as set out in the European Water Framework Directive, and should also focus on improving the protection of this resource by applying the "polluter pays" principle, which should be dissuasive enough not to encourage pollution or offer immunity to those obliged to pay.

3. The Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP) of EIP priorities needs to address the fact that over one million people in Europe have no access to safe, clean and affordable water, and that several million have no sanitation. The needs of these people are a priority, in terms of inclusion and combating poverty.

4. Public water service providers, users and consumers must be given a strong voice in the decision-making process on the EIP on water. The EIP on water must also bring about an improvement in coordination between all operators, ensure that the benefits of innovation reach the local level and facilitate the involvement of civil society organisations in any new networks and groups that are created.

5. The EESC believes that the results of research financed for the water innovation partnerships by the 7th European Framework Programme for research and technological development must be made available in a transparent form, given how vital water is for people.

6. The EESC advises against dealing with innovations in this sensitive area exclusively from the trade protection viewpoint and recommends making them easily accessible to authorities, public bodies, local and regional authorities and companies in the social economy.

7. The EESC urges the Commission to step up its efforts to ensure transparency of and coordination between certain ongoing key initiatives to address the complex issue of water. For example, the Commission needs to be more specific on the synergies and joint functioning of the recent EIPs on water, agriculture and raw materials.

8. There can be no real research and innovation policy for water without transparency or an inclusive employment policy that contains guarantees of adequate staff levels, training, recognition of qualifications, and technologies that can improve health and safety in water purification, treatment and sanitation procedures, to ensure that the whole range of different tasks can be carried out to best effect at every level.

9. The EESC underlines the role of CSO networks, which should be recognised and enhanced and should also be the subject of research with respect to the innovation potential they offer based on their experience and knowledge capital.
1.2 The EESC calls for the strategy of the EIP "Agricultural productivity and sustainability" to pay sufficient attention to the objective of strengthening and consolidating the European industrial processing sector. Only through adequate integration of the various links in the agri-food chain will it be possible to ensure that an increase in European agricultural supply goes hand in hand with adequate promotion and secure access to the market for European primary products.

1.3 The EESC believes that reflection is needed on the indicator proposed by the Commission for evaluating the results of EIP actions in terms of sustainability. While recognising the decisive contribution that satisfactory soil functionality can make to sustainability, the EESC believes that other results indicators should not be overlooked which make it possible to assess the potential contribution of certain agricultural practices, in particular to the conservation of natural resources.

1.4 The EESC believes that the EIP "Agricultural productivity and sustainability" should not neglect to support the implementation of organisational innovations able to optimise relations between links in national and European agri-food chains. Adequate profitability for agricultural operators, improving the operation of agri-food supply chains, restoring the market power of agricultural operators and bringing about a fairer distribution of value amongst the links in agri-food chains are crucial objectives, including for preventing the loss of agricultural activities in many European rural areas.

1.5 The EESC calls on the Commission to guarantee sufficient participation and involvement of representatives of agricultural economic, social and institutional partners in the governance of the EIP, with a view to ensuring that the activities carried out are as effective and efficient as possible.

1.6 The EESC believes that the EIP approach will only have positive effects if operational groups are genuinely capable of launching development processes with measurable objectives, rather than new partnerships simply aimed at seeking public funding. The EESC also agrees with the Commission's proposal to ensure proper coordination of the various operational groups of the EIP "Agricultural productivity and sustainability" through the creation of a network of EIPs under the umbrella of the European rural development network.

1.7 The EESC believes that the EIP "Agricultural productivity and sustainability" makes an important contribution to innovation in agriculture by creating a network of operators and connecting the places where innovation is created with the places where it is used. This approach should allow for intermediaries to connect the various stakeholders involved in innovation processes. The EESC believes that the impact of the EIP "Agricultural productivity and sustainability" depends on the active involvement of innovation brokers capable of creating and consolidating innovation cooperation links between the many diverse actors.

1.8 The EESC considers it a priority to integrate initiatives of the operational groups of EIPs with actions in the field of demographic renewal, technical assistance, training, particularly for young farmers, support for structural investments, the promotion and development of agricultural products, the creation of new market outlets (such as short supply chains) and the diversification of company income through priority access to the resources of rural development programmes.

1.9 The EESC calls for the implementation of specific measures to ensure coordination and synergy between the EIP "Agricultural productivity and sustainability" and the other EIPs for "raw materials" and "water".

