



***The CAP reform will not be able to reduce EU's
dependency on pesticides, but the battle is still only at
the beginning***

On the 25th of June 2013 the European Union agreed on the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy.

While the final agreement, depending on member states willingness to engage, do have a few opportunities for greening EU agriculture, PAN Europe secretariat estimates that it will take a Small revolution at national level to convert this agreement into an agricultural model able to rely less on chemical inputs.

The original proposal from the European Commission included the idea of encouraging farmers to take a more holistic approach to farming, and therefore apply the basic rule of integrated production, with the direct payments becoming conditional upon respecting 3 simple agronomic measures. And even though the original proposal did not propose crop rotation, but the main component: integrated pest management (IPM). This first idea was much more ambitious than what is now left, where the main component still is the idea of introducing ecological focus areas.

With the reform, all arable farmers above 15 hectares need to reserve 5 % of their land for Ecological Focus Areas (EFA) starting in 2015, which later might increase to 7%. But the problem from PAN Europe point of view is that there are loopholes allowing pesticides to be used on these EFAs. They seem to kill any idea of using buffer strips to attract natural predators, which could have been a way to start managing rather than killing all pests, in line with the principle of integrated production.

A list of EFA eligible areas has been agreed (e.g. fallow land, terraces, landscape features, buffer strips, agro forestry, etc.), but it remains to be seen if the EU and/or member states will have the courage to set rules regarding where to introduce EFAs in order to, among other goals, show how best to integrate these into the actual production in line with the philosophy of integrated production.

As something positive, ministers and the European Parliament did agree that Member States will be obliged as part of the Farm advisory service (FAS) to give advises on the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive (SUD).

Unfortunately, the Council and the European Parliament did not agree with the Commission's idea of introducing the SUD and the WFD into the so called cross compliance rules, conditions to comply with to receive direct payments. Instead a joint statement was elaborated, in an addendum 2 to the CAP agreement, stating:

'The Council and the European Parliament invite the Commission to monitor the transposition and the implementation by the Member States of Directive 2000/60/EC of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy and Directive 2009/128/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 October 2009 establishing a framework for Community action to achieve the sustainable use of pesticides and, where appropriate, to come forward, once these Directives have been implemented in all Member States and the obligations directly applicable to farmers have been identified, with a legislative proposal amending this regulation with a view to including the relevant parts of these Directives in the system of cross-compliance.'