

# Towards a Citizens' Agricultural Policy

## Conference report

"We spend 39% of the EU budget on a policy that is failing on an awful lot of markers... We must change the game" (MEP Alyn Smith)



"The CAP is fighting the last war. This policy is still based on the objectives set out in the Treaty of Rome in 1957. Boosting food production was a good idea at the time, when Europe was actually short on food. We have to think again about the fundamental purposes of the CAP". (Pete Ritchie)

**"It's our food system, and it's gonna take all of us to change it for the better"** (Nora McKeon)



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## Speakers

**Alyn Smith** is a Scottish Member of the European Parliament & Member of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development.

**David Barnes** is Chief Agricultural Officer for Scotland.

**Faustine Defossez** is Senior Policy Officer for Agriculture and Bioenergy at the European Environmental Bureau.

**Harriet Friedmann** is Professor in Sociology at the University of Toronto and one of the founding members of the Toronto Food Policy Council. She joined us by Skype.

**Councillor Lesley Hinds** represents the Inverleith ward on the City of Edinburgh Council and is Chair of Edible Edinburgh.

**Nora McKeon** is a member of the Council on World Food Security; and was formerly Civil Society Director at the UN Food & Agriculture Organization.

**Rosie Boycott** is the Chair of the London Food Board. She joined us by Skype.

**Pete Ritchie** is Nourish's director and a farmer at Whitmuir Organic Farm.

**Samuel Féret** is the coordinator of the European network Arc2020 and president of the think tank Groupe de Bruges.

## Chairs

**Bryan Wynne** is a board member of Nourish Scotland.

**Niamh Moore** is Professor in Sociology at the University of Edinburgh.

**Shelagh Young** is a board member of Nourish Scotland.

## Panellists

**Cheryl McIntyre** is a member of the Young Crofters, a branch of the Scottish Crofting Federation.

**Guus Thijssen** is project coordinator at the Dutch Slow Food Youth Network.

**Hassan Waheed** studies Sustainable Development at the University of Edinburgh and is actively involved in FoodSharing Edinburgh, Net Impact Edinburgh, and the SHRUB cooperative.

**Mo Samson** is a farmer at Muddy Boots, Fife.

**Patrick Mulvany** is a member of the Food Ethics Council and of the Council on World Food Security.

**Tom Kirby** is a founding member of the Granton Community Gardeners in Edinburgh.

# INTRODUCTION

*Foreword by Alyn Smith*

The Common Agricultural Policy is the one truly common budget in the European Union, costing 43 billion EUR in 2014 in farm subsidies with an additional 13 billion EUR in rural development funding. While the EU does heavily fund other policy areas, from regional development projects to energy infrastructure to research in universities, agriculture is the only spending area entirely determined by EU money and rules. Therefore, it is unfortunate that the CAP is also the EU policy area that provokes most distrust and discontent from both the people it is meant to help (farmers), policymakers, and the general citizenry. The CAP has - by different critics - been called a welfare system keeping inefficient farmers in business, a support mechanism for unnecessarily high food prices, a behemoth shackling farmers with unnecessary rules and regulations, an environmental disaster, a distorter of world markets, a machine for kicking small farmers off the land, and a slush fund for gigantic agri-businesses, food processors and landowners. Clearly, these viewpoints contradict each other, but they are a measure of the level of public unhappiness with what should be the EU's flagship policy - and to be fair, a policy that did deliver on its primary goal of feeding Europe's population after World War 2.

Everyone wants reform: I am no exception. The CAP is simply not delivering on its primary goals. The CAP is supposed to stabilise markets, yet dairy prices have crashed three times in the last seven years. The CAP is meant to secure a fair income for farmers, yet many farmers are faced with prices lower than the cost of production, and face unfair bargaining power and practices from powerful retailers and processors. Obscenely technical rules surrounding payment entitlements enable public subsidy to go to landowners who do not actively farm, and the model of hectare-based payments ensures that around 70% of payments go to the 20% wealthiest farmers. The CAP is supposed to keep farmers on the land, yet one in every four farms in the EU disappeared between 2003 and 2014. The CAP is supposed to ensure a healthy environment and properly managed landscapes, yet biodiversity in Europe is collapsing, and much of our soil and water is polluted from agro-chemicals. The CAP must be at the heart of rural economic vitality, yet rural depopulation continues apace across Europe. And the CAP should not harm development or ecosystems in other parts of the world, yet vast swathes of Brazilian rainforest are disappearing in order to grow soy to feed the livestock produced in Europe.

