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From:	Presidency
To:	SCA/Council
Subject:	Stocktaking of the first year of implementation of the CAP Strategic Plans - <i>Information from the Presidency</i>

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With a view to the “Agriculture and Fisheries” Council on 10 and 11 December 2023, delegations will find in the Annex a Presidency note on the first implementation year of the new CAP.

## **Stocktaking of the first year of implementation of the CAP Strategic Plans**

In 2021, after more than three years of negotiations, the EP and the Council reached an agreement based on the proposal presented by the COM to reform the CAP, mainly through Regulation 2021/2115.

Throughout 2022, the proposals for Strategic Plans presented by the Member States were examined by the Commission, underwent modifications, and were finally approved for application as of 01.01.23.

The year 2023 is coming to an end and it is appropriate to pause to reflect on the Reform we have implemented, the experience of this first year of implementation, and the future we face in the coming year and beyond.

The implementation has not been without its difficulties. Firstly, those intrinsic to a reform that has entailed major innovations and in which there was little time to transpose them into national legislation and to disseminate them among potential beneficiaries. But in addition to these circumstances, which had already been taken into account, there was a complicated market situation, with high input prices, high volatility and uncertainty in sales prices, and difficult meteorological circumstances, especially with a drought that extended over a large part of the EU, together with other adversities. Finally, the inflation scenario being experienced in the EU means in practice an erosion of the income support provided by CAP direct aids.

We have recently received the COM report (published on 24.11.23) which indicates how the approved plans contribute to the specific objectives pursued by the CAP and overall represent a leap in the environmental ambition of this policy as never before. The report also points out certain aspects that should be carefully monitored to improve them during implementation. The report also reflects on how the CAP cannot be the only instrument of response to various needs and how other sources of funding must be mobilized.

In addition, at the end of the Swedish Presidency and during these six months of the Spanish one, we have been able to exchange views on the implementation in this first year. Indeed, in September, at the meeting convened by the COM and then at the SCA meeting in 14 November, we have been able to see how, not without difficulties, what was planned is being implemented. We are therefore closer to seeing how the needs to which the plans were intended to respond are being met through the use of CAP funds.

Also in the SCA meeting in 9 October, we have been able to share how the implementation of a reform of this magnitude through such comprehensive Plans as those approved requires successive adjustments to guarantee the achievement of its aims and to ensure that the final recipients of the measures can benefit from the programmed interventions. Member States expressed their concerns to the COM about the extraordinary complexity of the first experiences of amending the Plans. The COM has taken note and has been working on this issue over the last months and has recently offered ways to simplify this process.

Finally, at 29 and 30 of November, the Directors of CAP Strategic Plans met in Madrid and exchanged not only these aspects but also the importance of evaluating the Plans and with them our policy. Evaluation is a transcendental exercise to provide information to policymakers, but also to show beneficiaries what is achieved with the efforts we have asked for when designing the requirements of the different interventions, thus informing society of what the CAP returns to the taxes with which they finance it.

It has therefore been an intense six months of reflection and exchange that allows us to take stock of the Reform: the Reform responds to the objectives and needs that were identified; the Plans, not without effort, are up and running and will respond to the specific needs of each Member State. The reform has been a far-reaching reform, which has meant a very important change for our farmers, who have often found themselves bewildered because the context has been particularly complicated. It is necessary to anchor this reform, to focus all our efforts on its correct implementation and on measuring and evaluating its results.

Our farms also deserve a message of stability in support: they have had to adapt to a big change. Once it has happened, we need stable years of policy to consolidate it, for farms to deepen all the opportunities that the Plans give them. The sector needs a message of stability, as well as firmness on something that this Council has already discussed on previous occasions: we cannot continue to ask for more efforts from our farmers that are not accompanied by additional support.

In the light of the above analysis, the Presence would like to obtain the assessment of the Ministers on the following issues:

1. Do you agree with this assessment, and are there any aspects that, given the experience in your country, you would like to emphasize, qualify, or correct?
  2. Do you think there are other elements that we should also take into account in this assessment?
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