NAT/585 Rio+20: Current situation and future prospects (rapp. Wilms)

1.1.1 The final document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro this year (Rio+20 conference), "The future we want", is weaker than the EESC would have liked. In particular, the urgency of the crisis situation on our planet has not been sufficiently taken into account. However, the final document contains several elements which can also be used as a basis in the EU. Particularly noteworthy is the global agreement on a "green economy" as an important tool for sustainable development, including
the social dimension, and the agreement on a process that is intended to lead to global Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in close coordination with the Millennium Development Goals (MDG).

1.1.2 The EESC is pleased at the strong civil society mobilisation in the run-up to and at the Rio+20 conference, which has led to the generation of many innovative ideas and new alliances.

1.1.3 The EESC fulfilled its mediating role between civil society and the EU institutions in the preparations for and during the Rio+20 conference. The efforts made by the EESC to promote civil society dialogue within and outside the European Union have been much appreciated by the other EU institutions.

1.2.1 The EESC believes that the Rio+20 follow-up process and the implementation of the Rio+20 decisions must be done with the involvement and participation of civil society. It therefore expressly welcomes all efforts made in this direction by the other institutions. As it did ahead of the Rio+20 conference, the EESC will continue to promote civil society dialogue on sustainability issues, also involving European civil society organisations and networks and the national economic and social councils and sustainable development councils.

1.2.2 The EESC will actively contribute to the development of global SDGs by promoting, as it did prior to the Rio+20 conference, civil society dialogue in the EU and with our civil society partners outside the EU. It will try in particular to bring together the actors from the SDG and MDG processes. Furthermore, the EESC can in particular draw on its experience and composition to contribute to the detailed design of the green economy, including the social dimension, as well as to the participation rights of civil society at global level.

1.2.3 The EESC welcomes the Council conclusions on Rio+20 of 25 October 2012, which announce ambitious follow-up measures to Rio+20 that will be effected by means of the Europe 2020 Strategy and the EU Sustainable Development Strategy, and the announced revision of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy. The EESC considers a broad civil society debate on sustainable development in the EU to be necessary and will continue to promote this in its future work.

NAT/540 The role of women in agriculture and rural areas (rapp. Rondinelli)

1.1 The potential of women working and/or with a business in agricultural and rural areas should be analysed, recorded and promoted in all EU policies, and not penalised by some of them: this will lay the groundwork for women to become drivers of development and innovation, helping the entire sector to emerge from the crisis.

1.2 All EU legislation and programmes should ensure equal treatment, equal opportunities and measures to promote conditions for women through effective gender mainstreaming, simplifying procedures for accessing funds and periodically monitoring results.

1.3 Women should be involved in plans for the sector’s development at local and regional level; they therefore need to be equipped with the skills to participate and to put across their needs, experiences and plans (capacity building).

1.4 Universities and research centres should collaborate with the women concerned in order to analyse potential and needs, provide training and technology to support the development of businesses run by women, and enhance women’s work and life in the agricultural sector.

1.5 ICT are essential for developing and improving women’s agricultural activities, provided that they are effective, accessible and cheap (broadband) and have a good level of regional coverage. This can also create work for ICT technicians.

1.6 The establishment of women’s networks (underpinned by good ICT) develops contacts, promotes participation and fosters personal relationships and the exchange of good practice between women in the EU and women in candidate and third countries, thus also furthering international cooperation and trade.
1.7 Training should target the needs and potential of the women concerned; the women themselves can be responsible for disseminating information using innovative methods (discussion and self-teaching groups, newspaper columns, training sessions in educational establishments, etc.).

1.8 To enable women to get organised and participate, thereby developing their potential, efficient, accessible and flexible services are needed which will free up their time from care duties. This applies to healthcare, transport, credit, distribution, marketing and care of the elderly and children, as well as social security to provide safeguards for women who do not have any. Here again, jobs will be created in the services concerned.

1.9 All Member States should promote legal recognition of assisting spouses so that they are covered for social security and healthcare. A legislative framework for joint rights of access should be established at EU level, possibly by means of a statute for women in agricultural and rural areas.

1.10 Women can help to make farming and their environment more sustainable if they are equipped with the necessary knowledge and technology (green technology, efficient management and use of resources, generation of clean energy). In order to kick-start this type of innovative and sustainable business, a fast-track scheme should be set up, granting streamlined access to resources (especially under the second pillar of the CAP).

1.11 Women can reinvigorate the crafts sector and traditional, high-quality, organic products, partly through closer collaboration between women producers and consumers, which needs to be studied and developed (as in the case of short supply chains).

1.12 The reform of the CAP and rural development policies must pull together to promote women’s work and businesses, particularly by means of theme-based programmes for women (second pillar).