We need to change the game. We need agricultural support systems that help small farmers stay economically viable, produce healthy food for local markets and develop quality brands. We need farming systems that protect the sustainability of our water and soils, boost biodiversity, and protect animals from inhumane rearing systems. We need fair trading systems that help poor countries develop their potential without exacerbating climate change in the process. And we need fair trading practices so that participation in the market genuinely pays for farmers, and consumers have a wider range of retail options than a few big-box stores.

Nourish is at the very heart of this debate: a driver of the key ideas and evidence needed to make the case for reform and the creation of a truly citizens' CAP.

## *Foreword by Nourish Scotland*

The Common Agricultural Policy was under heavy criticism in the run up to the last major reform that took place between 2010 and 2014. Two years on, opinions on the results of that reform process are mixed. Some observers are cautiously positive and acknowledge the progress made in addressing some issues of fairness and environmental sustainability. Others are mostly disappointed and condemn the new CAP for green washing and stopping short of tackling the main challenges facing agriculture. What all agree on is that the CAP is too complex, very expensive, mostly ineffective, and disconnected from the reality in the fields and in society. In short, the CAP still dramatically lacks legitimacy.

This is the conclusion we came to at Nourish Scotland, and the reason why we decided to organise an event about democratising the CAP.

The legitimacy of the CAP needs to be addressed on two fronts: not only by making it more effective and enhancing the public goods it delivers, but also by improving its democratic credentials by bringing the general public and the people working on the land back into the debate. These two fronts were discussed throughout the one-and-a-half day event organised by Nourish Scotland Towards a Citizens' Agricultural Policy on 22nd and 23rd of October 2015. The event was sponsored by MEP Alyn Smyth and took place in the Royal Botanical Gardens Edinburgh. Almost 100 people attended one or both days, coming from various backgrounds, such as community food growing groups, civil society organisations, academia, politics, or farming.

The outcomes of the conversations are presented in this report following the three-fold structure that guided the event: ideas, actors, and advocacy.

**Nourish Scotland** is a Scottish civil society organisation that works to make the food system fairer and more sustainable, in Scotland and beyond. Changing our food culture and public policies are key to achieving this. Nourish facilitates this change through engaging with organisations, community initiatives, politicians and officials. We work to influence policies from local to EU level.



# Ideas



The conference was kick-started by Pete Ritchie who briefly set out the context of farming in Scotland and explained what is wrong with the CAP.

- **it** drives a system of commodities, not food
- **it** serves the agri-food industry, not human nutrition
- **it** engenders environmental degradation in Europe and more globally through imports
- **it** reinforces market forces (larger farms and longer supply chains) instead of promoting public goods

## We pay 3 times for food Faustine Bas-Defossez

1. **for** the subsidies - which we pay as taxpayers;
2. **for** the products we buy - and despite subsidies good food is more expensive than bad food;
3. **for** cleaning up the damage made by bad food and farming to the environment and our health.

**// We need to know where we come from to understand how we got here and what the drivers for change are //** David Barnes

How did we get here? David Barnes explained the history of the CAP, from 1957 up to today. The presentation he used and the recording of his talk are available on Nourish's website.



As a result of the consecutive reforms, which have added objectives, pillars, instruments, conditions, exemptions, flexibility... the CAP is indeed an extremely complicated policy. Member States have been calling for "simplification", and everyone agrees that it is needed; but no one agrees on how to simplify the CAP. Therefore Barnes emphasised that any proposal for a reformed CAP, or new alternative policy, will have to take Member States' calls for simplicity and flexibility into account. The challenge will therefore be to figure out how to make the CAP greener, fairer and healthier without adding administrative burdens and complex rules.

## Is the way forward to reform the present CAP or to replace it with a new policy?

This question was touched upon at the conference but remains an ongoing debate. Faustine Bas-Defossez called for a new Sustainable Food and Farming Policy; Samuel Féret for a Common Food Systems Policy. If the current CAP is maintained, the fate of the Direct Payments (Pillar I) will have to be settled.

