



Paolo De Castro
CHAIRMAN

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPEMENT

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Thank you all

I am honored to be here with Commissioner Ciolos, minister Fazekas and minister Sawicki, and President Stopes of IFOAM Europe.

We are here to discuss organic farming, an established practice in many European countries, but considered worldwide as a new phenomenon. A paradox, because we know that organic agriculture, has ancient roots. But it is also true that it can be seen as an innovation in the recent tradition of production.

It is especially in organizational innovation, scientific research and development that organic farming in Europe and worldwide can continue to perform the function that has already been recognized under the Common Agricultural Policy in 1992, with the start of the great cycle of the Common Agricultural Policy reform.

I am talking about the contribution that this type of cultivation method can give to the protection of natural resources, the preservation of biodiversity, animal welfare and development of rural areas. But also the competitiveness of companies.

Also the fact that organic farming in addition to its contribution in terms of public goods constantly face increased support among consumers is to be considered. This is an important side effect, as data from this day will show. This is a sector in constant growth, marked by a dynamism that shows no signs of fade even in times of crisis.

Organic products are cultivated in 160 countries worldwide, about 37.2 million hectares in total area, 1.8 million managed by producers. In Europe between 2007 and 2008 the area cultivated with organic methods has increased by 7.4%, reaching 4.1% of the total utilized agricultural area. During the same period, the number of producers using this method increased by 9.5%. The European market for organic products grew from 13 to 18 billion euros between 2005 and 2008, while global sales reached 54.9 million dollars in 2009.

So, the conclusion here is that we like biological products. With its reference to "nature", organic products are able to intercept one of the megatrends of global consumption. Together with Commissioner Ciolos we have often said that in light of new global challenges that agriculture

faces, you must rebuild the trust between the producer and consumer of food, on a new and more solid basis.

A mission where organic farming is a kind of avant-garde. A sector based on the sustainability of the resources that expresses such a dynamism in terms of economic and commercial potential so vast, is crucial to the future of the industry, as for the new structure of European agricultural policy.

The new CAP should be built on an alliance between consumers and farmers. This has been stressed by all EU institutions: the Parliament, last summer with the Lyon report and a few days ago with the Dess report, the Commission in November with the Communication "CAP by 2020", and then the Council, thanks to valuable efforts of the Hungarian presidency.

In the face of challenges such as the availability and stability of food supply, dependence on non-renewable energy, the depletion of water resources and biodiversity, the task of the new CAP will be to link economic development and protection of natural ecosystems.

If the new normative and economic framework is to anchor its support in the provision of environmental public goods, it is obvious that organic farming will eventually play an important role, even more decisive than that assumed in the almost 20 years of public European support.

The organic sector stands well prepared in front of the reform. As soon as the new legislative framework entered into force two years ago, in 2009, European directives relating to production, testing and labeling of organic products were renewed.

In this context, a solid regulatory system is an essential condition so that citizens and consumers can have correct information and can be aware of the contribution that this model of agriculture provides to the community

Organic farming is an opportunity for European agriculture, as stressed by the title of this conference. We should value it properly. The industry has always found support in the European Union, since 1992 until today. Because organic agriculture is also a resource, a sector to store projects and research related to eco-sustainability, perhaps to be transferred also into more conventional fields.

This opportunity is now to be supported both to value even more than in the past the role of agricultural practices with low environmental impact, and as an opportunity for economic growth. Organic production is one of the most representative cases in which the market tends to recognize a value, however partial, to the collective values embedded in the product. This premium price that the consumer is prepared to recognize has created important spaces in the markets, with a stable relationship between distributors and manufacturers. An opportunity that if it overcomes the barriers of conventional production in terms of efficiency, can be grasped even in the most marginal areas.

This ability to settle environmental values in economic and social values must be supported even more in the future. The idea of production and organizational models that reflect the concept of multifunctionality must continue to find attention in the future.

paolo.decastro@europarl.europa.eu

ASP 15G301, rue Wiertz 60, B- 1047 Bruxelles - Tel 0032 2 28 47520 - Fax 0032 2 28 49520