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Joint Press Release

United call for rejection of unrealistic nature legislation that endangers farmers and fishers' livelihoods and food production in the EU

As part of its Biodiversity strategy, the European Commission proposed last year its flagship Nature Restoration Law which calls for new binding targets to restore degraded ecosystems. The Regulation is bound to have huge and devastating consequences for farming and forestry across the EU, to close countless fishing grounds for restoration purposes.

The Commission conducted an impact assessment which does not accurately represent the actual impact on the primary producers in Europe, and instead focused on the benefits it will have for society. The Commission expects all restoration to come from the CAP or EMFAF, when these budgets are already over-stretched; and refuses to propose a concrete Restoration Fund for the benefit of all actors in this transition. As a result, in an unprecedented move, the European Parliament's Committees on Agriculture (AGRI) and Fisheries (PECH) have rejected the proposal. On 15 June, the European Parliament's Committee on Environment (ENVI) will take a final decision on the file. Copa-Cogeca and Europêche call on this Committee to hear and respect the concerns of the farmer and fisher communities and request the Commission to restart the process from the scratch.

The European Commission proposed last year a Nature Restoration Law, introducing new legally binding targets and obligations for Member States, and indirectly on our European primary production sectors. All Members of the European Parliament who supported rejection said yes to nature restoration but no to an ill-thought out, unrealistic, and unimplementable legislation that endangers farmers and fishers' livelihoods and food production in the EU. These sectors have been facing not only global challenges (e.g., Covid, energy crisis, war), but also radical environmental EU policies that are deeply affecting EU food production and food sovereignty.

Niels Peter Nørring, Chairman of the Working Party on Environment for Copa-Cogeca, declared: "A good Nature Restoration Law cannot be designed without the clear commitment of farmers and fishermen. So, instead of threats and backdoor deals, the European Commission should go back to the drawing board. EU authorities must respect and acknowledge that those who will be implementing this law do not see it as feasible, workable, nor implementable."

Javier Garat, President of Europêche, commented: *“The Commission has created a polarised debate around the EU Nature Restoration Law. Likewise, NGOs have politicized and simplified the debate by listing MEPs in favour or against nature. But the problem is that we have reached a point where protection is synonymous with exclusion. We must try to make environmental protection compatible with human activity and in particular with the much-needed production of food. We are already importing 70% of the seafood we are consuming in Europe. The new Law will certainly contribute to increase the food security gap.”*

According to the sector, the troubled debate about the new environmental law made one thing clear. In order to meet the needs of its people, the EU must give a straight answer to fundamental question: How much food should the EU produce/import and is it wise to entrust our food security to third countries?

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Translations will be available in DE, ES, FR, IT, PL and RO on the Copa-Cogeca website soon.

About us - Copa and Cogeca are the united voice of farmers and agri-cooperatives in the EU. Together, we ensure that EU agriculture is sustainable, innovative and competitive, while guaranteeing food security for 500 million people throughout Europe. >>> More information www.copa-cogeca.eu

Europêche is the representative body for fishermen and fishing vessel-owners in the European Union. www.europeche.org

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