Direct Payments are 70% of CAP expenditure and, Féret explained, they are ‘the big issue’ of the CAP. Their justification is extremely weak and they fail to solve the issues of low incomes in the agricultural sector, unsustainable farming methods, and farms’ economic unviability. The remaining 30% of the CAP is spent on Targeted Payments (Pillar II), which provide incentives for environmental protection, support for the creation of rural jobs, and such. It was suggested that shifting the whole CAP to this model could be a route forward.

Whether in a reformed CAP or a whole new policy framework, the main challenge is to bring about fundamental change. This means an approach to farming policy which takes into account the whole system, from ecology to worker rights to public health, and a new narrative about what farming is for.

Bas-Defossez argued for a more holistic approach to food and farming that does not dissociate food production from consumption, and recognises that agriculture and environmental sustainability must go hand in hand in order to achieve long-term food security. This was echoed by Patrick Mulvany who stressed that agricultural policy must be seen in the context of all other related policies: on the environment, trade, public health, research and development, social justice, and competition.

Nora McKeon highlighted the two opposing narratives around food and agriculture. The dominant narrative in Europe is what she called the corporate narrative, which embraces the productivist paradigm. Productivism emphasises the need to increase food production, rationalise farming methods and embrace technology in order to secure global food security. It thus leads to intensive models of farming (large farms with expensive machines and little labour) and usually long food supply chains. The emerging alternative narrative in Europe, which is still mainstream in most parts of Asia, Africa and South America, is based on food sovereignty.

**It does not take a PhD to understand that the winning strategy to promote food security is to support and defend small scale producers’ own efforts**

Nora McKeon

Food sovereignty, as a model of farming, is based on agro-ecology, collaboration between farmers, and short food chains. As a driver of agricultural policy, McKeon explained, food sovereignty promotes local food webs and transparent political processes that involve smallholder organisations and consumers as central actors with real influence.

In the UK, the food sovereignty movement has grown in recent years. For more information and a report of the Food Sovereignty Gathering, that took place just after this CAP event, visit [foodsovereignty.org.uk](http://foodsovereignty.org.uk). Whether civil society’s campaign for a greener and fairer European Agricultural Policy should be run within or alongside the Food Sovereignty Movement is an important question that will have to be discussed and answered in the run up to a potential mid-term review of the CAP in 2017.



Falkland Kitchen Farm



## So what do we want the CAP to do?

**Ritchie listed a few of the benefits the CAP should strive to provide to European farmers and citizens:**

- good jobs in the food and farming sectors,
- climate change mitigation and adaptation,
- restoring and enhancing biodiversity,
- high animal welfare,
- safeguarding soils and water, in and outside Europe,
- public health and nutrition,
- thriving rural communities and urban farming.

It is important to note that despite all the criticism of the CAP, agricultural and rural development policies and subsidies are needed. Féret described how the EU farming sector would be much worse off without the CAP: far fewer farmers, much more commodities imports, less maintenance of rural landscapes, abandonment of marginal rural areas, etc. In Scotland, Alyn Smith warned that a third of the Scottish farms would go under without CAP support. Féret therefore insisted that the point is not to mobilise citizens against the CAP, but to mobilise towards a new, constructive narrative for a better Food and Farming Policy.

**Féret outlined five principles that should guide the future CAP:**

**1. Public health.** Improving public health must be a central objective when discussing how to improve how we produce food, what food we produce, and how we consume food.

**2. Agro-ecology.** Ecologically sound farming methods and systems must be scaled out and up; and the environmental impact of agriculture and agricultural policies must be assessed and improved.

**3. Community and regional prosperity and resilience.** Resilience, local innovation and community development must be fostered in both rural and urban contexts, for example through support for small and medium-scaled farms, decentralised processing facilities, regional distribution networks, and direct marketing.

**4. Fair trade and food chains.** Effective instruments are needed to manage price volatility; there must be more exemptions from EU competition regulations for agricultural products; and agricultural policies must focus on multi-level markets within the EU. "It is an illusion to think that global markets could solve farmers' problems."

