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Press release: The Agricultural and Rural Convention calls for a European Food Monitoring Agency

BRUSSELS, January 27, 2011 – The Agricultural and Rural Convention 2020(ARC) presented yesterday its vision to European Parliament at the Committee on Agriculture's Hearing on the future of the CAP.

Speaking on behalf of the alliance, Professor Michael Dower offered a creative solution to the crucial problem of securing for farmers a fair return on their production. "Without such a solution", he said, "European tax-payers will be permanently committed to paying income support for farmers".

The solution that he offered is to change the EU competition rules so as to permit farmers to form trading groups which can bargain for fair prices within the food chain; and to set up a European Food Monitoring Agency. The Agency's task would be to monitor the movement of demand for and supply of food, prices and production costs. It would then, on the basis of production costs, establish "price corridors" for key products. When prices fluctuated significantly above or below the price corridor, the Agency would issue an obligatory demand for growth or reduction of supply, to be carried out by farmers' groups and associations. When prices were depressed, the Agency would also be able to buy surplus products at the lower price of the corridor, using funds raised by a levy on all producers of the relevant product.

Professor Dower repeated the call which ARC has been making since July 2010, for a paradigm shift in agriculture. He said "The EU can no longer rely on a model of intensive industrial farming and a centralised food industry. We must move towards a model of sustainable farming everywhere. This can build upon Europe's rich heritage of regional and local production and processing of food. We need to make closer links between farmers and consumers, and to achieve high care for public health and respect for the environment."

Commenting on the dioxin scandal in Germany, Professor Dower said, "This is the latest of many tragic examples of massive mistakes to which the industrialised food processing system is prone, and the impact of these mistakes on public health and public budgets. We must move into safer and more sustainable practices. European citizens should not have to pay for highly subsidised industrial farming and then pay again to clean up the mess."

Notes to Editors

The Agricultural and Rural Convention (ARC) is committed to a reform of the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union. The European Milk Board supports ARC.

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 Zoé de York: zoe@arc2020.eu or +32 2 549 55 37, mobile: +32 473 22 44 84

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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[<<< back](#)