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ARC press release: ARC2020 calls upon European decision-makers to show courage for long-sighted farm, food & rural policy change

Brussels, July 14 2011 – ARC 2020, the alliance of civil society organisations from across Europe has pressed decision-makers to show courage in reforming the Common Agriculture Policy. At its European Conference which took place on 13 July at the Economic and Social Committee in Brussels, ARC members discussed CAP reform perspectives with Commissioner Dacian Ciolos, the President of the Council of Ministers Marek Sawicki and the rapporteur of the European Parliament Albert Dess.

Referring to the "Communication of civil society to the European Institutions", which ARC 2020 had published on 19 November last year, in parallel with the European Commission, spokesperson Arie van den Brand said: " We believe that our voice has been heard since the consultation of civil society started last year, - at least that we agree on the challenges we all face and the radical changes needed to respond to climate change, biodiversity loss and gross social disparities in European regions and the world. Now European decision makers must show the courage to work towards long-sighted policy change. The new CAP must address how truly sustainable farm and food systems will be introduced in the field, how markets can work better to offer farmers a fair income and give consumers healthy food. We need a real paradigm shift which ends the current unsustainable use of natural resources, moves towards solar based farming, reduces land use abroad for animal feed production in order to offer sufficient food for all in a long term perspective. And we need rural renaissance through a specific and inclusive rural policy which strengthens local governance and innovation in all regions of Europe"

At the ARC conference spoke Jim Harkness from the US Institute for Trade and Development Policy (IATP) about the potential of transatlantic and global alliances in building sustainable food systems; Tim Lang, Professor of Food Policy at City University London, who said that the debate on the evident links between farming, what and how we consume and public health had not yet been sufficiently addressed in CAP debate yet, and Erik Mathijs, Professor and head of division of agricultural and food economics at the K.U.Leuven, who pointed at opportunities to move from a "narrative of productivism" to a narrative of "sufficiency" in farming and food consumption.

ARC members felt encouraged by the closing words of Commissioner Ciolos, who said that the ARC alliance should not believe that with a "communication of civil society to the European Institutions" the work was done. " In fact, I would like to whet your appetite for continued constructive dialogue after the Commission publishes its legislative proposals for the CAP reform in October this year".

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Notes to Editors

ARC, the Agricultural and Rural Convention 2020, was created in early 2010 as a platform to enable concerned citizens and their organisations to advocate a sustainable reform of the Common Agricultural and Rural Development policies of the European Union. Active within the platform is a wide array of civil society organisations, at European, national, regional and local level. They represent a great variety of interests, including human rights, farmers, consumers, rural communities, nature protection, cultural heritage, animal welfare, minorities, public health, organic food and many others.

For more information on ARC, please visit <http://www.arc2020.eu/front/press/> or contact Grischa Hadjamu: contact@arc2020.eu or +32 2 549 55 37

The ARC Communication, which sets out the full range of policies advocated by the alliance, is available on <http://www.arc2020.eu>.

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