

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND RURAL
DEVELOPMENT

INVITED COMMITTEES:
COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOD
SAFETY
COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

HEARING OF CHRISTOPHE HANSEN
COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE
(Agriculture and Food)

MONDAY, 4 NOVEMBER 2024
BRUSSELS

1-0002-0000

IN THE CHAIR: VERONIKA VRECIONOVÁ
Chair of the AGRI Committee

1-0003-0000

(The hearing opened at 18:34)

1-0004-0000

Veronika Vrecionová, *Chair of the AGRI Committee*. – Welcome. Before we start today's evaluation meeting, as Chair of the AGRI Committee, I would like to express our sincere condolences and solidarity with the victims of the horrible floods in Spain. Our hearts and thoughts are with you and we wish you much strength, courage and confidence in these difficult hours. At the same time, we want to say you are not alone. Thank you.

So I would like to welcome, on behalf of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr Christophe Hansen, Commissioner-designate for agriculture and food. Welcome.

I should point on the importance for the AGRI committee of the responsibilities that could be entrusted to the Commissioner-designate. He would have to strengthen the competitiveness, resilience and sustainability of the farming sector, while the latter must face multiple changes ranging from adaptation to climate change to unfair competition from third countries. Mr Hansen, the members of our committee are therefore eager to know your vision and your proposals for European agriculture and its developments.

I would like to recall that during the evaluation of the hearing, coordinators of the AGRI Committee will have to state clearly whether they consider the Commissioner-designate to be qualified both to be a member of the College and to carry out the particular duties he has been assigned.

I would like to recall that before the hearing, the Commissioner-designate replied in writing to questions prepared by our committee. The answers have been distributed to the members in all languages. Please note that the Committee on Legal Affairs has assessed the question of potential or actual conflict of interest, and raised no objection to the holding of the hearing.

Finally, Mr Hansen, I would like to stress that we acknowledge your response to the horizontal written questions and your readiness to cooperate with the European Parliament. This is particularly important in the context of the revision of the Framework Agreement between the European Parliament and the Commission, in particular regarding your engagement to be regularly present in committees and plenaries, to follow up on Parliament's legislative initiatives, and to timely share information to Parliament as co-legislator and arm to the budgetary authority. We count on the full implementation of these commitments, and emphasise the Commission's role as the honest broker in the legislative procedures and in interinstitutional negotiations, ensuring equal treatment of Parliament and the Council. We equally count on your full cooperation to inform our committee in advance of all upcoming proposals, with detailed justifications for those requiring urgent action. This will ensure transparency and allow Parliament to properly exercise its prerogatives.

Regarding the structure of the debate, I have to draw your attention to a few essential points. The Commissioner-designate will make an opening oral statement of no longer than 15 minutes. He will also have five minutes at the end of the meeting for a closing statement. After the introduction, we will turn to the questions from Members. The hearing will be structured in four rounds. First round, of political group coordinators, with five-minute slots each. That is to say, one minute for the question and two minutes for the answer from the Commissioner-designate, with a possibility of follow-up question from the same Member, no longer than one minute, and with one minute for

the reply. The second round of questions with three-minute slots each, based on the overall distribution of speaking time among the political groups, including a representative from the non-attached members. Third, a round of questions by the chair of the invited committees with three-minute slots each. A final round of questions by political groups in reverse order, also with three-minute slots each. All slots of three minutes will be divided into one minute for a question and two minutes answer from the Commissioner-designate. Thank you, dear Mr Hansen and dear colleagues, for respecting this schedule.

Please know that interpretation is provided in 22 languages. Interpretation in Maltese is not available. All speakers can, therefore, use their own language. Speakers should keep in mind that what they say is interpreted and that they should, therefore, not speak too quickly.

The confirmation hearing is streamed live on the Parliament's internet website. It will also be possible to access a video recording of the hearing a few hours after the end of the hearing.

Dear colleagues, please respect the time of your questions. If you are speaking more than one minute, I will turn off your microphone. We have three hours and after that the lights turn off.

And now, I give the floor to the Commissioner-designate for his presentation for a maximum of 15 minutes. Mr Hansen, the floor is yours.

1-0005-0000

Christophe Hansen, *Commissioner-designate*. – Good evening to everybody. And thank you, Madam Chair. And let me thank you also for your words on the catastrophe in Spain. I can join you in saying that my thoughts are with the victims, are with their families, and are as well with the rescue teams. I think all European solidarity is needed to really help people in need. And it will be one of our utmost attentions over the next months to help the people in Spain.

Honourable Members, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues, I am honoured to be here tonight with you to discuss the future of EU agriculture, food systems and rural areas – a future that I believe we can forge together.

I grew up on a family farm on the border between Belgium and Luxembourg, so I know the good times and the bad times of farming. I remember well my father and, after him, my brother struggling with paperwork when all they really wanted to do was work their land and take care of their animals.

Honourable Members, our Union depends on its 9 million farms, more than 90 % of which are family farms like ours. Together with the wider agri-food sector, these farms provide us with safe and high-quality food. They guarantee food security and play a crucial role in maintaining the beauty and diversity of our landscapes. They keep our cultural heritage alive and our rural areas vibrant.

But our farmers are under pressure: under pressure to carve out a living from their work, under pressure from climate change and extreme weather events, from geopolitical instability and unfair competition, and from increasing regulatory complexity and administrative burden. Farmers felt their voices were not heard, so they took to the streets earlier this year. That is why I intend to be a 'boots on the ground' commissioner. I will use every opportunity to visit farms and farmers throughout the Member States.

The Strategic Dialogue on the future of EU agriculture was much needed to bring a very diverse group of stakeholders to the table and leave the climate of sharp polarisation behind us. If confirmed

as Commissioner, I will build on its consensus and transform it into a clear perspective. I will follow up on the Dialogue's recommendations, including, as recommended by the Strategic Dialogue, through the European Board on Agri-Food, which I will soon establish and convene. I will do this in close cooperation with this committee and this House, and I will work just as closely with all fellow Commissioners who are part of the food system cluster.

As the Dialogue concluded, farming needs to be sustainable in all three dimensions: economic, environmental and social. We need better policy coordination on topics such as climate adaptation, water resilience, animal welfare, and the many other initiatives that directly impact farmers and consumers. These principles will guide me when preparing the vision for agriculture and food that the President of the European Commission asked me to prepare in the first hundred days of the mandate. It will consider a plurality of views, and the whole agri-food value chain will be included. It will be a shared roadmap for future initiatives and not a top-down 'take it or leave it' blueprint.

