**WAA (World Association of Agronomist’s) - Webinar 2nd July 2020**

***1st International Conference WAAFORAGENDA2030***

***Saluti delle Autorita – Presidente CEDIA***

***Le politiche Europee ed il Piano di azioneWAAFORAGENDA2030***

Good afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great pleasure for me, to participate in this webinar conference and address you on behalf of CEDIA, the European Association of Agricultural Scientists and Engineers; which is also a regional member of WAA (World Association of Agronomists).

**Introduction to CEDIA**

For those not familiar with CEDIA; - CEDIA is the European Network which links the Associations of Agricultural Engineers and Scientists from various European countries. Its origins go back to members of our profession attached to the EU Institutions in Brussels, 40 years ago. The main purpose of the Network is the promotion of the profession and its interests, and the support of members, and member Associations.

Cedia is listed in Belgium as a voluntary organisation, and registered on the European Transparency Register. Our members are involved in a professional capacity across the full spectrum of activities in Agriculture Agri business and Agrifood.

Cedia is an associate, and cooperates closely with ICA - the European Association for Life Sciences Universities. Today we are joined by , President of ISLE, which is the ICA Support Network with responsibility for promoting sustainability in university courses and by a number of other speakers from associated Universities.

For those in attendance from other parts of the world, I would like to refer to some current developments in Europe, and in relation to European Agriculture.

**EU Presidency**

Yesterday,1st July, Germany took over for the next six months, the rotating presidency of the European Union; among its priorities are, addressing the consequences of the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Brexit negotiations and the issues of a Fair and Sustainable Europe, and Europe’s place in the world.

The principle issues relating to Agriculture are the Green Deal, and the proposals for a new CAP – which require political approval.

**Brexit,** which refers to the exit of the United Kingdom from the EU, reduces EU membership to 27 Countries, a transition phase is in place, with negotiations re future arrangements ongoing.

**Covid -19,**

Has put food security on top of the agenda in all EU countries , The critical importance of supply chains has been brought to the fore and will remain, a future top agenda item.

Covid -19 has also demonstrated the resilience of farming and the food processing sector, food supplies were maintained on supermarket shelves, although there were some delays at internal borders.

Changes in eating patterns has led to changes in Demand, and prices to farmers in some sectors.

In the work place, meat processing sector staff have suffered greatly, second only to health care professionals.

The ways of working have changed for most persons.

Reductions in trade and economic growth is now predicted to fall.

The economies of all countries will take some time to recover.

In order to help this recovery a 750 Billion Euro stimulus package is being made available - A major task for the German Presidency is to ensure its immediate implementation.

***Agriculture in the EU - Some general comments***

***The principle policy issues*** *relate the Green Deal, and the new CAP proposals, which I repeat, need political approval, having been adopted by the Commission.*

***Europe is one of the world’s leading producers of food*** *and guarantees food security for over 500 million European citizens.*

***Agricultural productivity*** *has continuously increased over the years supported by science, technology and mechanisation. However, substantial scientific evidence indicates that the current system is not sustainable, requiring change and new approaches.*

***Trade:*** *The EU is the largest Agri food importer and exporter in the world, trading in a wide range of products and commodities.*

*The* ***EU‘ s rural areas is home to 55% of its citizens****, while serving as a major base for employment, recreation and tourism.*

*There are approximately* ***10 million farmers and farm holdings in the EU,*** *with 44 million jobs associated with the European food chain.*

*The EU’s farmer’s and foresters are the guardians for the natural resources of soil, water, air, and biodiversity on 84% of EU land.*

***Farm Structure:*** *It is estimated that 84% of total holdings occupy 82% of (UAA) utilised Agricultural area, while 86% of total holdings occupy 18% of UAA.*

***Depopulation*** *of European rural areas is a concern. The number of small farmers continue to decrease while farm sizes are increasing.*

***Farm Incomes;*** *Despite the importance of the sector, farmer’s average income, while improving, is about 40% lower, when compared to the average income of other citizens. The farming population despite best efforts is both declining and ageing.*

