



“green alliance...”

## EEB-UK statement on Climate Change and Agriculture Informal Agriculture & Environment Council, 9-12 September

### The threat of climate change

EEB-UK considers the fight against climate change to be one of the most important challenges facing the world today.

We welcome cooperation between agriculture and environment ministers, acknowledging that agriculture, as the dominant land use in the EU, has a crucial role to play in both fighting climate change and adapting to its inevitable effects.

Climate models predict that climate change will have a range of impacts on agricultural systems. For example, some areas will experience longer and hotter summers resulting in increased demands on scarce water resources. Increased storminess and higher autumn rainfall may impact on the viability of late harvested crops. Shifting climate envelopes could change the range of crops, altering local habitats and landscapes and affecting the spread and virulence of diseases. In addition to the effect this will have on agricultural productivity these changes will inevitably affect farmland wildlife, landscape, soil and water resources.

### Reducing Climate Change through Agriculture

Early action to mitigate global warming effects will reduce the need for future adaptation. Agriculture has the potential to contribute to climate change mitigation on two fronts. Firstly, there is scope to amend current practice to reduce emissions released through everyday agricultural operations, e.g. through improved precision of fertiliser application, adapted animal feeds, reform of the dairy sector, a reduction in transport of all inputs and commodities, better soil management to conserve the organic carbon - especially in upland areas and minimum tillage techniques which reduce hydrocarbon usage.

Secondly, there is potential to utilise crops as sustainable energy sources and thus help reduce carbon dioxide emissions. If the battle against climate change is to be won, it is vital that energy efficiency is improved and new sources of renewable energy are developed. Bioenergy, as a renewable energy, has the potential to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. However, it is essential that bioenergy proposals deliver real greenhouse gas savings and do not sacrifice other environmental priorities such as the protection of biodiversity, water and landscape character. Energy use over the life cycle of bioenergy production must be taken into account, including fertiliser, pesticide and mechanical inputs. Moreover, accreditation should be used to ensure that bioenergy delivers real carbon benefits without damaging the environment.

The potential specific and cumulative impacts of bioenergy production should be carefully assessed, and support programmes for this industry should be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to ensure that sufficient safeguards and monitoring are in place.

## Adapting to Climate Change

Policy adjustments will be needed to help adapt to factors such as change in land use and landscape character, change in the natural ranges of the EU's valuable wildlife species, and the indirect impacts of new invasive species and diseases. Adaptation to climate change across all land uses must be co-ordinated to deliver a multifunctional landscape delivering public benefits such as habitats for wildlife, places for recreation and the protection of natural resources such as soil and water in an integrated way.

Agri-environment schemes, which have been developed to offset some of the negative effects of agriculture, could be expanded to help biodiversity meet the challenges of climate change at farm and landscape levels. A robust programme of monitoring and research will be necessary to identify requirements and design effective measures.

However, any additional call on the funds available for agri-environment schemes will require extra resources to bolster the EU's Rural Development programme and ensure that sufficient funds are available to meet the needs of biodiversity across the EU. In addition, a new system for calculating payments for such public goods which more accurately reflects their benefits to society should be developed.

We urge ministers to ACT to:

- Undertake as a matter of urgency further research and monitoring on the real impacts of agriculture and land use on climate change and the efficacy of adaptation and mitigation measures. This will include detailed appraisal and assessment of all aspects of agricultural production, transport and processing.
- Develop and implement an accreditation scheme to ensure that bioenergy crops deliver real carbon benefits and do not result in negative environmental impacts both inside and outside the European Union, for example on biodiversity.
- Increase the share of funding allocated to the Rural Development programme within the CAP in the next financial perspective 2007-2013 to ensure that current commitments on biodiversity can be met and any additional demands which result from climate change can also be catered for.
- Ensure more agricultural support for the delivery of public goods and work towards a system which bases payments to farmers on the value to society of the (public) goods produced, rather than merely basing it on income foregone.
- Provide advice to farmers on energy efficient production systems and promote to consumers food with a low climate-impact, such as local, seasonal and organic food.

EEB-UK is a group of UK members of the European Environmental Bureau, the largest federation of environmental citizens organisations in Europe, working for an environmentally sound European Union.

Our members include:

Aviation Environment Federation	National Society for Clean Air and
Chartered Institute of Environmental Health	Environmental Protection
CPRE	The National Trust
CPRW	RSPB
Environmental Law Foundation	Scottish Environment Link
FERN	Town and Country Planning Association
FoE England, Wales and Northern Ireland	The Wildlife Trusts
FoE Scotland	Wildlife & Countryside Link
Green Alliance	WWF-UK
Greenpeace UK	

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