The vision needs to start from a central question: how do we attract a future generation of farmers that will take up the mantle from the current generation as custodians of our countryside? In line with the conclusions of the Dialogue, the vision needs to look at how farming can be economically viable, environmentally sustainable and socially responsible – today, tomorrow and also in 2040.

Let's take a closer look at how we can do that.

First and foremost, generational renewal will be central in my thinking for the next five years, because only 10 % of farmers are currently under the age of 40, and therefore we are heading towards a demographic cliff. If confirmed as Commissioner, I want farming to entice young people once again. They need a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. And this is why I intend to develop a strategy for generational renewal in close cooperation with the young farmers.

We also need to support the development of a land observatory. It is crucial to promote transparency and accountability in the land market, to improve access to land for young farmers.

But who will enter or continue farming if they cannot make a decent living out of it? Farmers' income is only around 60 % of the EU average. Therefore, income support remains key. But all the farmers I met so far said that they would rather prefer to get a fair price for their products than rely just on public support. They need to be fairly remunerated by the market and that should be our main global goal.

Global competition, on top of rising energy and input costs, puts this objective even further out of reach. And I have heard too many farmers say that they will struggle to pass on a viable enterprise to the next generation.

Honourable Members, President von der Leyen said that it is vital that farmers have a fair and sufficient income, and that we will defend an income policy for Europe's farmers. I can tell you I stand fully behind that. And to this end, we must draw on all sources of income: from the market, public income support, investments and alternative sources of funding.

Support through the CAP remains essential for farmers. It secures them a fair income, rewards them as well for ecosystem services and it compensates them for work in areas with natural constraints. It supports investments into climate mitigation and adaptation, and it helps to meet our environmental objectives. It is crucial that our farmers should not be forced to systematically sell their products below the production costs. We need to beef up their bargaining position.

Honourable Members, we also need to support the competitiveness of our entire food value chain. Strengthening competitiveness means investing in research and innovation. It also means supporting small and medium-sized enterprises. We need to foster the development and non-farm deployment of new cutting-edge technologies, such as precision farming and biocontrol. That's how good farming practices can help reconcile environmental, social and economic sustainability.

For the year 2022 alone, the European Investment Bank estimated the financing gap for agriculture at around EUR 62 billion. We need public and private investment to finance and de-risk the sustainability transition. We need new initiatives. The EIB funds can help support the CAP and unlock and de-risk private capital. This is especially true for young farmers and women in agriculture. They are most at risk and yet find it most difficult to obtain loans or additional investments. This must clearly change.

I know from experience how important global trade is for the competitiveness of our agri-food sector. Last year, agri-food exports totalled nearly EUR 230 billion. But we all agree this trade must be fair and allow our farmers to compete on a level playing field.

One of the main concerns expressed by our farmers during their protests was that we hold our own producers to higher standards than non-EU producers. This can also lead to social, environmental and production leakage to other parts of the world and I believe we have to avoid that. If confirmed as Commissioner, I will work with my future colleagues to address these issues and see how to ensure the application of our standards by any imports in compliance with the WTO rules.

Let me turn now to the latter part of my future job title: food.

Farmers, producers and the wider agri-food sector all play a part in delivering abundant, delicious and nutritious food for our citizens, and that is something we can be proud of. We must build on this success with a holistic approach to transform our food systems and make them resilient for the future. This means changing the way we produce, we process and sell and consume our food.

Farmers also need consumers appreciating and willing to pay for the production of high-quality and safe European food products. Concretely, we should take into account the need to promote sustainable supply chains in the framework of the revision of public procurement rules. We have to step up our fight to reduce and better reuse food waste, to name but a few issues.

But we should always remember that European action is not automatically a silver bullet. Many policies around food remain national, regional or even local.

EU action is, however, indispensable when it comes to addressing climate and environmental challenges. And no one knows this better than our farmers, as extreme weather events are putting their livelihoods at risk ever more frequently, and last week's devastating floods in Spain, I think, was the example that they have and want to contribute to the protection.

Farmers see the change. They live with it and they deal with it. And I believe they are our first line of defence in the fight against climate change, biodiversity loss and pollinator decline, to name but a few. I know that farmers want to contribute to the fight against climate change. Under the current CAP, already one third of the budget goes to environment and climate measures, and 70 % of EU farmland is already covered by eco-schemes.

The full impact of the national CAP plans, in force only since 2023, still needs to be fully factored into this calculation. And we need to further unlock agriculture's potential for carbon storage. More can be done, but farmers' efforts need to be encouraged by appropriate incentives.

Our vision for the future should therefore double down on the logic of the Strategic Dialogue. Agriculture and the preservation of nature can go hand in hand. Organic farming, I believe, is a good example of that. But a one-size-fits-all approach is not the way forward. Environmental pressures are different from region to region and from sector to sector.

We also need to better measure and record the efforts our farmers are already making today. And to this end, we need to support the development of a user-friendly benchmarking system to help farmers deal with sustainability requirements and, at the same time, reduce red tape.

Last but not least, our rural communities need to thrive. They need better access to services and opportunities which those in urban areas often take for granted. The circular bioeconomy can play an important role in this regard. Agriculture and forestry should not only produce biomass but also add value. Scaling up the bioeconomy through investment support in rural areas is therefore essential. And cooperative entrepreneurship in rural areas will be key to ensure that farmers and foresters benefit from bioeconomy developments.

Specific attention must go to employment and economic development in remote rural areas, on islands, and especially in our outermost regions, for which the Treaties require specific efforts.

Honourable Members, the common agricultural policy will remain the frame that holds this vision in place up to 2027 and beyond. I believe the CAP strategic plans will continue to prove their worth. They enable us to contribute to farmers' income as well as to achieve high environmental and social objectives.

The Treaty requires us to develop and maintain an ambitious common agricultural policy. We need stability, predictability and simplification where possible. We must find the right balance between incentives, investments and regulation, and we need to ensure that our farmers are not burdened by excessive bureaucracy. I believe the previous Commission made a good first step towards simplification.

If confirmed as Commissioner, I will closely monitor the impact of any new measures on our farms and farmers, also with the necessary impact assessments.

Honourable Members, the CAP safeguards our food sovereignty, supports our rural areas and contributes to the sustainable transition. It is not just a policy for farmers. It is a policy for all Europeans. I have met many of you over the past weeks to discuss agriculture and the challenges, and today I'm keen to exchange with you views on the future of agriculture. If confirmed, this is how I intend to continue: working in close cooperation with this committee and in close cooperation with this House, I will always cherish the dialogue and discussion, to nourish future policy initiatives.