1.13 Member States, regional and local authorities and the social partners have a shared responsibility to promote the potential of women living in agricultural and rural areas by ensuring that laws are respected and implementing an appropriate legal framework that guarantees the principle of gender equality and representation, including within their own institutions. Positive examples in some Member States should serve as an incentive to ensuring that women – as also called for by the European Parliament – are appropriately represented in all political, economic and social bodies in the agricultural sector and rural areas.

NAT/531 The 2011 monitoring report on the EU's sustainable development strategy: the EESC evaluation (rapp. Palmieri)

1.1 The EESC considers Eurostat’s monitoring report (2011 monitoring report of the EU sustainable development strategy) to be a useful and important instrument in terms of:

- taking stock of progress made so far towards meeting the objectives and targets of the European sustainable development strategy (SDS);
- reviewing and fine-tuning the objectives, actions and measures of the EU's SDS, while also refining the methodologies and tools currently used to measure sustainable development;
- tackling the new challenges on the horizon, particularly in the light of the effects on the SDS of the global economic and financial crisis.

1.2 In this respect, the EESC is disappointed that there has been no Commission report on progress in implementing the SDS in the EU and calls on the Commission and the EU’s other institutions to respond to the findings of the Eurostat report as an integral part of the strategy itself and a basic tool for political evaluation of the measures implemented to date and helping to determine future avenues.

1.3 The EESC argues, therefore, that more effective political action is needed to achieve the strategy’s objectives, starting with endeavours to measure the state of sustainable development accurately, which will involve an assessment of pro-sustainability policy measures that is both scientific and political in nature.
1.4 To this end, the EESC calls once again for consideration to be given to the pointers and thoughts generated on these issues within its Sustainable Development Observatory, so as to allow civil society to have its say. The only way to achieve transition to a more sustainable model for development is to activate democratic processes that encourage public awareness of and participation in decision-making, by developing the structures for dialogue between civil society and political leaders.

1.5 The EESC stresses the need to reinforce the links between the SDS and the EU's other major policies. The cross-cutting, all-pervasive nature of the concept of sustainable development demands a very close connection with all the other emerging political priorities (social equity, the fight against poverty and unemployment, social justice, the efficient use of resources, nature conservation, social cohesion and development cooperation).

1.5.1 This need for joined-up thinking on the EU's various policy strategies is all the more important at this point in time. The serious repercussions of the global economic crisis make it necessary to distinguish between the impact of the current world economic situation and the development of long-term, far-reaching, structured strategies.

1.5.2 In particular, the EESC reiterates the need for enhanced cooperation and symbiosis between the EU's Sustainable Development Strategy and Europe 2020 strategy so as to ensure that the measures taken under the latter are genuinely geared towards achieving more sustainable development. Analysis of and research into new indicators can offer a way of assessing the effectiveness of measures to promote sustainable consumption and production models while also feeding into the Europe 2020 monitoring process.

1.6 The EESC recommends bolstering the social dimension of sustainable development, especially given the social repercussions of the economic crisis, particularly in terms of the increase in unemployment, inequalities and the risk of social exclusion, which hit the most vulnerable groups hardest and have a long-term knock-on effect on people's living conditions, while also restricting room for manoeuvre on environmental protection.

1.7 The EESC is strongly in favour of promoting economic development that can secure economic growth while also neutralising negative consequences for the environment and giving consideration to the key principles of equity, cooperation and social justice (that underpin the concept of sustainable development).

1.7.1 The EESC supports the concept of green growth and the development of a green economy, to be achieved within the framework of long-term sustainable development, reducing disparities and inequalities in opportunities in the transition to a low-carbon development model.

1.7.2 In this respect, the EESC welcomes the recommendations of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) on green jobs, aiming to ensure that workers are guaranteed decent, high quality work in the transition to a green economy so as to prevent replication of the social divisions that have materialised at other times of change.

1.8 In the transition towards sustainability more investment is needed in research and innovation, particularly in the field of energy, in order to promote a development model based more on renewables and less fossil-fuel-dependent and continue reducing the energy intensity of the economy, and also in view of the positive impact on growth and jobs that can be generated by launching of new activities and promoting economic competitiveness.

1.9 Training, too, plays a fundamental role alongside high-quality research and technological innovation: it leads civil society towards a different model for development, providing the tools needed to tackle the challenges development brings and reinforcing its role as a catalyst for change.

1.10 Appropriate awareness-raising and training in the area of sustainable development is therefore a crucial objective, one that goes hand in hand with the aim of implementing more effective parameters for measuring progress made towards greater sustainability.

1.11 In particular, it would be worthwhile continuing along the path taken by the EESC in backing the framing of new, non-GDP-based indicators. The analysis must build in both quantitative and qualitative
dimensions and also possibly include a survey of the way in which social players perceive and assess the issues surrounding sustainability.

