

Statement made by Franz Fischler following the Council of Agriculture Ministers (Luxembourg, 26 June 2003)

Caption: On 26 June 2003, following the meeting of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council in Luxembourg, Franz Fischler, Member of the European Commission with special responsibility for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries, welcomes the compromise secured on the reform of the common agricultural policy (CAP).

Source: RAPID. The Press and Communication Service of the European Commission. [EN LIGNE]. [Bruxelles]: Commission européenne, [04.07.2005]. SPEECH/03/326. Disponible sur <http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/03/326&format=HTML&aged=1&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>.

Copyright: (c) European Union, 1995-2012

URL:

http://www.cvce.eu/obj/statement_made_by_franz_fischler_following_the_council_of_agriculture_ministers_luxembourg_26_june_2003-en-0c43fe03-4c98-47e0-a551-5a3e80d91c91.html

Publication date: 06/09/2012

Dr. Franz Fischler, Member of the European Commission responsible for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries: "The new, reformed agricultural policy" – Final press conference after the decision at the Council on Agriculture (Luxembourg, 26 June 2003)

Ladies and gentlemen,

The agriculture reform has been agreed.

Today marks the beginning of a new era. European agricultural policy will change fundamentally. In future, our products will be more competitive, and our agricultural policy will be greener, more trade-friendly and more consumer-oriented.

Farmers will enjoy more income stability, more freedom to produce what the market wants, and a system of support which is much easier to justify from a social point of view.

Consumers and taxpayers will receive more for their money: more transparency, more quality, more environmental protection and animal welfare.

The reform's message to the world is clear: today we have largely said goodbye to an old system of support which distorted trade. The new agricultural policy is trade-friendly, particularly as regards its effects on developing countries.

This will put us on the offensive at the WTO negotiations in Cancún in September. But no illusions, please: the negotiating capital which we have gained from this reform will be invested at the WTO only if we receive something in return. There will certainly not be any unilateral disarmament.

The EU has done its homework. Now others must make a move for example our American friends who, unlike the EU, have over recent years revived their old system of support and massively increased their trade-distorting agricultural subsidies. Not practising what you preach is unacceptable.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Everyone knows that, with this reform, the Commission and all the Member States have made a compromise. But an acceptable one. It is a reform worthy of the name. And I will tell you why:

From today, we are embarking on a new course towards sustainability.

As I expected, achieving this reform has been tough. Because reforming agricultural policy is no simple task.

Of course the Commission has trimmed its reform plans. But anyone familiar with the EU knows that this is normal and necessary in order to find solutions which are acceptable to everybody.

We have decided to pay most agricultural support direct to farmers, independently of production.

Most Member States will decouple their cereal or livestock premiums immediately (from 2005 onwards). Continuing to pay some components in accordance with the old system will be the exception, and will entail accepting responsibility for the considerably greater bureaucratic procedure involved.

I am moreover convinced that these uniform farm premiums for farmers will gain acceptance very quickly - and even more widely than the current fixed minimum percentages. And that is a huge success, bearing in mind how discussions stood just a few months ago.

Not only will farmers retain more money, as the OECD has demonstrated, they will also no longer be

subsidy-led or urged to overproduce.

As regards our WTO position, this means that we can substantially reduce our trade-distorting measures. This gives us more latitude for Cancun.

Funding for programmes to support the environment, animal welfare, quality and young farmers will be massively increased, over €1.2 billion more will be available for the new rural development policy.

Support will in future be conditional upon meeting clearly-defined environmental, animal welfare and food safety standards. This will make it possible to cut payments to those who cause environmental damage or are cruel to animals.

As regards market reforms, too, we have found a compromise which everyone can live with. Where it is most needed - namely for butter - we have pushed through a further reduction in the intervention price, while for cereals it remains unchanged. By contrast, the so-called monthly increases are being halved.

Market developments will show whether our calculation proves correct.

Overall I can say that, in my view, fighting for this reform has been worthwhile.

Recent days and weeks have also shown how important it is to have an independent, European-minded Commission which is not afraid of making courageous and sometimes unpopular proposals in the interests of European progress.

Precisely that has been achieved today, and our farmers and sustainable European agriculture have fared best of all.

Thank you very much.