**5. Systemic approach.** Policies and programs must be better integrated: all policy decisions must be based on an assessment of their impact on all aspects of the food system including production, processing, distribution, trade, and consumption.

## ACTORS

Many speakers echoed the reflections that prompted Nourish's decision to organise this Citizens' CAP conference. McKeon hammered: I am totally convinced that changing our food system is something that builds above all from the local level up. Bas-Defossez confirmed the view that there is a substantial democratic deficit in Europe, and called on us and all citizens to hold their politicians and MEPs accountable. Féret highlighted the need to reinforce the participation of citizens in policymaking and the role of multi-actor platforms and new coalitions.

### **We are citizens and actors**

Nora McKeon invited us not to talk of "consumers" and "stakeholders", but of "citizens" and "actors".

She explained: We have been slaughtered into a role of being consumers who each one, on their own, make rational choices; rather than allowing us to be citizens who come together as groups to decide what kind of food we want, what we want our children to have, what we want for our environment, etc.

Stakeholders is a term that comes from the corporate meeting room. While stakeholders are defined by their interests, actors are people or groups who have rights.

**We are not only consumers and stakeholders; but citizens and actors with the right to choose what our future food system should look like.**

### **"There is an issue of who decides..."**

There is considerable pressure from those who currently benefit from the CAP for maintaining the status quo.

COPA-COGECA is the European umbrella of farmers unions and a vocal defender of conventional agriculture. It is very powerful in Brussels, and its national members are equally influential in most EU countries. Further, many corporations have high stakes in the status quo: agri-chemical companies thrive in an intensive model of agriculture and the sugar industry, for example, receives thousands of euros each year from the CAP.

In Brussels, three institutional bodies control a large part of decision-making powers on agricultural matters: DG AGRI in the Commission, COMAGRI in the European Parliament, and the Council of Agricultural Ministers. In DG AGRI and COMAGRI, many civil servants and politicians have interests in (conventional) agriculture: they are former or part-time farmers, or their family is, or the big players in their constituency are. In the Council, most Ministers have close links with the dominant farmers' union in their country, which are mostly members of COPA-COGECA, we come full circle.

### **"... and on what basis", Nora McKeon**

In modern states policies must be "evidence-based", McKeon explained. However, evidence is based on paradigms. In Europe, agricultural policies are mainly based on the productivist paradigm. Evidence is also shaped by the existing and available data. Because there is no information about informal markets and initiatives taking place within small communities, they are invisible and not taken into consideration by policies despite their importance for food security, rural vitality, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability - coincidentally the official objectives of the CAP.

## We must take the CAP out of the Brussels bubble

This means involving all levels of governments and a broader section of civil society. During the conference particular attention was paid to national governments, cities, and youth movements. The role of farmers was also an important focus point.

**You can't expect the candle makers to invent the light bulb** // MEP Alyn Smith



### National governments

Despite their eagerness to shift the blame to Brussels, national Ministers still hold the reins in agricultural matters: they decide on their country's negotiation stance, they make the final decisions in Brussels in the Council of Agricultural Ministers, and their departments are in charge of implementing the outcome of the negotiations - with increased flexibility allowed in the new CAP giving them leeway to improve or weaken previous decisions.

To successfully reform agricultural policy, it will therefore be crucial to first place those policy issues on the national agenda. In all EU countries there is a dire need to engage in nation-wide debates about what citizens want for their food, farmers, countryside, wildlife,... The next step is to keep politicians in check when they negotiate in Brussels: they must be held accountable for the policies they defend. The pressure and scrutiny must continue until after the reform, when governments implement the reformed EU policy.

### Cities

Cities were put in the spotlight because they are, after all, where most of the food is eaten: about three quarters of European population lives in urban areas and this figure is expected to increase to 80% by 2020. Besides, they are also a prime locus for more direct participation of citizens: local authorities such as City Councils are much closer to their citizens than central governments are. Rosie Boycott and Harriet Friedmann joined us by Skype to share their experience from the London Food Board and the Toronto Food Policy Council (TFPC), respectively; and City Councillor Lesley Hinds joined in person to talk about Edible Edinburgh.