1.12 It is only by means of a participatory process supported by experts and political, social and civil society players alike that it will be possible to build a new political and social culture that can plan for the kind of development that embraces and combines the three dimensions - economic, social and environmental - on which the concept of high-quality, sustainable human progress is built.

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### NAT/550 Priority substances in the field of water policy (rapp. Le Nouail Marlière)

1.1 The EESC welcomes the current draft directive inasmuch as it extends the list of priority substances and priority hazardous substances, applying the most comprehensive option proposed in the impact analysis.

1.2 The EESC welcomes the new mechanism proposed by the Commission to supply it with targeted, high-quality monitoring information on the concentration of substances in the aquatic environment, with a focus on emerging pollutants and substances for which available monitoring data are not of sufficient quality for the purpose of risk assessment. The EESC considers that the new mechanism should facilitate the gathering of that information across EU river basins and maintain monitoring costs at reasonable levels.

1.3 The EESC nevertheless recommends that the draft directive include, if only on a trial basis, specific analyses of the following areas that are not yet fully understood:

   i. nanoparticles and, more specifically, their interaction with the priority substances, as there are an increasing number of questions surrounding this subject – raised by the European Environment Agency;
   
   ii. the effects of chemical combinations of substances present in inland waters, as these combinations can have a significant impact on the aquatic environment even in very weak concentrations.

1.4 The EESC suggests that, in the interests of implementing the Water Framework Directive effectively, the draft directive should refer to best practice regarding river basin management.

1.5 The EESC considers that lead and nickel, being persistent and bioaccumulative substances, should be classified as priority hazardous substances (PHS) with the aim of eliminating all releases within 20 years, even if it is estimated that this will be very costly.

1.6 The EESC believes that public support and involvement are a precondition for the protection of water resources, and for the identification of both the problems and the most appropriate solutions, not least regarding costs. Without popular backing, regulatory measures will not succeed. Civil society has a key role to play in the implementation of a proper water framework directive (WFD), and in helping governments to balance the social, environmental and economic dimensions to be taken into account.

1.7 The EESC insists that a sound ecological and chemical state must be achieved for water resources, so as to protect human health, water supply, natural ecosystems and biodiversity.

1.8 The EESC notes that the new directive should simplify and streamline reporting obligations for the Member States.

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### NAT/537 Promotion of sustainable production and consumption in the EU (rapp. Le Nouail Marlière)

1.1 In accordance with the request from the Danish Presidency, the EESC has assessed the instruments and measures needed to shift to sustainable modes of production and consumption. Welcoming the awareness and efforts of the European institutions in this area, and with a view to working towards these objectives and ensuring a just transition, the EESC calls for the development of a renewed, joint vision of
the economic model, including consultations within a specialised forum with all sectors of organised civil society, in order to set objectives and targets and update the monitoring procedure.

1.2 It would be advantageous to:

- integrate policies for promoting sustainable consumption and production closely with the implementation of the Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe and encourage the Member States to implement these policies via the Roadmap and the European Semester;
- make use of a range of cross-cutting implementation and incentive instruments, such as phasing out non-sustainable products, developing a more equitable tax policy, promoting green public procurement, phasing out subsidies that do not take account of negative impacts on the environment, supporting research and eco-innovation, internalising environmental costs, creating other market-based incentives and encouraging consumers and the workforce to play an active part in the transition process.

1.3 The financial system also needs to be addressed, so that its focus can be shifted back to supporting an economy based on sustainable production and consumption, by concentrating on areas such as the agro-food industry, agriculture, housing, infrastructure and transport, which have the largest ecological footprint.

1.4 In addition, it is important to go beyond a strict focus on energy and greenhouse gas emissions to take account of other resources and environmental impacts, such as water management and conservation, soil use, and air pollution and the overall impact which products have on the environment.

1.5 By supporting improvements in the production process and in products themselves, consumers can be provided with the goods and services that will empower them to enact changes in behaviour and opinion.

1.6 Lastly, in order to promote sustainable consumption and lifestyles, the role of consumer associations and fair trade producers needs to be strengthened so as to promote and protect alternative, non-predatory forms of consumption and support best practice.

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NAT/528 Sixth Community Environment Action Programme – Final Assessment (rapp. Chiriaco)

1.1 The Committee welcomes the Commission initiative aiming to provide an assessment of the Sixth Community Environment Action Programme (EAP). The Commission considers that the programme was helpful in that it provided an overarching framework for European environment policy. The Committee cannot completely support this conclusion. Although an important contribution to policy development, the 6th EAP has had a limited impact on the adoption of specific instruments. Despite difficulties in collecting information with which to analyse the implementation of the programme's measures, it is possible to see significant delays in the adoption of the legislative instruments, problems in identifying specific objectives and inadequate control and monitoring mechanisms.

