



# **Stakeholder meeting on the role of agriculture and forestry in the EU's climate change policy**

30 August 2012

Charlemagne, Room Sicco Mansholt  
Rue de la Loi 170, 1000 Brussels

## **REPORT**

DG CLIMA organised a second stakeholder meeting on the role of agriculture and forestry in the EU's climate policy in Brussels on 30 August 2012. The first stakeholder meeting was held in January 2011. In the second meeting, there were 90 participants from Member States and Brussels based organisations, representing farmers, forest owners, wood and paper industry, environmental NGO's, research institutes, think tanks and bioenergy associations. In addition, some participants represented governments of Member States, groups in the European Parliament and various Directorates of the Commission.

The programme of the morning included an opening statement, an overview presentation of LULUCF concepts and principles and a presentation of the Commission proposal for a decision on LULUCF accounting rules and national action plans. In the opening statement the Commission emphasized that it is time to put Durban into practise and close the gap in the Green House Gas accounts of the EU now, some other Parties to UNFCCC have started doing it already. The Decision is addressed to Member States, no individual farmer or forest owner will be expected to do anything additional because of this Decision. The process has two steps. The first one is to improve the accounts in order to ensure robust data and reduced uncertainties. When good and harmonized data based on common accounting rules is available, the inclusion of the sector into the EU's reduction commitment can be subject of a new co-decision process.

In the afternoon representatives from the Council (Environmental Attaché of the Cypriot Presidency) and from the European Parliament (Head of Office from MEP Girling's office) provided an overview of the state of play of negotiations and next steps. Both pointed out that there is a common understanding between the ENVE rapporteur and the Cypriot Presidency to reach a first reading agreement and that trilogue could start in November or end of October. This time table was supported by many stakeholders. Some participants noted that it would be useful to have the issue closed before the UNFCCC Doha meeting.

The major part of the afternoon was used for a round table discussion. All stakeholders that participated in the discussions welcomed the proposal on LULUCF accounting. There was also wide support for the two stage approach. In more detailed comments there was a wide variety of views which were similar to the proposals for amendments made by the Member States in the Committees of the Parliament.

Environmental NGOs support the mandatory accounting of agricultural activities in order to reduce the possibility to pick and choose. In fact they consider the voluntary approach approved in Durban to be detrimental. They agree that in addition to agricultural lands, wetland management should also be mandatory. Historical baselines should be the basis for all accounting, projected reference levels for forest management accounting are not considered to be reliable. Examples for measures that may be included in LULUCF Action Plans in Annex 4 were considered to start from carbon point of view only, even though forests have also other important roles. In view of the second step, environmental NGOs also find it important to maintain the "firewall" between LULUCF and the EU ETS.

Forestry organisations are glad that the role of forests and wood products has been recognised. However, they would prefer the EU to stay in line with the internationally accepted rules because stricter rules could weaken the competitiveness of European wood and thus result in less active forest management and less use of wood, which would counteract the mitigation targets. Forestry organizations made remarks on the competence of the Commission to both change reference levels and request LULUCF Action Plans. COM noted here that it has no intention to interfere in national policies. The possibility to change reference levels is there only for the case that the reference levels sent to UNFCCC are changed, i.e. as a measure to ensure consistency. It was also explained that the Action plans would hold no legally binding measures or financial incentives, but should be seen as synthesis reports explaining the situation and potential in the LULUCF sector. On the text itself, forestry industry mentioned the definition of forest as an important point while recognizing that discussions on appropriate definition of forest continue in different international fora. Also, it was questioned whether the examples in the Commission's explanatory memorandum on ways to increase storage of carbon in the forest would actually serve the purpose of carbon sequestration. Finally, some forestry organisations also find that forest owners should get credit to the benefits achieved through forests.

Farmers recognise the importance to reduce emissions related to agriculture and land use. This ambitious policy should be compatible with food security; production capacity should be maintained. Aligning with international rules would be better than stricter EU rules. Farmers representatives are sceptical about a national LULUCF Action Plans. For the next step, a profound impact assessment is important. Scientific knowledge on emissions from agricultural lands is still rather weak. COM noted that information on agricultural lands is already reported to UNFCCC. Those who need to improve its quality have ten years to do so, with support from JRC.