They told us about all the projects and movements that are already happening in cities that contribute to a more sustainable food system. Friedmann emphasised the importance of involving farmers in early discussion stages about Urban Food Policies and bringing them around the table alongside city actors, as was the case during the creation of the TFPC. How cities could be involved in CAP politics, however, remained an unanswered question: 'Yes, but how?' was Rosie Boycott's reply.

All agreed that a coalition of European cities could be a significant actor for change in a future CAP reform, and existing networks such as Eurocities or the cities that signed up to the Milan Urban Food Policy could be the platform for their involvement.



## Grassroots movements

The second group in the spotlight was (youth) grassroots movements. It is important that citizens' groups and small NGOs become engaged in CAP politics alongside the usual environmental and agricultural organisations. All movements, community groups, and organisations that care about how we produce, process, transport, trade, consume, and/or dispose of food should become primary actors – and indeed those who care about social justice, public health, the environment and all other areas on which the food system has an impact.

Youth movements are important because young people have endless ideas, imagination of what a better world could look like, and energy and ambition to achieve those ideals. Some young people are interested in farming and feel a connection to the land, as Mo Samson, Tom Kirby, and Cheryl McIntyre testified. Many others are not, but as Hassan Waheed and Guus Thijssen pointed out, food can be a rallying tool. To engage young people, Waheed said we should talk about the CAP in relation to our food, and provoke thinking about what kind of ideal world we want. About CAP politics, he said it is very important for us to engage with higher-level policies such as the CAP, but also to look at what we can do at our own level because that is where youth organisations can make a real difference. They need to lobby their local authorities to address all the different issues linked to food.



Olga Bloemen



Youth Movement Panel

## Farmers

Farmers, finally, remain the central players in CAP politics. On that note, David Barnes astutely commented: “the farm union lobby is a very powerful voice in CAP negotiations. What I think is extremely interesting, is the extent to which that union voice is or isn’t representative of the entirety of the farm community”. Many small, and most very small European farmers are not represented in Brussels. Yet, their work contributes significantly to biodiversity protection and rural economies.

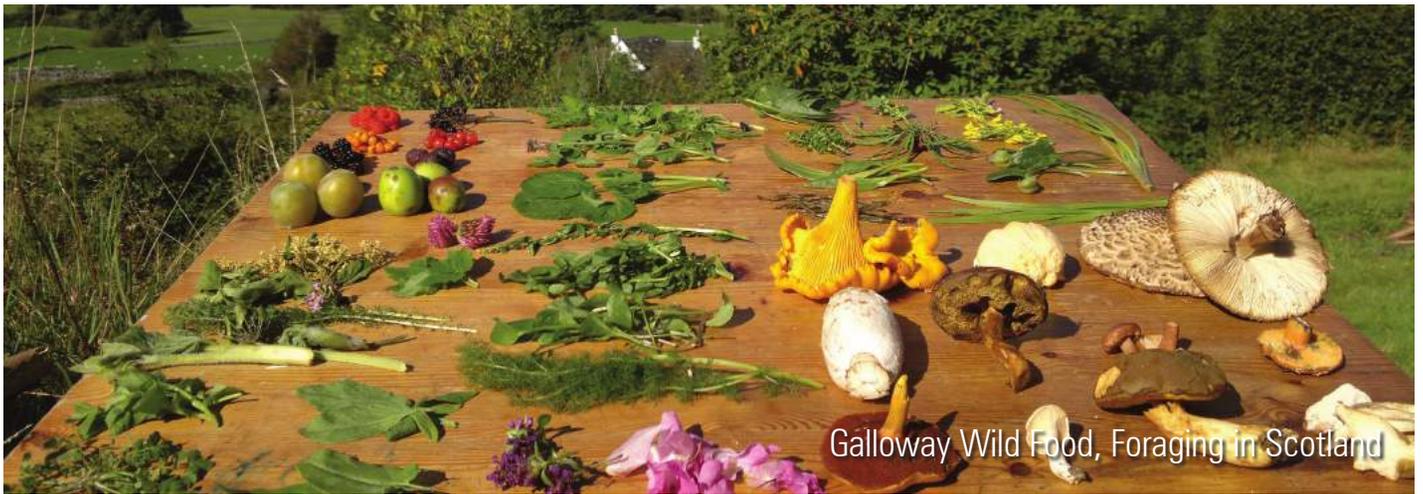
McKeon presented the example of the recent reform of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), which formally introduced the Civil Society Mechanism. A similar process needs to take place in EU institutions; opening up political space for small farmers and civil society organisations and supporting them in occupying the space effectively.