1.2 Therefore, the Committee calls on the Commission to improve the instruments available, including monitoring and assessment mechanisms, in order to ensure effective implementation of existing legislation. At the same time, the Committee recommends greater consistency between legislative initiatives and programming on environmental matters and improved integration of environmental issues in interconnected sectorial policies. As stated in a recent opinion, the Committee urges the Commission to take a clearer, more practical approach to tackling environmental challenges, clarifying what is meant by "efficient use of resources" and "green economy" and stating precisely what changes producers and consumers are called upon to make, in terms of quantity and quality.

1.3 Furthermore, the Committee considers that a stronger focus on the international dimension is needed. Environmental challenges are global in scope, and so require an approach based on stronger multilateral cooperation and better instruments for global governance.
Lastly, the Commission Communication lacks a long-term strategy, there is no reference to any further action programme and the intended added value of the 7th EAP is not mentioned. The Committee considers that this programme should be consistent with and support the Europe 2020 strategy and the flagship initiatives, should identify objectives and priorities selected realistically and on the basis of broad political consensus, and should plan for instruments capable of ensuring that the proposed measures are effective.

NAT/520 CAP towards 2020 (additional opinion)  
(co-rapp. Chiriaco)

Change for the EU agricultural model

1.1 The European Economic and Social Committee greets the Commission's legislative proposals with interest, and notes that some – although far from all – recommendations made in its past opinions have been taken into account. Most importantly, the Committee has repeatedly stated, in its opinions NAT/449 and NAT/481, that the future CAP must be driven by a determination to defend the European agricultural model, which is based on the principles of food sovereignty, sustainability and responsiveness to the real needs of farmers and consumers.

1.2 The EESC notes the considerable efforts made by the Commission regarding the future of the CAP in order to propose a profoundly European project based on the concept of inclusive diversity. Reflecting the Commission's efforts to build a new partnership between Europe and its farmers, the EESC considers that, although the proposals have the right focus, they still need significant adjustments in a number of areas.

1.3 The present financial and economic crisis and extreme climate changes require a fundamental change in the approach to closing the gap between promises and the reality of day-to-day farm life. Farmers are under increasing pressure from markets, leading to the abandonment of entire regions. More than ever before, the European agricultural model is indispensable. The EESC considers it vital for the CAP 2014-2020 to help to overcome the huge obstacles to the development of the agricultural sector. However, the Committee regrets the absence of a clearer commitment on the part of the Commission in favour of the European agricultural model.

1.4 The EESC welcomes the Commission's intention to improve the competitiveness of multifunctional agriculture in Europe consistent with the European agricultural model, through various activities such as research, development and guidance and remuneration for the services provided to society which are not, as yet, reflected in consumer prices. However, the Committee believes that the proposed approach is far from sufficient to ensure continued growth in output and employment and to help meet the ever increasing demand for food in the world. The EESC notes that the future CAP must take into account the fact that one sixth of all jobs in Europe are related directly or indirectly to agricultural production, this figure being much higher in some Member States. The CAP should play a role in guaranteeing employment in the EU, especially in rural areas, although at present it instead contributes to reducing employment. When agricultural and forestry production disappears in one region, then the related jobs in the upstream and downstream sectors – including the food and wood processing industry – disappear too. The future CAP must focus on improving the economic performance of farming families and cooperatives to help them gain better market access and better market their products.

1.5 The new CAP should contribute to improving socio-economic conditions, employment and the safety of workers in the agricultural sector by ensuring full compliance with social clauses, laws and employment contracts in the allocation of aid. This should take place in a context that places farm and agri-food businesses at the heart of the system in order to reward the real economy, promote research, innovation and generational renewal and encourage food production, including by building on regional added value.

1.6 The EESC renews its call to the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission for a robust CAP budget to be maintained at least at the same level as in the current budget period. There are particular problems at present in relation to the development of Pillar II, since it appears that many Member States are no longer willing and able to provide the necessary co-financing. This will lead to an unacceptable weakening of rural development policy, including environmental measures, which are financed through Pillar II.
1.7 The EESC considers that one of the prime concerns throughout the CAP reform process must be simplified procedures and flexible implementation to reflect the diversified agricultural conditions in the Member States and to reduce bureaucracy for farmers and difficulties for the bodies administering payments.