I hope I will earn your trust today, and I'm looking forward to this fruitful exchange and the many questions you might have. Thank you very much.

1-0006-0000

Veronika Vrecionová, *Chair of the AGRI Committee*. – Thank you for your presentation, Mr Hansen. And we now move to the first round of questions from coordinators.

1-0007-0000

Herbert Dorfmann (PPE). – Herr designierter Kommissar! Sie schicken sich an, ein sehr wichtiges Dossier zu übernehmen – Landwirtschaft und Ernährung – in einem wichtigen, entscheidenden Moment für den Sektor. Sie haben es schon angesprochen: Vor weniger als einem Jahr hatten wir Bauernproteste. Die Landwirtschaft, die Bäuerinnen und Bauern waren nicht zufrieden mit unserer Politik. Dann hat es den strategischen Dialog gegeben. Jetzt gibt es den Auftrag an Sie, innerhalb von 100 Tagen einen Bericht zu machen über die Zukunft der Landwirtschaft. Und Sie werden dann nachher einen Vorschlag für die Weiterentwicklung der Gemeinsamen Agrarpolitik vorlegen müssen.

Meine Frage ist: Wie wollen Sie dieses Puzzle zusammenbringen? Wie weit sehen Sie den Input des strategischen Dialogs als bindend, auch für Vorschläge, die Sie machen? Und wie weit wollen Sie auch die Autonomie Ihrer Behörde beim Vorschlag, vor allem auch die Autonomie des Parlaments als Gesetzgeber, wahren, damit es in den nächsten Monaten und Jahren zu einem fruchtbaren Dialog hier im Haus kommt?

1-0008-0000

Christophe Hansen, designiertes Mitglied der Kommission. – Vielen Dank, Herr Dorfmann, für diese wichtige Frage. Sie haben das richtig angesprochen. In den ersten 100 Tagen soll ich eine Vision vorlegen für die Zukunft des Agrarsektors, aber auch des Lebensmittelsektors. Und da werde ich mich auch ganz klar auf die verschiedenen Berichte stützen, die in meinem Mandatsschreiben auch ganz klar drinstehen. Da ist einerseits der strategische Dialog drin, aber wir haben auch den Letta-Bericht, wir haben den Draghi-Bericht und seit letzter Woche auch den Niinistö-Bericht, wo es auch um Lebensmittelsicherheit geht.

Ich denke, es ist wichtig, dass wir diese vier Berichte auch nebeneinanderlegen und ganz klar herausfinden, was ist möglich und was ist nicht möglich. Im Papier, das der strategische Dialog entwickelt hat, gibt es ganz sicherlich einige sehr interessante Punkte, bei denen es auch Konsens gibt. Aber es gibt auch andere Punkte, wo der Konsens wahrscheinlich weniger war, weil der Text auch dementsprechend vage formuliert ist. Ich denke zum Beispiel an das Agri-ETS, wo auch viel spekuliert wurde, ob das jetzt drinsteht oder nicht. In meinen Augen ist das nicht sehr klar, dieses Agri-ETS. Zum Beispiel hat Neuseeland versucht, so ein Agri-ETS auf die Beine zu stellen, haben das dann aber sein lassen. Ich denke, das müssen wir uns auch ansehen, wieso die das nicht umgesetzt haben.

Andere wichtige Punkte in diesem Strategiedialog sind natürlich auch: Wie sieht es mit dem Haushalt aus? Da steht auch ganz klar drin, dass es weiterhin einen spezifischen Haushalt für die Landwirtschaft geben soll und dass man sich auch verschiedene andere Quellen aneignen muss, um eben auch der Landwirtschaft verstärkt zu helfen. Ich denke da zum Beispiel an die Europäische Investitionsbank – ich habe das ganz kurz gesagt. Aber ich denke auch, dass wir zum Beispiel über *Carbon Farming* nachdenken müssen, wie wir zusätzliche Mittel reinbekommen. Das konnte ich jetzt in zwei Minuten unterbringen. Aber ich bin mir sicher, die Frage wird auch in anderen Formen noch mal zurückkommen.

1-0009-0000

Herbert Dorfmann (PPE). – Ich möchte nochmals – Sie haben es schon angesprochen – auf das Geld zu sprechen kommen. Der strategische Dialog hat ausreichende Haushaltsmittel gefordert – ich unterstütze das natürlich –, zusätzlich auch neue Fonds wie den *Just Transition Fund*. Gleichzeitig gibt es aus der Kommission zumindest *Leaks*, die eine vollkommen neue Positionierung des

Agrarhaushalts sehen. Und andererseits gibt es auch die Idee aller dieser Berichte, die sie gerade angesprochen haben, Dinge zu vereinfachen. Und gerade in der Landwirtschaft – Sie haben es vorher gesagt –, wo neun Millionen Betriebe in Europa dann diese Unterstützung erhalten, geht es ja auch darum, die Dinge so einfach wie möglich zu machen, also Bürokratie abzubauen.

Vielleicht können Sie hier noch mal zu diesen zwei Punkten Stellung nehmen: Wie stellen Sie sich den Haushalt vor, und vor allem auch, wie stellen Sie sich vor, Landwirtschaftspolitik zielgerichtet aber gleichzeitig bürokratisch vertretbar zu machen.

1-0010-0000

Christophe Hansen, *designiertes Mitglied der Kommission*. – Danke für die Nachfrage. Also ich denke zu der Haushaltsdebatte: Es handelt sich hier um *Leaks*, und ich werde jetzt nicht *Leaks* kommentieren, die nicht offizielle Kanäle der Kommission sind. Ich denke aber, die Politischen Leitlinien der Präsidentin selbst sind sehr klar, und – ich habe das vorhin in meiner Rede auch gesagt – sie steht weiterhin zu einer Einkommensstützung unserer Landwirte. Das steht auch im Strategiedialog drin. Und dafür sollten wir uns auch gemeinsam einsetzen. Ich werde mich auf jeden Fall, wenn das im nächsten Kollegium diskutiert wird, ganz stark einsetzen für einen spezifischen Agrarhaushalt.

