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Brussels, July 7th 2005

To: Members of the Special Committee on Agriculture

Cc: Commissioner Mariann Fischer Boel

The European Commission's proposal for the Strategic Guidelines for Rural Development 2007-2013 needs your support

Dear Member of the SCA,

The EU Strategic Guidelines for Rural Development, presented by the European Commission on July 5th, are an important step forward to improve the status of the environment in the rural areas of the EU.

The Guidelines clearly indicate the potential role of farming in halting the widespread loss of biodiversity by 2010, combating climate change and preserving water resources. The inclusion of the Water Framework Directive, Natura 2000 and the Kyoto Protocol targets as priorities for the EU rural development policy represent an acknowledgement of the impact that farming policies have on global sustainability.

To turn these positive steps into practical action, your government should build your Rural Development Plans according to the parameters of the Strategic Guidelines. We therefore ask you not only to support the adoption of the Strategic Guidelines as they stand, but to play your part in ensuring that your national Rural Development Plans reflect the sustainable priorities contained in these Guidelines.

The most vital priorities to this end are –

- that you improve the quality of existing measures such as agri-environment schemes;
- that you introduce payments to adequately protect Natura 2000 areas;
- that you contribute to delivery of the Water Framework Directive objectives through improved watershed management ;
- that you support development of environmentally sustainable renewable energy

On behalf of the signatory organisations

Yours Sincerely,

John Hontelez, Secretary General of the European Environmental Bureau, EEB

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