Direct payments

1.8 The EESC supports the move away from historical reference periods as the basis for determining the amount of support for farmers in each country or region. However, the EESC believes that a flat per-hectare payment is not always the most efficient policy tool, especially when the argument for income support is taken into consideration (see point 4.3.2). Therefore, this internal convergence within each country or region should allow flexibility, a longer transition period and progressive change throughout the period.

1.9 The EESC welcomes the effort to close the gap between the level of support received by farmers in the different Member States. The main features for the future CAP in terms of the redistribution of financial resources among Member States should be balance, fairness and pragmatism, bearing in mind the agricultural diversity across the EU. Consideration must thereby be given to the cost and revenue structure of farming activities in the various Member States. It is important that the redistribution process should reflect sensitively the problems of farmers both from old and new member states. That is why the EESC recommends redistribution of national direct payment envelopes based on objective, non-discriminatory criteria and a balanced and appropriate transition period for the planned fair convergence away from the historical reference principles. The goal is to ensure that no country’s direct payments would be under 90% of the average of the 27 EU Member States at the end of the financial framework for the period 2014-2020.

1.10 The EESC endorses the decision to introduce a simplified support scheme for small farmers, but doubts whether the support rates proposed by the Commission will be high enough to promote the development of small agricultural holdings. It also asks the Commission to clarify the requirements for the identification of small farmers. The scheme could be voluntary depending on Member States’ conditions.

1.11 The EESC endorses the principle underpinning the Commission proposals that CAP payments under Pillar I should be targeted at active farmers. Clear definitions of agricultural activity, eligible land and active farmer, as well as better links between payments and activity should be established in order to avoid a limited budget being consumed by unfarmed land and non-agricultural activities (unless this is land duly registered as set-aside). Whether it is possible to ensure the effective application of this principle is something that must be clarified with the Member States. Furthermore, the definition of the active farmer should not exclude beneficiaries of less than EUR 5 000.

1.12 The EESC supports a phased-in reduction by capping direct payments, and, as stated in previous opinions, further urges the Commission to adopt an implementation method that takes into account the specific characteristics of businesses made up of cooperatives and farm producer associations. Unused direct payments should remain in the Member State's envelope and be used to support weaker agricultural sectors at national level through Pillar I or Pillar II to be decided at MS level. The EESC proposes that funds transferred in this way should not require co-financing.

1.13 The EESC considers that a double gate entry to the basic payment scheme should be created based on existing farming activity in 2011 and occupation of eligible land at the 2014 start date. The Committee feels that the activation of one payment entitlement under the single payment scheme in 2011 does not constitute a fair criterion.

1.14 The EESC welcomes the flexibility between pillars proposed by the Commission. It is of primary importance that Member States in which the level of direct support remains lower than 90% of the EU average should be given the opportunity to transfer funds allocated for rural development to their Pillar I envelope as well. This possibility should also be available for Member States with a disproportionately small Pillar I or which suffer from natural handicaps. The EESC proposes that such choices be possible within a limit of up to 10%.

1.15 The EESC has constantly underlined the role that farmers should, and could, play in soil preservation, biodiversity, natural landscapes and the environment, but which they are unable to perform adequately.

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because of the current circumstances. It has therefore supported "targeted direct payments" (see NAT/449); the greening component is precisely a step in this direction. The EESC calls on the Commission to assess the implications of the new measures to ensure that any harm they do to the economic balance of farms is compensated for. When possible, greening measures should be based on win-win solutions for both the environment and growth. The EESC refuses to accept a situation where the EU increases costs of compliance for European farmers on the one hand, and on the other accepts, through trade agreements, cheap imports that need not comply with the same rules.

1.16 The greening component of Pillar I is a way of creating a stronger and more visible link between direct payments and the environmental public goods produced by farming. The EESC believes that this system should be kept simple, and should ensure environmental outcomes from all farmers across the EU. It should be possible to take into account the specific features of Less Favoured Areas when determining payments. The measure for "ecological focus areas" should be implemented in a manner that avoids agricultural land being taken out of production. Agro-environmental measures taken to date should be recognised under the new environmental requirements (Pillar I), as is also the case for organic farming generally.

1.17 The EESC welcomes the opportunity offered to Member States to use a voluntary coupled support scheme, in order to respond to specific situations. However, in the interests of greater flexibility and subsidiarity, the EESC suggests abolishing the closed list of sectors and productions eligible for coupled support and allowing Member States to decide which sectors and productions are eligible.

Market instruments

1.18 The EESC considers that the Commission proposals are insufficient to meet the challenge of increasing market volatility and the problems resulting from it. The CAP objective of stabilising agricultural markets, as set out in the Lisbon Treaties, is not addressed by the legislative proposals.

