CAP towards 2020: meeting the food, natural resources and territorial challenges of the future

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The Council discussed **environmental aspects of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)**, in view of its upcoming reform. The Council's discussion was a response to the Commission communication “The CAP towards 2020”.

Ministers emphasised the importance of the CAP for the **protection of the environment and the climate** and for delivering environmental public goods, such as **biodiversity** protection or **flood** prevention. They welcomed the fact that the Commission had proposed to make sustainable management of natural resources and climate action one of the objectives of the reformed CAP.

Delegations stressed that **"greening" the CAP** was an important contribution for achieving the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy. For the Commission, measures such as the maintenance of permanent pasture and green cover, set aside and crop diversification could be made mandatory for beneficiaries of direct payments. They help to curb climate-harming emissions.

At the same time, some ministers advocated **targeting rural development measures** to support biodiversity, the protection of water resources, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and adaptation to climate change.

Many asked for **greater simplification and for more flexibility** to take into account regional and national environmental conditions. Some argued that the rural development measures in the so-called second pillar of the CAP were more suitable for providing such flexibility.

The views of ministers will feed into the debate of the Agriculture Council on the CAP reform.