### Reform of the CFS:

“Priority will be given to ensuring that the voices of smallholder producers, fisherfolk, pastoralists, indigenous, urban poor, migrants, agricultural workers etc. are heard. The Civil Society Mechanism will make special efforts to support the capacity of the marginalized to follow and participate in the CFS process.”  
(CFS:2010/9)



Edible Schoolyard Project



Galloway Wild Food, Foraging in Scotland



Mihaela Bodlovic for Edible Edinburgh, Lochend Community Growing Project



Youth Food Movement, Whitmuir Farm

## ADVOCACY

How then can we, citizens and actors, make an impact? What are the channels and processes we need to use and master in order to reform and improve our food system and the CAP?

At the conference, advice was given from a EU perspective and from a Global Food Security Governance perspective. Our EU experts were MEP Alyn Smith; Faustine Bas-Defossez, Senior Policy Officer at the European Environmental Bureau; and Samuel Féret, coordinator of the European network Arc2020. Nora McKeon and Patrick Mulvany shared their experience from the reform of the CFS.



Patrick Mulvany



Pete Ritchie & Alyn Smith



Nora McKeon - Samuel Féret - Faustine Bas-Defossez

**“What I need is a broad coalition within my constituency to come up with a list of demands that you want to see progress on” explained MEP Smith. To do this, he outlined three steps:**

1. Get your network together; this must be a coalition that is as broad as possible.
2. Establish your list of demands.
3. Present your demands to politicians in the European Parliament and the national Agricultural Ministries; and hold them to account in the longer term.

### Network

The groups of actors listed in the previous section will need to be mobilised and brought together. This coalition should be ambitious both in the breadth of the spectrum of actors and in the depth of their engagement.

This network does not necessarily need to be international. Although a EU-wide network is necessary and would be extremely strong, Bas-Defossez and Féret emphasised that what

was sorely lacking in the last reform were 28 strong national networks. European citizens and organisations need to urgently work to strengthen the national advocacy base on agricultural and rural development matters, and improve their capacity to lobby their own local authorities and national governments.

**McKeon shared 3 lessons** learned from her experience in the reform of the Committee on World Food Security to include small farmers from developing countries.

**1. Build from the bottom up:** “We need to build the movement for change from the base up. Don’t feel that you’re limiting yourself if you start with your own practice, your own vision, at the local level. The only way to have that sense of ownership that gives power is to build this movement from the local level up.”

**2. Everyone should be involved, but not everyone should be on an equal footing:** “We have to resist being seduced by vaporous multi-stakeholderism that lets everyone into the room, on the same footing, without making distinction, so inevitably the more powerful, the corporations, set the rules and the governments’ accountability evaporates.”

**3. Be clear with who is in the coalition, and what interests, rights, and responsibilities they have:** “When you build this coalition, be very clear about who is in it, what their identity is, what interests they are promoting. Be very clear of who is who, who has rights and who has obligations.”



## **Demands**

Any list of demands should be embedded in a larger vision for the future of agriculture and rural areas. In Scotland, a public consultation took place in the autumn of 2015 on The Future of Scottish Agriculture. McKeon praised this process and insisted that in every country, there should be a national debate about the future of agriculture, focusing on the objectives of agriculture. And from the objectives, the policies are drawn.

Our demands will be the specific, executive changes that we want to see, based on the vision and objectives the network agrees on.

## **Presenting and defending our demands**

### **\* Elaborate a strong, positive narrative**

Our demands need not only to be part of a vision, they need to be framed by a powerful narrative. This narrative needs to both acknowledge the weaknesses of the CAP and offer a positive message by showcasing success stories and offering a positive image of the future, of “what can be”.

For example, demonstrating where subsidies are ineffective or harmful is not enough; it is important to also suggest a specific, better alternative, with details of the concrete positive outcomes.