***Direct payments*** *make up approximately 46% of farmer income, varying with region and sector.*

***Food Waste and nutrition:*** *In the European Union about 20% of food produced is currently wasted, whilst 36 million citizens cannot afford a quality meal every second day. This is set against a backdrop of rising obesity, contributing to a high prelevance of diet related diseases and related health care costs. Over half of the adult population of the EU are overweight.* ***The food environment does not always allow for the healthy option, to be the easiest option.***

***Health:*** *Antimicrobial resistance is a serious health threat linked to excessive and inappropriate use of antimicrobials including in farmed animals, as well as to the discharge of antimicrobials in the environment.*

**The CAP-The European common agriculture policy**

The CAP is the guiding Agricultural policy throughout the European Union. It has evolved over the years. It is still evolving. It was developed in the early sixties to ensure food security, a fair standard of living for farmers and reasonable food prices for consumers. It was a first tool towards European Integration.

**Early CAP measures** were based mostly on price and market support to include Product Quotas, intervention purchases, export subsidies, and restricted market access. While the policy was very successful in addressing food security, and developing agriculture in the region It was also often criticised, for being, in equitable, - farmers did not get a fair share of the supports, trade distorting and environmentally damaging.

**Direct payments** for farmers were introduced in the 1992 CAP reforms. These were decoupled from production in 2003 reforms. Direct payments are in compliance with WTO trade arrangements and are non market distorting under WTO rules. Production is now market driven within the EU.

The Common Agricultural policy is divided into **two pillars;** Pillar 1, focusses on financial support - direct payments to farmers, which accounts for about 70% of CAP spending. Pillar 2 focuses mainly on rural Development programmes.

**The cost** the Common Agricultural policy for the period 2014 to 2020 amounted to 410 Billion Euros or 38% of the EU’s total Budget for that period. This % which has been declining in recent years.

***Conditionality****: In order for Farmers to receive direct payments they must fulfil certain conditions with regard to environmental protection, food safety, animal welfare.*

***Views on CAP***

While both farmers and consumers are generally favourable towards CAP policy, there are demands for modernisation and simplification as well as for a greater commitment and contribution of Agriculture to Economic, Environmental and Social Sustainability.

*(There are currently five Green Governments among EU member states.)*

Since the adaptation and publication of CAP proposals by the commission in 2018, Elections for the European Parliament have taken place, leading to a new Parliament and a new Commission.

**European Green Deal**

On the 11th **December 2019, t**he new Commission adopted the **European Green Deal**  **which re sets the Commission’s commitment to tackling climate change and environmental related challenges - the defining task of this generation.**

The European Green Dealsets out how to make Europe the first climate – neutral region with no net emissions of Green house gases by 2050. It maps a way forward, a new sustainable and inclusive growth strategy to boost the economy, improve people’s health and quality of life, care for nature and leave no one behind. It applies across all policy areas. The intention is to put Europe on a new path of sustainable and inclusive growth. The Green deal is an integral part of the Commission’s strategy to implement the United Nation’s 2030 Agenda and the Paris agreement on climate change, which it has already committed to.

The Green deal framework includes:-

* **A farm to fork strategy**
* **A Biodiversity Strategy**
* **A Climate Law** –
* **An Action Plan for the Circular Economy**

The farm to fork strategy and the Biodiversity strategy will also be a central element of the EU’s recovery plan following the Covid-19 pandemic.

**The Farm to Fork strategy** is at the heart of the Green deal. It addresses comprehensively the challenges of sustainable food systems and recognises the inextricable links between healthy people, healthy societies and a healthy planet. The CAP is a key tool in support of this strategy. Under the CAP for 2021 – 2027, incentives have been proposed for farmers to actively contribute to climate objectives, protection of the environment and biodiversity. The farm to fork strategy will compliment and support these efforts to move towards more sustainable food systems.

The Farm to fork strategy will interphase with the new Circular Economy Action Plan, the 2030 Biodiversity Strategy, the Forestry Strategy, the EU Climate ambition and the zero pollution strategy. It will have a major influence on how we farm in future.

**Bio Diversity Strategy:**  Is a comprehensive plan for protecting nature and reversing the degradation of ecosystems. This includes protecting areas on land and at sea, restoration of ecosystems across the EU and putting measures in place to enable the necessary transformative change.