Zum *Just Transition Fund*: Zu dem Punkt denke ich, wir sollten – bevor wir neue Fonds kreieren – auch erst mal die nutzen, die es schon gibt. Und beim *Just Transition Fund*, der eigentlich für alle Sektoren gebraucht wird, da ist noch Geld verfügbar. Wir müssen den Zugang für unsere Landwirte dazu vereinfachen.

Stichwort Vereinfachung: Ich denke, wir können aufbauen auf diesem Frühjahrspaket, das wir hatten. Und ich denke, wir sollten analysieren, wo es noch Vereinfachungsmöglichkeiten gibt. Zum Beispiel auch, dass wir verstärkt auf Pauschalbeträge zurückgreifen, wo wir vielleicht auch Vereinfachungen kurzfristig hinbekommen könnten.

1-0011-0000

Dario Nardella (S&D). – Signor Commissario, l'innovazione è fondamentale per il futuro dell'agricoltura europea, in particolare la competitività e la sostenibilità ambientale, economica e sociale del settore. Cosa intende fare nei prossimi cinque anni per attrarre nuovi e maggiori investimenti e garantire la transizione verso la sostenibilità?

Come intende garantire che l'agricoltura europea rimanga dunque competitiva a livello globale e quali misure intende adottare per incoraggiare l'innovazione e renderla accessibile agli agricoltori?

Lei ha dichiarato la disponibilità a proporre rapidamente modifiche mirate al regolamento OCM. Può fornire dettagli su questo aspetto?

Si impegnerà inoltre in un processo rapido di revisione della direttiva UTP? In caso affermativo, come intende garantire una migliore applicazione della direttiva in tutti gli Stati membri per assicurare un trattamento equo degli agricoltori a livello europeo?

1-0012-0000

Christophe Hansen, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you very much, Mr Nardella. Again, a lot of questions in one question. First, on innovation, I think innovation is crucial and I mentioned the enormous gap that we currently have. The EIB estimated at more than EUR 62 billion per year that

is missing in investment. And if we don't invest and if we don't modernise our production system, well, the competitiveness is going down, and therefore we need to bridge that gap.

And I think the EIB itself can help. And I think I will go to the EIB and argue for new financing possibilities, loans for innovation, loans for the next generation farmers that will de-risk as well that capital. I think that will be very important to get additional funds, because if we are now not investing, well, we will be behind the others, and that would be a huge mistake.

You mentioned the CMO and the Unfair Trading Practices Directive as well – two very important points to strengthen the revenues for our farmers. In the CMO, precisely, I believe we can do more, and we have to do better in the strengthening of our producer organisations.

In some Member States it is working quite well, but we have other Member States and as well as sectors which are divergent, that there we are lagging behind, and we have to encourage as well. And I believe we can strengthen this part of the producer organisations in the current CMO, and we can do this quite quickly, and I will work on that in the first days of my hopefully future mandate.

On the Unfair Trading Practices Directive, it is a very recent legislation. We need to assess next year what is working well, and this is ongoing work: what is going well, what is not going well. So we have to wait before we make a huge change. But nonetheless, I think there are issues that we can address in the short term, namely the cross-border implementation, because I believe there is a margin to do better when it comes to cooperation between the national authorities. So this, as well, for the first days of the next mandate.

1-0013-0000

Dario Nardella (S&D). – Vorrei passare all'aspetto dei lavoratori nella catena del valore agroalimentare; parliamo di 30 milioni di persone. Una parte significativa di essi sopporta ancora difficili condizioni di lavoro, salariali e anche dal punto di vista del lavoro precario e degli abusi.

Signor Commissario, come garantirà nello sviluppo della Sua visione per l'agricoltura e l'alimentazione che la prospettiva dei lavoratori in tutta la filiera sia sempre presa in considerazione?

Inoltre, possiamo avere un Suo impegno concreto affinché le parti sociali, insieme ai rappresentanti delle imprese, siano concretamente coinvolte nel futuro comitato europeo per l'agroalimentare?

1-0014-0000

Christophe Hansen, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you very much, Mr Nadella. I believe that workers are very central, and you mentioned the numbers yourself. We have to take care of them because agriculture and food production is not working, anyhow, without the qualified workers in there. So they need to be held to the same high standards as the rest of the economy. And I think that is crucial as well, that our national labour authorities are better controlling on the ground what is happening. And I think there, in some parts, I have the impression maybe the eyes are closed half and that is not in the interest of our workers. We need to do this better. Social conditionality is a very important point as well in the current national strategic plans in the CAP. I look to my left. Maria Noichl was not very innocent on that point to bring it in. So this needs to be further strengthened. And we will see by next year if it is really working. So this would as well be very high on the vision, then.

My time is already over, but I think you mentioned as well the involvement in the future European board on agriculture and food of the workers. Already in the strategic dialogue, we had the European Federation of Food, Agriculture, and Tourism Trade Unions. They have to know when

the call will be made to join. They have to apply, and then I'm quite sure that they will be on board as well for the follow-up.

1-0015-0000

Raffaele Stancanelli (Pfe). – Io Le chiedo innanzitutto se, contrariamente a questa brutta consuetudine del cordone, ha intenzione di lavorare proficuamente con i Patrioti, perché noi abbiamo intenzione di farlo.

Detto questo, sappiamo che gli adempimenti burocratici della PAC sono da sempre un tema caldissimo ma mai come ora urge dare delle risposte. La verità è che la PAC doveva essere più semplice e non lo è stata, neanche per aspetti essenziali come i pagamenti diretti e le condizionalità.

Per gli agricoltori sta diventando sempre più conveniente rinunciare agli aiuti; ciò dovrebbe far capire quanto la direzione presa, soprattutto negli ultimi anni, sia tragicamente sbagliata.

Le chiedo quindi, come pensa di gestire il grido di aiuto che arriva dagli Stati membri, che chiedono massima flessibilità nell'attuazione dei piani strategici?

E come pensa di affrontare le prossime scadenze, tra cui quella di febbraio 2025, quando gli Stati saranno chiamati a presentare la relazione annuale sull'attuazione della PAC, che comporta il trattamento di una mole esagerata di dati?

1-0016-0000

Christophe Hansen, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you very much, Mr Stancanelli, for your question. On your first question, I, of course, stand ready to discuss with every Member of this Parliament, because everybody here is as well democratically elected. But I also say that we need to share our common European values in those ideas that we express. Also, they need to contribute to a European unity. That is very important. And we have to defend as well our common European values, and those are, on the one side, of course, the rule of law, the European democracy, and the just and lasting peace in Ukraine. Those will be, for me, the very important criteria for cooperation.

