

No. 1118

EU's CAP: NOW AND BEYOND

"The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is not just a policy for farmers" emphasised Dacian Cioloş, European Commissioner for Agriculture, in a message sent to the participants of a National Conference, organised by MEUSAC in collaboration with the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs (MRRA) and Perma Culture Research Foundation. The Commissioner stated that "CAP is a policy for all citizens, as tax payers and consumers...CAP is more than 'just' producing foods, ... agricultural activity has a broader function, in terms of the wider rural economy and addressing a wide range of very serious global challenges - the sustainable management of water, soil, energy and other natural resources; biodiversity loss, and global food security", besides Climate Change which the Commissioner also mentioned.

The National Conference entitled *EU's CAP: Now and Beyond* was the first in a series of activities organised as part of an EU-funded project, which MEUSAC had successfully applied for. Making his introductory remarks, Dr. Vanni Xuereb, Head of MEUSAC, stated that other events include information stands at Mnarja Fest later on this month, various radio and television information spots targeted at the general public, school visits at the beginning of the next scholastic year and a number of publications.

During the event participants were also given the opportunity to contribute to the discussion as well as to voice their opinion during the course of four different work shops. The themes of the workshops were Agro-Tourism, Entrepreneurship in the Agricultural Sector, Organic Farming and Product Quality. The workshops were preceded by several presentations expert speakers. Following each workshop an evaluation of the discussions were presented to all.

The National Conference was brought to an end by an address delivered by the Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs, the Hon. George Pullicino. The Minister stated that we are currently called to debate the role that Agriculture must have in today's society and what future role it should have. He emphasised that while discussing the future, one needs to hold fast to the principles and objectives of the policy which include guaranteeing a suitable income to farmers, favouring economic and social development in rural zones, safeguarding the country side and rural zones as well as help to make agricultural production more sustainable and competitive, both from an environmental and an economical point of view.

Minister Pullicino concluded by stating that "thanks to various measures, the functioning of the CAP, together with a huge investment in the Agricultural sector, including that funded by the European Union, we have managed to be successful in the first years of our European Union membership. With an updated CAP, we should be managing to continue to create more wealth for our farmers and to offer our consumers fresh and high quality products."

The speakers during the National Conference included Dr. Mark Harwood, Lecturer at the University of Malta; Mr. Donald Aquilina, Senior Programme Manager at the MRRA; Dr. Andrew Elliot, Director - DARDNI (Northern Ireland); Dr. Stefano Briganti, Head of International Projects (Italy); Mr. Joseph Caruana, Head of MRRA Paying Agency; Dr. J.M. Brand, Project Coordinator within the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (The Netherlands); Ms. Doris Wielderwald, OAR Regional-Beratung International (Austria); Mr. Robert Cassar, MCAST Information and Support Services; Mr. Peppe Gauci, Permaculture Research Foundation; Mr. Mario Salerno, MOAM.

The National Conference was also attended to by the Hon. Philip Mifsud, Parliamentary Assistant within the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs.

DOI – 15.06.2010