Covid -19 has demonstrated a clear link between health and ecosystems – the risk of emergence of infectious diseases increase as nature is disturbed or destroyed.

This particular strategy is estimated to cost in the region of 20 billion Euro per annum and will be part of Europe’s recovery programme

**Climate Mitigation and adaptation:** The Intergovernmental Panel report on Climate Change estimates that 25% – 30% of global greenhouse gas emissions are attributable to the food system. Food systems also contribute to pollution of air, soil and water as well as to biodiversity loss. Progress is being made.

The Agricultural sector in the EU has increased productivity by 9% since 2005 while cutting GHG (green-house gases) by 24% since 1990.

Overall, between 1990 and 2018, Europe has reduced green house gas emissions by 23 % while the economy grew by 61%.

**The Green deal has set Targets for the Agricultural Sector together with impact indicators; as well as output and result indicators**.

1. Reducing by 50% the use and risk of chemical pesticides by 2030. Reducing by 50% the use of high risk pesticides
2. Reducing by 50% the sales of antimicrobials for farmed animals and in aquaculture by 2030
3. Reducing nutrient losses from fertiliser by 50% by 2030, resulting in the reduction of the use of fertilisers by at least 20%.
4. Achieve 25% of agricultural area under organic farming by 2030
5. Completing fast broadband internet access in rural areas.
6. Increasing land for biodiversity, including agricultural area under high- diversity landscape features

**Climate** **Target**: Europe to be climate neutral by 2050, with a reduction target for GHG (green house gases) to 50 % or 55% compared to 1990 levels, by 2030

*(Measuring performance rather just compliance is a welcome addition)*

**Green Finance and Investment:-**  A sustainable Europe Investment plan will be presented by the commission to help meet the additional funding needs.

**Outline proposals for the next CAP period 2021 to 2027,**

The CAP structure provides the framework through which the Green deal will be reflected.

The CAP proposals for 2020 to 2027 whichwere adopted by the Commission in 2018 following wide consultation as already mentioned await final political agreement and approval.

**Three general Objectives of CAP policy 2021 -2027**

1. To foster a smart resilient and diverse agricultural sector ensuring food security
2. To bolster environmental care and climate action and to contribute to the environmental – and climate – related objectives of the Union
3. To strengthen the socio economic fabric of rural areas

**A new way of working**

A new way of working is proposed, giving greater subsidiarity by way of National strategic plans. National plans drawn up by Ministries of Agriculture in coordination with other relevant national authorities e.g. Environmental protection agencies, will set out how EU objectives are to be achieved, for approved by the European Commission. The focus will be on performance rather than just, compliance through the creation of a performance Monitoring and Evaluation framework.

**The nine specific objectives of CAP**

* **to ensure a fair income to farmers**

food security*, (role of CAP, measures to best address current farm income situation in EU and farm viability)*

* **to increase competitiveness**

(research, technology, digitalisation, management information systems)

* **to rebalance the power in the food chain**

improve farmer’s share (*farmers low share of value add*ed; legal base to address trans*parency – unfair trading practices* )

* **climate change action**

mitigation and adaptation, sustainable energy-(*reduction of emissions by adaptation of new farming methods- soil management . Mitigation of risk of climate change to agriculture through new plant varieties, agronomic practises etc.)*

* **environmental care**

water, soil and air- (*Soil a most important natural resource supplying nutrients, water, oxygen support for plants; Carbon sequestration abilities, precision agriculture etc.)*

* **to preserve landscapes and biodiversity**

enhance ecosystem services and preserve habits (voluntary *ECO-Scheme – with enhanced conditionality)*

* **to support generational renewal**

(attract young farmers & businesses to rural areas)

* **vibrant rural areas**

promote employment, growth, social inclusion, Bio economy & forestry- (*Income support, rural Development programmes )*

* **to protect food and health quality**

Improve response of agriculture to providing quality food (more nutritious, healthy and sustainable; animal welfare; mitigate food waste-reduce *Anti microbial resistance, food bourne diseases)*

**These objectives will be supported** by way of increased:- budget, research, and farmer support.

**Budget –** There will be a small positive Budget adjustment, the extra funds going primarily to pillar two.

**Research**:by way of an expanded Horizon, and related programmes, aiming to provide new knowledge, technologies and innovation.