Then, coming to your question on simplification, I of course hear what you are saying on the complexity and the administrative burden. I also have to remind you that, when we pay public money to our farmers, this needs in some way to be controlled. And here in this House it's the CONT Committee – but as well the plenary – that is in charge of controlling and checking that payments are done in a proper manner. And therefore, of course, a certain kind of administrative burden is needed to be able to pay out that money.

Nonetheless, I think the political guidelines for the Commission are very clear as well on this: simplification needs to happen. And this is a horizontal priority. And there we have to work, and personally I will have to work, with the Commissioner on environment, but as well with the Commissioner on simplification, very closely together. We have overlaps and we need to do that better.

And I believe that the benchmarking system that is as well proposed and on the agenda for the next time is a voluntary one that will help our farmers to deal better with the requirements, and at the same time reduce red tape, which should be in the interest of all of us.

1-0017-0000

Raffaele Stancanelli (Pfe). – Vorrei approfondire altri due aspetti brevissimamente.

Non è un caso che le regole sugli obiettivi verdi siano percepite come eccessivamente complesse dagli operatori e dagli Stati membri; come dice la Corte dei conti, gli stessi Stati hanno difficoltà a documentare la sostenibilità degli obiettivi. È evidente che se saremo chiamati a ripensare i pagamenti diretti, tutta l'architettura verde dovrà essere riformata.

Ci auguriamo che il complesso di regole venga semplificato e razionalizzato e che le risorse, ora condizionate a regole difficili, ritornino nei pagamenti delle aziende e nella gestione del rischio per combattere le conseguenze dei fenomeni atmosferici che affliggono i nostri agricoltori.

Le chiedo, quindi: come intende affrontare concretamente il bilanciamento tra l'obiettivo di una PAC sostenibile e la tutela del potenziale produttivo delle nostre aziende?

Cosa ne pensa della proposta contenuta nel dialogo strutturato sul disaccoppiamento degli aiuti per superficie? Ritiene sufficiente il parametro al reddito per avere una PAC equa?

1-0018-0000

Christophe Hansen, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you for your follow-up question. I believe, on the complexity, we all agree we need to work together to reduce administrative burden. And this is, as I said, a horizontal priority of the next European Commission.

Also, what I would like to mention is that the last reform came in quite late because of European elections amongst others, and that has also contributed to a delay of the deployment of that. So our national authorities were really rushed into this, and that means that, in the end, maybe not everything was so clear and so simple as it could be by design. That is as well, I think, for political reasons.

But I think we have done already a great deal with the simplification package of March. Also, as I said to Herbert Dorfmann, we should try to use more lump sums, which would then reduce, there as well, the administrative burden. And we have to be less strict on the small farmers, which represent the majority of our farmers. I think that more can be done to help them.

1-0019-0000

Carlo Fidanza (ECR). – Lei ha opportunamente citato, nella Sua relazione di presentazione, il tema del commercio equo, del *fair trade*, che è stato sottovalutato in buona parte nel dialogo strategico e mi fa piacere che invece Lei lo abbia voluto menzionare, sarà un capitolo fondamentale dei prossimi cinque anni.

È assolutamente necessario ripristinare delle condizioni di *level playing field*, per fare in modo che le norme, spesso molto stringenti, che noi imponiamo ai nostri produttori siano il più possibile simili a quelle che imponiamo alle produzioni che, invece, invadono in molti casi il nostro mercato interno, provenendo da paesi extra europei.

Quindi Le chiedo se intende, e come intende, sviluppare questa politica, naturalmente in accordo con il Suo collega responsabile per il commercio internazionale, per ripristinare degli standard il più possibile omogenei e fare in modo che questo aspetto abbia un'importanza centrale anche nello sviluppo dei prossimi negoziati su nuovi accordi di commercio internazionale, in cui troppo spesso l'agricoltura è stata penalizzata negli ultimi anni.

1-0020-0000

Christophe Hansen, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you, Mr Fidanza. I definitely need to learn Italian, I think, with all the coordinators speaking Italian. On your question on trade, of course, this is a very relevant topic because, as I said, our farmers often feel a disadvantage because methods that are not allowed anymore in the European Union are allowed in third countries. So there is a competitive disadvantage, and this has been very clearly. So we need to work on reciprocity.

A general remark, maybe: often the problem is like, for example, Mercosur. The mandate to negotiate is over 20 years old, and in the meanwhile, so much legislation has been done in the European Union, so this was not taken into account. That is why, as well, this additional protocol is now being negotiated. I think we have some examples already now of kind of mirror clauses.

The Deforestation Regulation – I know that many people say it is burdensome for us, but in fact, we are imposing what we already have as a law in the European Union to other third countries. We have as well banned the neonicotinoids like clothianidin or thiamethoxam for sugar beets in the European Union. And now we have as well banned imports treated with those products. But this is now going to be taken or is taken to the Court by a third-country producer.

So I believe we are WTO compatible, what we are doing there, but I think we need to do even more, as you suggested, to have, as well, a proper reciprocity of production methods there. And I think those two – the deforestation and the neonics – are a good litmus test for that.

We have, as well, now systematically in new trade agreements, the so-called trade and sustainable development chapters that are getting evermore important. So really, on the new agreements we have them in, and then also what we did, and therefore trade is important. We are protecting our geographical indications, which is a strong promotion argument as well for our European quality production.

1-0021-0000

Carlo Fidanza (ECR). – Riparto esattamente da questa Sua ultima frase, perché la tutela dei nostri prodotti deve procedere parallelamente alla lotta alla contraffazione alimentare, da un lato, e appunto alla promozione dei nostri cibi di qualità.

Abbiamo notato anche, di recente, una pericolosa tendenza alla diminuzione dei fondi per la promozione, quindi Le voglio chiedere intanto se è disposto a impegnarsi affinché in futuro questi fondi vengano garantiti e se possibile anche aumentati.

Abbiamo però anche notato una recente negativa tendenza a cercare di escludere dall'utilizzo di questi fondi alcuni prodotti che sono tipici dell'agricoltura europea, come i prodotti a base di carne rossa o come il nostro vino, che sono sempre maggiormente esposti a richieste di riduzione o di non possibilità di utilizzare i fondi di promozione per questi prodotti.

Ecco ci auguriamo e Le chiediamo un impegno in questa direzione, affinché i fondi per la promozione non solo vengano mantenuti, garantiti e magari anche aumentati, ma vengano mantenuti anche su carne rossa e vino, che sono pezzi fondamentali della dieta europea.

