

Sir

Foreign Ministers meeting in Brussels today (21st November) will discuss the future shape of the EU's budget 2007-2013. One of the major stumbling blocks to a deal has been the debate surrounding Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) funding, which represents more than 40% of the EU budget.

Our organisations acknowledge the reforms of the CAP that took place in 2003, but these did not go far enough. Much more must be done to ensure that the CAP delivers sustainable rural development and to stop the dumping of subsidised overproduction on world markets.

European leaders should agree to a major rethink of the CAP by 2008. This should seek to ensure thriving rural communities through environmentally-friendly farming; significantly increased market access to developing countries; improved nature conservation; and high standards of animal welfare and food safety.

Many of these objectives can be achieved by shifting funds from CAP market expenditure to rural development measures, whilst ensuring a fair and equitably distributed income for farmers practising sustainable farming; by setting an end date for subsidies that facilitate export dumping; and by assisting developing countries to comply with EU standards.

If European leaders can agree to a comprehensive review of the EU budget, which entails amongst other things creating a CAP based on the above principles, then the stated aim of having a modern EU budget fit for the 21st Century stands a chance of being realised.

Yours faithfully

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Paul de Clerck, Friends of the Earth Europe
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