### **\* Know your policy processes**

The next step is to present those demands and defend that narrative. The first essential prerequisite for this is to know how the CAP is made. To quote Pete Ritchie, a camel is a horse designed by a committee, and the CAP is a policy designed by various committees in and out of Brussels: the European Commission, Council of Ministers, European Parliament, national agricultural ministries... The network needs to be ready to lobby the right committee at the right time.

An important lesson learned from the last round of reform is that CAP policy-making is not a sprint, but rather a long marathon. Early consultations and alliance building start as early as two years before the European Commission officially announces a reform. Then the “actual” reform can take as much as four years. Finally, up to two years will be needed to make the decisions on implementation in Brussels and in the national agricultural ministries.

## \* Know your politicians

While civil society is usually relatively well represented in the European Commission; the Council of Agricultural Ministers (as well as national agricultural ministries, arguably) and the Agricultural Committee of the European Parliament are much less permeable to NGOs, while being reputed for buddying up with the main farmers' unions.

All three EU institutions will need to be targeted in order to achieve radical change in the CAP. It is therefore crucial that the advocates of a better CAP seek and succeed to infiltrate those impermeable institutions and establish good working relationships with civil servants and politicians.

MEP Alyn Smith told participants at the conference that the drive for reform would need to come from the European Parliament, by which he meant primarily the Agricultural Committee. The 45 members of COMAGRI should thus be a top priority for campaigners.

## \* Know your opponents

In Brussels, our strongest opponents are COPA-COGECA. We must strive to understand their stance and find common ground where it exists in order to work with them when possible.



Where there is no common ground, our arguments need to be stronger than theirs, and we need to have other partners in the farming sector who support us.

It is equally important to engage with the mainstream farmers' unions at a national level, and partner up with farmers and farmers' unions who share our vision.

## \* Engage with people

One lesson to be learnt from the last CAP reform round is that lobbying the institutions is necessary, but not enough to achieve real change. A broader public movement is needed.

Nora McKeon insisted that technicalities are not and cannot be an obstacle to engaging people and farmers in policy processes. The pro-reform coalition will thus need to overcome the technicalities of the CAP and of agriculture and engage in conversation with the general public and with farmers.

At this conference, it was repeatedly argued that food could be the missing link to mobilise people for a better CAP. Everyone relates to food Guus Thijssen pointed out. Indeed, food is central in our lives, and our societies.



## WHAT NEXT?

In the final session of the Towards a Citizens' Agricultural Policy conference, participants were asked to discuss any or all of the following questions in small groups. Each table's conversations were then fed back to the whole audience by a rapporteur and a last plenary discussion followed.

- How can city dwellers support action and networks in their town or city, such as Edible Edinburgh?
- How can we shift the policy and practice in Scotland towards the new paradigm?
- What alliances can we make at UK level, and can Scotland influence conversations in Westminster?
- What could a civil society platform look like in the next CAP reform round & what are the first steps for building this?



## Cities

Edible Edinburgh (EE) has the potential to be a strong platform for the city-based movement for better food and agricultural policies. The most optimistic participants suggested EE. could be a flagship project within Scotland to demonstrate what is possible. Yet, many felt it needs to be energised and democratised and suggested how:

- EE. should engage more with Edinburgh residents and community groups;
- EE. should seek to connect different sectors, in particular the food and health sectors;
- EE. should do more work on promoting short food supply chains and better practices in public procurement;
- EE. should contribute to information and expertise sharing networks, for example by organising discussion forums focused on specific issues;
- EE. should enhance the visibility of positive initiatives in Edinburgh by providing a single forum or map where sustainability-related shops, events and community initiatives can be showcased.

**In more general terms, various suggestions were made concerning actions urbanites can take and areas of work for policy-makers:**

- Engaging with the retail and hospitality sector to promote good practice, and more transparency about food procurement;
- Supporting urban food growing, as treatment (horticultural therapy in hospitals), as spaces for social inclusion and cohesion (in community gardens), and as a powerful educational tool (in schools).