1-0022-0000

Christophe Hansen, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you, Mr Fidanza. Indeed, I have to say, our GIs are of utmost importance, and therefore we need to better protect them because my heart bleeds when I go to Latin America and you see in the supermarkets Parmigiano-Reggiano and just next to it is the 'queso tipo Parmigiano', which is four times cheaper, and it is, in fact, a counterfeit of our

European production. So it is very important that we do agreements with third countries to protect this intellectual property and the high added value because last year, we had in 2023 the record export year. We exported for EUR 230 billion agriculture goods and this was an all-time record. So it is really important that we are able to export and to promote.

And you rightly mentioned that the budget for promotion had been suspended on some parts, and that was namely because of the mid-term review of the MFF, where our heads of state and governments decided. So I'm still quite optimistic that we have to maintain, firstly, and secondly, there is an amending letter by the Commission to the budget authority for an additional 40 million for the multi-country promotion and that should already help in the in the short term.

1-0023-0000

Elsi Katainen (Renew). – Näyttää siltä, että komissio on vihdoon nostamassa maatalouden ja ruokaturvan yhdeksi kriittiseksi osaksi Euroopan huoltovarmuutta ja kilpailukykyä. Miten pidätte huolen siitä, että strategisen dialogin kannatettavat ajatukset ja aloitteet siirtyvät CAP-ehdotukseen ja monivuotiseen rahoituskehikseen? Niillähän on varmistettava, että eurooppalaisilla tiloilla maataloutta voidaan harjoittaa kannattavasti tulevaisuudessa. Entä kuinka aiotte varmistaa, että EU:n maatalouden rahoituspohja ei heikkene CAPin rahoitukseen kohdistuvista leikkauspaineista huolimatta? CAP-uudistuksilla on luotava vakautta ja vähennettävä byrokratiaa ottaen huomioon, että CAPia on uudistettu vain pari vuotta sitten aika merkittävästi. Toimivat ja reilut markkinat on toinen kriittinen eurooppalaisen maatalouden kannattavuustekijä. Mitä Te aiotte tehdä, jotta elintarvikeketjun epäreilut kilpailutavat saadaan karsittua ja alkutuottaja saa tuotteistaan riittävän hinnan, jossa on huomioitu myös tuotannon kestävyiden arvonlisä?

1-0024-0000

Christophe Hansen, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you very much, Ms Katainen. And I 100 % can sign what you said – that agriculture is a strategic sector for the European Union, and we have to admit that getting more dependent on agricultural products would be a disaster, because in so many other sectors, we are already heavily dependent on imports. So let's keep things together.

We need agriculture not only in the most productive parts of the European Union, but as well in the most remote parts. We need a covering of farms all over the European Union. And I think the strong CAP has shown over the last 60 years that it can deliver. So I think we have to fight for the strong budget. Of course, this is not something I will, or can, do alone. Otherwise, you would know probably my answer.

Nonetheless, I will strongly argue this as well on the basis of the political guidelines, as well on the basis of the strategic dialogues. Both are strongly asking for the strong agricultural budget that should be commensurate, and that would as well ensure that we can give the right incentives to farmers, because farmers would prefer to have incentives rather than regulation to contribute to our fight against climate change, to contribute to the fight against biodiversity loss and pollinators loss.

So those incentives need to be better done. And I think there is room for manoeuvre, for example, in the frame of the eco-schemes that in some Member States are working well. In others, they are not working so well yet, so we have to address this. And I think there, as well, we have to see what nationally can be done to better support and design those eco-schemes to have this. But I think it is important.

I think we have learned from the crisis, from the farmers on the streets, that any budget cuts would be a disaster, especially in those tricky times where we face catastrophes, like in Spain, or all over the continent. So this needs to be addressed.

1-0025-0000

Elsi Katainen (Renew). – Kiitoksia vastauksesta. Toivottavasti todellakin voimme jatkaa keskustelua. Haluaisin myös kuulla niistä keinoista, kuinka pääsemme siihen, että kannattavaa tuotantoa voidaan jatkaa.

Tietysti ruoantuotanto on maatalouspolitiikan ydintä, mutta myös biotaloussektori tarjoaa sekä ilmasto- ja ympäristöratkaisuja että uudenlaisia tulonlähteitä viljelijöille ja myös metsänomistajille. Kuinka siis maatalouskomissaarina aiotte vaikuttaa ja sitouttaa teidän oman pääosastonne biotalousstrategian edistämiseen ja lainvalmisteluun niin, että maa- ja metsätalouden sivuvirtojen mahdollisuudet nähdään osana ratkaisua puhtaassa siirtymässä? Miten aiotte tehdä yhteistyötä esimerkiksi ympäristökomissaari Roswallin kanssa siten, että tulevissa lakialoitteissa ymmärretään hyvin erilaisten jäsenvaltioiden metsien erot ja huomioidaan riittävät joustot myös jäsenvaltiokohtaisissa ratkaisuissa?

1-0026-0000

Christophe Hansen, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you for that follow-up question and indeed, I believe, and I know it from practice, a lot of farmers are as well forest owners, for their own necessities, but as well for an additional income, so I think agroforestry can work together, and bioeconomy is definitely a solution to get as well quality jobs in the rural areas. That is something very important. They need to not only produce biomass, but be able as well to generate more added value. That will be very crucial. So I will be working very closely with my hopefully future colleague Jessika Roswall on this to develop together a bioeconomy.

Some might say, 'what has agriculture to do with forestry?', but I just wanted to remind you that already now there are a lot of programmes going on where the CAP funds initiatives in the in the forestry sector, and this stands for over EUR 4 billion, so it is not as if agriculture has nothing to do with forestry and the hopefully fruitful future bioeconomy.

1-0027-0000

Thomas Waitz (Verts/ALE). – Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Commissioner-designate Christophe Hansen for being here today.

Reflecting, actually, on the last question of Elsi Katainen and also your answers you have been giving, you have said, well, foresters and farmers witness the negative impacts of climate crisis and biodiversity loss every single day. And if you already see the kind of competition on the future budgets and the future MFFs, do you actually think that we will be able to maintain the amount of money that we have available for farming without teaming up with biodiversity and climate? And linked to that question, then, how exactly are you prepared to actually help farmers, just to give one example, to reduce the use of toxic pesticides?

