

# European AgriCultural Convention

## A Rural Future For A Larger Europe

**Speech delivered on the occasion of the plenary session of the Convention on the Future of Europe 24th June 2002 by Sharon Leclercq-Spooner**

Good Afternoon.

on behalf of the AgriCultural convention, which brings together a wide range of representatives from civil society – including consumers, environmentalists, heritage conservationists, farmers, development NGO's, and some government officials and politicians from all corners of Europe - East, West, North and South. We share serious concerns about the negative side effects of the current CAP – and particularly it's centrally controlled productivist focus. We came together to form a vision for the future of agriculture in an enlarged Europe.

I urge you to read our statement, which is outside. It is the result of an innovative, dynamic and effective process of consultation. Mr President, thank you very much for supporting this initiative by your presence at the gathering of our AgriCultural convention. We seek to answer your questions, and continue to work on more detailed recommendations both to the Convention and for the Mid Term Review of the CAP. All are welcome to contribute. We hope to be able to act as an independent contact group specifically on the issues of the future of AgriCulture and rural development. We are however happy in the meantime to put forward a few key points through this Environment contact group as the environmental dimension is central to our vision.

I will focus on 2 key constitutional areas:

Firstly: decision-making

Secondly: the establishment of a new Common Agricultural and Rural Policy - a C.A..R.P, with the emphasis on Rural - a CARP

**Regarding decision making: We call on the convention to ensure accountability in decision making related to agriculture.**

This is not the case at present. The CAP has reached levels of complexity that even the experts can no longer master. With compulsory spending rules, sectoral policies run by sectoral management committees, and decision making limited to very few players, there is little democratic accountability.

We make 4 key recommendations:

1. That the broad lines of the CARP be decided and funded as a Community policy
2. That the CARP be subject to Co-decision between Council and the European parliament both for policy and budgets
3. That policy co-ordination be encouraged between different Commission directorates – (Environment, regional, social, industry, consumer, development, culture and external relations interests also need to be taken into account).
4. And perhaps most importantly, we urge you to explore the application of open governance principles to CARP management – especially how to improve the participation of stakeholders.

In the agricultural area, there have been some very good experiences with participatory democracy. Notably the LEADER type programmes, which promote integrated territorial programmes, public/private partnerships, competence exchange and networking between regional groups. Both the quality of policy and the effectiveness of implementation is improved by involving the relevant actors and stakeholders. These approaches should be central to the future CARP.

**Secondly, establishment of a CARP**

We call on the Convention to set out the foundations for a new Common Agricultural and Rural Policy in the treaty.

We propose inclusion of some new rights:

- the right to healthy food, and to transparent information about its production and safety
- the right to a healthy environment and clean water,

- the right to produce and consume GMO-free food (as we see AgriCulture and forestry both as archive of the past and laboratory for the future, this is not a call for a ban, but a call for responsibility and freedom of choice)

We request changes to the articles of the Nice treaty (title II, esp art 33) to set out the objectives of a CARP based on the core EU principles of sustainable development. (The current CAP does not meet sustainable development criteria.)

We believe that the CARP should:

- ensure the viability of agricultural production in Europe based on responsible yields
- provide fair income for farmers and good prospects for young farmers
- protect environmental resources such as soil, water and bio-diversity
- provide quality and variety of healthy food
- ensure animal welfare
- foster the development of local economies and cultures (*not just agriculture*)

We call for a CARP designed to enable developing countries fair access to Western markets and development of food security within their own. We believe it is essential to use the WTO development round to advocate an integrated approach to rural development and sustainable farming practices across the world. The US farm bill is a regrettable step backwards. The EU must not let this prevent it from taking the lead in negotiating globally responsible solutions.

We recommend a significant, shift of funding from production support towards rural development. (promotion of economic diversity and jobs in the countryside, payment for environmental services, such as maintenance of clean water supply, infrastructural improvements, promotion of artisanal foods and tourism etc)

Enlargement provides an opportunity, which several accession countries are rightly taking, to start this shift towards rural development. Representatives from new Member States were particularly dynamic in our convention. We hope to see change leadership in old member states as well.

So to summarise we call for a CARP, based on 2 key sets of principles:

- sustainable development, and
- democratic accountability.

We envision a CARP clearly identified as a community policy, based on networks of integrated territorial programmes and developed and managed in the spirit of participatory democracy.

The European AgriCultural convention is an ongoing process, we encourage you to give your feedback on this document and contribute to a positive dialogue.

Brussels, 24th June 2002