## Scotland and the UK

Although Scotland is not represented in European negotiations in Brussels, the Scottish Government has acquired significant devolved powers in the area of food, agriculture and rural affairs. This means that on one hand, a lot can be done in Scotland to improve the food system, and on the other hand, Scotland needs to make their voice heard on CAP matters in Westminster and DEFRA in order to influence the UK's negotiating stance in Brussels.

Participants discussed these two paths of action and made suggestions of the necessary steps and strategies:

- **Language change:** we must talk about food rather than agriculture to broaden the debate;
- **Synergies:** there are already many organisations working on various aspects of food system change, they need to connect with each other better;
- **Inclusivity:** all actors and intermediaries of the food chains should be involved in a coalition for change, this means seeking to include large retailers. In addition, cross-sectoral connections are needed, so that we go beyond the usual suspects (health, environment...) and engage with 'unexpected' actors (e.g. in the finance sector);
- **Multi-pronged strategy:** work for top-down change (e.g. sustainable public procurement) as well as bottom-up (e.g. community food growing);
- **Pragmatic ambition:** we should work for radical change in the long-term, but recognise that we will only get there by incremental rather than instant changes; we want to plant seeds of ideas in achievable terms using the limited available resources.

In recent months Nourish Scotland has been the driving force of the new Scottish Food Coalition. This coalition, albeit still very young, scores on many of the previous points: it gathers organisations from different sectors using food as a common link and seeks to push for fundamental change of attitudes and narratives around food, to encourage people to consider food in its relation to the environment, public health, and socio-economic issues. The Food Coalition is therefore likely to become a major player in food system reform in Scotland (and beyond) in future years.

## Europe

The discussions about the first steps needed for establishing a European civil society platform raised important questions as well as suggestions.

First, it is unclear what would be the best relationship with defenders of the status quo. How do we persuade and include reluctant conventional farmers? There can be no success on CAP reform without a majority of farmers on the side of progress.

Second, there is a consensus that we need to place food at the centre of CAP reform. What food discourse should be used, however, is unclear.

Patrick Mulvany argued that the pro-reform coalition should use the food sovereignty discourse, however others suggested that it may be inappropriate and we should instead speak of food system reform.

Third, participants emphasised that both in Europe and at home, community-level transformational initiatives should be linked to the policy level. Community-led change shows that better is possible, and should thus inspire policy-makers to be ambitious in their efforts to support food system change.

Finally, Bas-Defossez brought up the possibility of using the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) as the way forward on CAP reform. An ECI is "an invitation to the European Commission to propose legislation on matters where the EU has competence to legislate". For an initiative to be successful, it must gain the support of one million European citizens from at least seven EU countries. In the last six years (i.e. since the ECI was established) only three initiatives have reached that threshold. If we were to launch an ECI and be successful, it would be an extraordinarily powerful message that radical CAP reform is needed. However, that endeavour would be extremely difficult and would require a formidable network of organisations to agree on a common list of demands and commit resources to campaigning for the ECI.



## WHAT'S COMING UP AT NOURISH SCOTLAND?

Nourish Scotland will play a central role in emerging Scottish, British, and European civil society platforms for CAP reform. We have various public engagement projects in the pipeline and are working to secure funding that will enable us to engage in a political campaign for better food and farming policies. The “Citizens’ CAP” event was a first step and we hope that this report will contribute to gathering momentum and leading the way forward.

It is important to emphasise that these debates are relevant despite the possibility that Britain might leave the European Union after the June 23rd Referendum. Whether in or out of the EU, our food system needs urgent reform to avoid climatic, environmental, public health, and global food security disasters. Whether in or out of the EU, citizens must be involved in shaping the future of their food and farming.



**Many thanks** to all those who contributed to this conference and made it happen: Arc2020 for their support in framing the discussions, Alyn Smith for sponsoring this event, the Edinburgh Larder for the delicious food, the Royal Botanic Gardens of Edinburgh for their warm welcome, the many friends of Nourish Scotland who helped spread the word about this event, and all of you who showed your interest and support by attending the conference or reading this report.

If you would like to know more about the CAP, this specific event, or about Nourish's activities on the CAP, visit our website at [www.nourishscotland.org](http://www.nourishscotland.org)

Nourish Scotland would not be what it is without its members, so if you like our work, do consider becoming a member.



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