And to build on that, I mean, we're still losing 800 farms per day. This is just an enormous loss on farm holdings that we witness on an ongoing basis. Will you be ready to think about strategies of keeping these farmers on the land, like through capping and redistribution of parts of the funds, or changing, actually, the funding model from hectare-based payments at least partly to workplace or income-based payments? Would this be something that you will engage with? Because we have to stop this loss of farms.

1-0028-0000

Christophe Hansen, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you very much, Mr Waitz. And I believe if we already would manage to maintain the budget as it stands, I would be very glad if we manage at the same time as well to get additional incomes. Bioeconomy can contribute, get an additional income. I'm also thinking about carbon farming, for example, where the foresters and the farmers could be rewarded for certain practices and that would be as well an additional income. So this is something where definitely we need to work.

But as well, the position I mentioned earlier, rather of the farmers in the entire supply chain, needs to be strengthened, that they are cooperatives that can work together and that they have as well a bargaining power, and that they are not just the employees of some bigger company. That is, for me, very important.

And on the reduction of toxic pesticides, I think all the farmers would like to reduce pesticides because, firstly, they have to drive out with their tractor that costs already energy prices. That is, they have to work with labour costs as well, and as well, they know that they are not doing good to species like bees and other plants or animals. So I think this is something where we need to help them as well.

When we take pesticides off the market, we need as well to be able to deliver faster alternatives to that. Because if the farmer loses his crop, because in the beet sector, for example, because he can't treat with neonics any more, well, then he needs an alternative. So I really want to speed up in this, together with the responsible colleagues, the authorisation procedure for biocontrol and alternatives. That would be very important.

And then maybe another point is organic farming is a way forward. It is, meanwhile, in all the national strategic plans, and we have a strategy. But I think some Member States need a little bit more push.

And then the last question on the redistribution, I think we discussed this already during the last reform. We did a little bit of redistribution. It was the 10 %, which brings down a little bit more for the small farmers. But it is not enough. And I think the strategic dialogue is hinting at a more distributive measure in that sense.

1-0029-0000

Thomas Waitz (Verts/ALE). – So just to recall, hectare-based payments versus income-based, maybe for a second round, but basically, also, I mean, the diversity of our agriculture is providing us not just with vital rural areas, but also with resilience towards climate impacts, but also with resilience towards market distortions. Will you be ready to strengthen direct marketing schemes, so directly consumers–producers, but also producers directly to tourism, to public public procurement, to have alternatives and build alternatives for farmers, actually, to sell their goods also via different streams than via retailers or big food processors? Is this something we can expect from you?

1-0030-0000

Christophe Hansen, *Commissioner-designate*. – On the hectare-based payments, of course, we have to see what is the benefit for the environment because one of your colleagues whom I met says as well that in his region, you have organic farms that are over 1 000 hectares big and I think the benefit is, as well on those hectares, for environment good. So to be too strict on that might be a problem, but I would not move from a certain redistributive measure away. We tried this last time.

Commission and Parliament agreed, but the Council was back in time quite reluctant on that part. But I think this needs to be done to get small farmers more resilient.

And then alternative incomes – I know it from practice in Luxembourg. Where I go to buy my meat, for example, it's a small farmer. He has done his freezer under the ground. I can do it by internet. And then I go and get my meat there and as well the fruit and vegetables. But it is very burdensome as well with the national authorities to get there and I think we need to encourage as well our national authority to be a little bit more flexible there and help them, really, to deploy this marketing on farm.

1-0031-0000

Luke Ming Flanagan (The Left). – Thank you very much, Commissioner-designate. I don't come from a farming background. I live in a rural area and, I have to say, I am a massive fan of the common agricultural policy, because without it my family would have had to emigrate again. And it's on that, and the reason why I'm asking you this question about funding is because I believe the more funding we have for the CAP, the more money we have for rural areas.

The EU budget for agriculture has gone down from 65.5 % to 23.5 % of the budget. In Ireland, in real terms, we have seen a 60 % drop in CAP funding since 1991. You spoke about various other sources for funding: EIB, we currently have NextGenerationEU. I have to say I'm not a fan of that. I am a fan of us actually using money that we don't have to borrow and spreading it around rural areas.

How ambitious will you be as the Commissioner – if you get the job – in increasing the real budget, not borrowed money into the future? How ambitious will you be? Will you be as ambitious as we were back in 1991?

1-0032-0000

Christophe Hansen, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you for that question. Of course, it is premature to prejudge what will the next College decide, but you can count on me to defend a very strong and dedicated budget to the common agricultural policy, to concrete figures. You agree, I don't have the glass ball to reply this in detail, but as well we need there to make pressure as well on our national governments. If we want a strong CAP that is not amputated from several parts, then we need to contribute as well more, because the money is not dropping down like rain. So I think that will be very important.

Therefore, I look really at the money where it lies, and I mentioned in the beginning, for example, the Just Transition Fund. There's so much money left of the funds that is not used. We need to guarantee that the access of our farmers gets it, because usually it's bigger companies, bigger projects. That needs to change and, therefore, I think really as well at the national level, it is important to steer our farmers into those funds. That would be very crucial. The EIB as well. I believe it is important when we speak about generational renewal, I think they have the capacities for investment, securitisation. And that is something we haven't looked into so far.

So this will be really one of my first steps where I don't have to wait for the heads of state and government, where I don't have to wait for the discussions on the next MFF yet to take the money now. Because farmers don't have the time to wait until we agree here on a hopefully enhanced budget, which I cannot promise – and you know exactly that I can't – so that's what I really want to do in the short term. Because we need to give perspective, we need to give predictability, and there are means out there that are underused currently.

1-0033-0000

Luke Ming Flanagan (The Left). – Several Members have touched on – and you have as well – the idea of giving more funding to small-scale and medium-scale farmers. It was mentioned by you that there was something in the current CAP. It's called CRISS, the complementary redistributive income support, which is set at a minimum of 10 %. And I hear various MEPs from various countries saying we need more money for small farmers. I hear various governments say the same thing.

Yet when you look at each and every one of these countries' CAP strategic national plans, we see that the vast majority of them do not go past the minimum of 10 % for small farmers. In fact, I think it's only six out of all EU countries; half of Belgium does a really good job on it and some other countries do a good job on it.

So when you hear people complain that there isn't enough money for small-scale farmers – you yourself said you'd like to see more money going to them – what would you do with this mechanism in a reformed CAP? Would you make it mandatory that countries have to give more than 10 %, given that you support more money going to them but countries are refusing to do it?

