Future of the CAP after 2013

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The Council held a **policy debate on the future of the CAP**, with a particular focus on **rural development policy**. The Council debate on the future of rural development policy is the continuation of previous discussions under the Czech and French Presidencies, which focused on the first pillar of the CAP.

Member States were invited to reflect on the future challenges they consider to be most relevant for European agriculture and rural areas and on what changes were needed in the rural development programme in order to tackle these challenges, while respecting the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.

Several Ministers emphasised that although there is already quite a good existing policy, there is still room for improvement because a central banner is needed, which in their view, could be **Green Growth**. Some urged structural changes; the replacement of the axes-structure with a new clearer one with more focused targets. Some others pointed out the need to redesign some of the individual measures, and establish balance between targeting and simplification.

In its introductory words, the Commission representative highlighted that **strengthening competitiveness, protecting the environment and creating new jobs are the three most important challenges** we face when we talk about the future of rural development.

After the discussion, she estimated too early to mention any figures and invited Member States to reflect on several issues that most delegates touched upon, such as the criteria to be defined for the distribution of money intending to replace historical grounds.

The Swedish Presidency concluded that **there is a need to keep rural development as part of the common policy**, in order to face several important challenges such as sustainable development, climatic change, water management, and biodiversity.