1.19 The EESC strongly believes that supply management tools can also be effective in some agricultural sectors. The EESC therefore recommends a thorough analysis of market developments when examining the possibility to postpone the abolition of the vine planting rights system, and the possibility to maintain sugar quotas for a longer period.

1.20 It is vital to strengthen the position of farmers and their organisations in the food supply chain, in order to secure a better return from the markets. The EESC welcomes the extension of product coverage for recognition of producer organisations, their associations, and inter-branch organisations. In view of the different structures and traditions in the Member States, the new arrangements should be made voluntary. The Committee also supports the Commission proposals for the milk sector, but recommends that the Commission provide a clear definition of the term "producer organisation". It is also of paramount importance for EU competition rules to be adjusted to allow producer organisations and cooperatives to strengthen their positions on the market. In order to strengthen the bargaining power of farmers within the food production chain, the EESC also considers it necessary to create conditions for developing short supply chains managed directly by farmers.

Rural development

1.21 The EESC welcomes the proposed closer alignment of the CAP with the EU’s 2020 strategy and the sustainability strategy for rural development, with particular emphasis on research, innovation and training. There should be particular focus on training of the most vulnerable groups (immigrants and unskilled agricultural workers), and of young people and women - these are key factors in professionalising and boosting the competitiveness of agriculture. It is therefore important to improve quality, accessibility and use of information and communication technologies in rural areas. Rural development policies should be geared primarily towards the innovation and competitiveness of farm businesses in keeping with the European agricultural model, especially in order to support farm investments, promote generational renewal, support the development of supply chain integration measures and integrated regional projects, improve relations between farm businesses and the food processing industry, support environment and climate-friendly measures and processes and consolidate the process by promoting and upskilling farm jobs.

1.22 One very positive element in the Commission proposal is the introduction of European Innovation Partnerships to help improve links between researchers, farmers, foresters and advisors, to secure a
knowledge-based agriculture and forestry that makes use of professional extension services. Such research should also include the improvement of rural economic activities, including tourism, crafts and other activities that can create jobs in rural areas.

1.23 The EESC welcomes the move from the "axis" approach to a thematic approach under the Rural Development Policy proposals. We think this will give Member States and regions more flexibility to take account of their own specific conditions. However, it is necessary to ensure that important aspects of Pillar II cannot be completely disregarded. The principle of earmarking 25% of funds for environmental protection measures and climate change measures is therefore important. A minimum amount should also be earmarked at least for the LEADER approach.

1.24 The EESC deems it crucial that the Member States provide the co-financing required for Pillar II in good time. The Committee disagrees on the desirability of including risk management measures under Pillar II. The Member States should ensure adequate national co-financing.

1.25 The EESC considers that a new, separate measure to raise the profile of organic farming is needed, for which the co-funding rate should be equal to that proposed for less developed areas (85%). The EESC would also encourage the promotion of integrated production and conservation farming, stressing their positive environmental impact.

1.26 Taking into consideration the serious conditions facing agricultural activities in mountain and island regions, the EESC proposes that the Commission extend the 85% co-funding rate not only to less developed regions but to mountain and island regions as well. This is implicit in the philosophy of the proposal but not specified directly. The proposed redefinition of "other areas" in the context of less favoured areas requires further revision.

1.27 The EESC reminds the Commission, the Parliament and the Council that water scarcity and droughts are already a serious problem in many European regions and that the situation is expected to worsen as a consequence of climate change. The EESC stresses the importance of integrated planning and sustainable development to address water use, water scarcity and drought, based on the integration of sectoral policies and the importance of territorial planning in areas traditionally affected by water scarcity and drought. At the same time, however, account should be taken of the additional costs incurred in northern Member States for draining agricultural land.

1.28 The EESC calls for a balanced, predictable, viable, less bureaucratic, flexible and transparent future CAP to attract younger generations to this sector.

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**NAT/521 Reform of the CFP (co-rapp. Chiriaco)**

1.1 The EESC agrees with the Commission on the need to propose that the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and the Common Organisation of the Markets (COM) be reviewed simultaneously, thereby enhancing the necessary integration, coherence and coordination of the production, processing and marketing aspects of fishing, aquaculture and shellfishing.

1.2 Overall, the EESC agrees with the proposal's general and specific objectives, as well as its principles of good governance. The CFP must guarantee that fishing and aquaculture activities create long-term sustainable environmental, economic and social conditions and that they contribute to the availability of food, applying the precautionary principle and an ecosystem-based approach.

1.3 However, the EESC does not believe that the proposal for a Regulation lays down the fisheries management measures needed to fully restore and maintain fish stocks to levels above those capable of producing the maximum sustainable yield (MSY), ensure healthy and high-quality fishery and aquaculture products for citizens, to contribute to the prosperity of fishing communities and the viability of production and processing companies and provide jobs that are attractive and more secure.