**Farmers** who have a key role to play will be given incentives and compensated for their efforts to facilitate the transitionto more sustainable systems.

**Distribution of Direct Payments:** A fairer distribution of direct payments, with a better targetting of support towards medium and small sized farmers.

**Young Farmers:** Special support payments and certain other priorities for young Farmers .

**Eco - Scheme – Green architecture:** These arevoluntary additional measures for which farmers may enter.

**Conditionality**: 100% compliance with green measures or loss of all direct payments, up from a potential 30% loss of payments at present.

**The WAA (World Association of Agronomists) Action Plan 2020-2030**

The WAA Action Plan 2020-2030 identifies clearly with the Green Deal, the farm to Fork strategy, and the CAP Proposals 2021 - 2027. Of the 17 SDG’s (Sustainable Development Goals) of the United Nations the 7 goals and targets indicated below were regarded as appropriate for the purposes of this project.

**WAAFORAGENDA 2030**

Focus area SDG’s Targets

A – Climate change and production area 2, 12, 13 12.2; 13.1; 13.3

B – Nutrition and food waste 8, 12, 15 2.4; 8.4; 12.3; 15.9

C – Biodiversity and genetic improvement 2, 15 2.5; 15.6; 15.9

D- Sustainability and productivity 2, 12, 15 2.4; 12.4; 15.4

E- Development and local identity 8, 11, 15 8.9; 11.4; 15.1

f- Design culture and social responsibility 4, 8, 12 4.4; 8.4; 12b

The WAA agenda, covering 6 key Action areas, incorporating several sub projects on a global basis, provides an ideal prototype, which through monitoring, performance evaluation and analysis will enable the “Global farm lab” to, provide indicatory evidence as to best practise, and act as   a type barometer for performance measurement, and  for progress being made towards agenda 2030.

This WAA plan of action provide an opportunity for our profession world wide to be part of an initiative which will contribute the success of Agenda2030 and the achievement SDG Goals as well as being a learning experience for individual members.

The WAA focus areas and Action Plan for Agenda 2030 are in line the with the focus of the proposed CAP strategic plan and European green deal.

Better alignment of policies and actions with SDG’s, with measurable impact indicators, together with monitoring and performance management as specified in the WAA action plan is essential in measuring progress towards achievement of the SDG’s. This was a weakness which often bedevilled past policies and programmes. The “new way of working” as proposed for the new CAP gives Member States the opportunity to link their action plans to the UN SDG’s. which were endorsed by EU member states in 2015.

**The Targets set by the Green deal for the Agricultural Sector,** while necessary, are particularly challenging for most settings. The implementation of the adaptations and targets proposed will require societal changes as well as new science, technology, and farming practises, if they are to be achieved. Synchronisation of science and advisory capacity inline with such developments is required If the risks to the security of food chains are to be avoided. It is Important that moves towards sustainability be carefully planned, science based, and adequately financed.

**New Challenges for the Agricultural Profession**

The Agricultural Profession through science and technology can can again make a significant impact in addressing sustainability in all its facets; as was the case with the Green Revolution over 60 years ago, in addressing food security, the major issue, particularly in Asia, at that time.

The challenges of today:-

* Climate change: mitigation and adaptation;
* Management of the natural resources used by Agriculture,
* Enhancing Protection of biodiversity and ecosystems within agrarian and forest systems,
* Effecting sustainability of food systems, ensuring wholesome and healthy food,
* Improving the economic position of farmers and rural communities.

As the only profession operating in the specific space from “Soil to Society”, with the responsibility of producing food and natural materials, by harnessing natural resources in a sustainable way, integrating the whole chain, adding value, and providing solutions for human benefit.

While giving rise to major challenges for our profession, it also provides the opportunity for a new beginning. Sustainability is here to stay. We must all evolve in our ways and show resilience.

S. Gaule

2nd July 2020