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1.4 The Committee welcomes the general provisions regarding access to EU waters, which are already in force and which benefit local fishing communities more.

1.5 The Committee approves of the types of conservation and technical measures proposed, which will have to be adapted to the different forms of fishing.

1.6 The EESC supports the proposal to establish multiannual plans with the aim of restoring and maintaining, as far as possible, all fish stocks above levels which can produce the MSY by 2015. Though laudable, this objective is difficult to apply in the case of mixed fisheries, and the EESC therefore calls upon the Commission to provide practical solutions to resolve any problems which may arise in those forms of fishery.

1.7 The EESC considers it a priority for the Member States, backed by the Commission, to provide scientific institutes with the resources they need to meet applied research needs and to deal with all commercially-fished species and associated and dependent species and their environment.

1.8 With regard to the policy of banning discards, the EESC welcomes this objective, but advocates a more gradual and proportionate approach, based on progressively reducing discards, promoting and encouraging more selective fishing gear, implementing measures designed to process fisheries products in a manner that offers added value, searching for market outlets and adapting the infrastructure of vessels and fishing ports.

1.9 The EESC believes that the proposal does not introduce sufficient regionalisation and offers no measures for decentralisation.

1.10 With regard to relative stability and its application in the allocation of fishing opportunities to the Member States, the Committee would stress the need to update this principle, since it is out of date and no longer reflects the real situation of fishing fleets and areas highly dependent on fishing. Moreover, the Committee suggests that allocation of fishing opportunities, once the principle of relative stability has been updated, should be based primarily on a set of transparent environmental, economic and social criteria.

1.11 The Committee finds the proposal relating to transferable fishing concessions to be confused and believes that the Commission should clarify the interpretation of the relevant articles, particularly in relation to the definition of "transparent and objective criteria" for the allocation of concessions. The Committee also calls for this measure’s impact on employment to be taken into account and for specific measures to be provided for employed fishermen.

1.12 With regard to the management of fishing capacity, the EESC believes that the Commission should carry out, by 2014 at the latest, a detailed assessment of fishing capacity, covering not only power and tonnage, but also types of fishing gear and other vessel characteristics, and that Member States should be obliged to align fishing capacity with available resources on the basis of this assessment.

1.13 In relation to ecosystem-based fisheries management, the Committee considers it crucial that data collection include the greatest possible amount of environmental data in accordance with the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the GES (Good Environmental Status) criteria.

1.14 The EESC agrees in general terms with the Commission’s proposals regarding external policy. It has concerns, however, regarding certain issues mentioned in point 3.7.9 of this opinion.

1.15 The EESC applauds the Commission’s recognition of the common European dimension of aquaculture policy. The EESC calls for the strengthening of environmental control and the creation of a streamlined administrative framework and a single legal area in order to develop a sustainable aquaculture sector that can help maintain the population and generate wealth in outlying and rural regions, while also respecting and fitting in with the local environment.

1.16 With regard to the new financial instrument, the EESC believes that the role of fishermen and fishing communities in the sustainable development of coastal areas should be boosted and that this should include social measures, particularly support measures in cases of job losses and assistance with training and redeployment, placing the emphasis on young people and women.
1.17 The EESC is disappointed that the proposal does not address the social dimension, which is taken into account throughout the fisheries and aquaculture sector (production, processing and marketing), and puts forward no concrete measures to improve working and living conditions and believes that the participation of the social partners at the appropriate level should be promoted.

1.18 The EESC calls upon the Commission to take account of the range of demands expressed by the sectors’ different stakeholders. The reform of the CFP should meet the needs of both shipowners and crews.

1.19 The EESC believes that a definition of small-scale fishing based solely on vessel length is too simplistic and results in a large proportion of the small-scale fleet falling into the category of industrial fishing.

1.20 The EESC supports the objectives and principles governing the new COM regulation and urges the Commission to take account of the Committee’s views expressed in this opinion.

1.21 In order to prevent unfair competition on the EU market, the EESC recommends that imported products be subject to the same hygiene and health and monitoring requirements as EU products, including full "sea-to-table" traceability, and calls for exhaustive controls, at borders and at origin, to ensure full compliance with these rules, which contribute to food safety. In this regard, the Committee feels that a consistent approach should be established amongst the European Commission’s various Directorates-General.

1.22 The EESC stresses that all these proposals also apply to freshwater fishing and aquaculture and calls on the Commission to devote appropriate attention to the specific characteristics of these.
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