1-0034-0000

Christophe Hansen, Commissioner-designate. – You remember well the last negotiations we had on the the current CAP. You were in charge in the agriculture committee for your group. I was in charge in the environmental committee. And we had the discussion on the mandatory aspect. And I think the mandatory aspect needs to be put on the table again. The situation politically has as well changed, because the pressure from our farming community is very high.

So I really believe that we need a certain degressivity, because when you read in articles – recently, I think Thomas Waitz was quoted on that as well in *The Guardian* – on billionaires getting literally billions of public money, of taxpayers' money, that is not the CAP I want to stand for. And I want to look into that – how we can really distribute better degressivity very clearly.

But we need as well to see that one size doesn't fit all. We really need to look as well at the definition of agri farmers, which is not the same in all the Member States, so the criteria are very different there. I think we really need to take a closer look, because for me it is unacceptable that billionaires get this, and those most in need get maybe EUR 100 more in a year. But this is not going to make them profitable in the end.

1-0035-0000

Ivan David (ESN). – Paní předsedající, pane kandidáte, v roce 2004 bylo do Evropské unie přijato několik států střední a východní Evropy. Ty musely splnit celou řadu podmínek omezení produkce v řadě komodit, avšak dostaly nižší unijní dotace než dosavadní členové Evropské unie. Bylo přislíbeno, že tato nerovnost bude kompenzována do roku 2012, ale dosud k tomu nedošlo. Domníváte se, že to je v pořádku? Chcete udělat něco pro nápravu? Pokud se jedná o národní dotace, je ten rozdíl ještě podstatně větší, což samozřejmě vede k dumpingovým dovozcům do chudších zemí. Trváte na splnění všech cílů *Green Deal* nebo hodláte některé z nich korigovat tak, aby docházelo k menším problémům, na které zemědělci narážejí?

1-0036-0000

Christophe Hansen, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you, Mr David. Your first question goes precisely on convergence. We discussed now the internal convergence with Mr Flanagan, but this concerns the external convergence. And we know that there is still differences and huge differences between Member States depending on the moment they joined the European Union.

So this is, of course, a topic that will be very high on the agenda as well of not only the next MFF discussion, but as well in the discussion we will have to have on the reform of the common agricultural policy. But, of course, there we have to work towards convergence from one day to another. It is probably not that easy, but nonetheless, I think convergence as well, the external convergence, is a critical point, not only for budget-wise, but as well from a social point of view that we need to meet.

Then on your second question, on meeting the Green Deal objectives, I believe that on the basis the Green Deal objectives, nobody is or can honestly put them in question. We see the dramatic events that we have had now in Spain. We had dramatic events before in France, in central Europe. Those critical events are getting ever and ever more frequent, and we need to better prepare and mitigate where we can.

And there the farming sector can and wants to contribute. And all the farmers I speak about, they say, 'We want to contribute but make it simpler to contribute'. And I think that is something that we need to work on, rather to say, 'Okay, I withdraw this, or I withdraw that now,' just to set a signal. We have good elements in place. We need that farmers are able to take them up, we need to support – and this, as well, financially – their capacity to buy into this new innovation. That will be crucial and not revising everything that is going into the right direction.

1-0037-0000

Ivan David (ESN). – Pane kandidáte, já bych se rád zeptal: Co uděláte se situací, kdy nadnárodní maloobchodní řetězce, které v podstatě ovládají trh s potravinami i s jinými zemědělskými komoditami, určují kupní ceny často pod úrovní nákladů a na druhé straně pro spotřebitele ceny velmi výrazně narůstají, v posledních několika letech až o 30 procent?

1-0038-0000

Christophe Hansen, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you for that question. I think it has been partly already answered to my two different questions before, when it came to the targeted CMO review, where we should strengthen the position of the farmers in the supply chain. This is, as well, an overarching objective of my mission letter and the vision I will present in the first 100 days. Therefore, we will need to make a targeted amendment and revision of the common market organisation to address and strengthen the position of the producer organisations in there, and then also the Unfair Trading Practices Directive is in place only since barely one year, but it is as well already delivering. So this is very important to acknowledge. But there is an issue in cross-border enforcement, and that is a quick fix that we can address in the next weeks after the next Commission, hopefully, can take up its duties.

1-0039-0000

Daniel Buda (PPE). – Înainte de toate, mult succes, domnule comisar desemnat, convins fiind că succesul dumneavoastră va fi și succesul nostru, al tuturor și fără discuție, și cel al fermierilor. În primul rând, aș dori să vă întreb și să insist asupra aspectelor legate de convergența externă a plăților directe sau, cu alte cuvinte, asupra egalizării subvențiilor dintre fermierii din Estul Europei și Vestul Europei, aspect care reprezintă o preocupare majoră în sectorul agricol european și, de altfel, există diferențe de plăți directe chiar și în interiorul statelor membre.

Astfel, domnule comisar, fermierii au prețul de cost pe unitatea de produs aproximativ la fel. Sunt actori pe aceeași piață unică, dar, cu toate acestea, au aceste plăți directe inegale, ceea ce, desigur, creează o concurență profundă, neloială între ei. În aceste condiții, când estimați, ca orizont de timp - înțeleg constrângerile din acest punct de vedere, dar totuși fermierii așteaptă un răspuns

aproximativ - când estimați că se va ajunge la acest proces de convergență deplină între statele membre?

De asemenea, s-au purtat o serie de discuții legate de viitorul plăților directe, care astăzi funcționează ca o centură de siguranță pentru fermieri. Vor fi ele condiționate exclusiv de îndeplinirea unor obiective de mediu? Subliniez, încă o dată, exclusiv doar de condiții de mediu?

1-0040-0000

Christophe Hansen, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you, Mr Buda. I will start with the second part of your question on the budget. And there I would like to recall again the political guidelines by our President, who clearly states that she will defend and that we will defend as the European Commission an income policy for farmers. And income policy does not mean just environmental services. So this is very clear. I believe the size and the shape of the future MFF, of course, still needs to be decided. That will be by the end of next year. So it is difficult to foresee this already, but I think it is important to remind people as well that already now, one third of the EU budget is used for agri-environmental measures, if it is a cross-compliance or eco-scheme. So I think it is very important to remember that as well. Also, the European Court of Auditors in a recent report clearly stated as well that the green architecture of the CAP and the strategic plans is working and up for the task, is going in the right direction. So this is very important to recognise as well.

And then on the second part of your question on the external convergence, you know that we had already at the last mandate, this very strong fight. This will be as well at the centre of the MFF discussions, because we know how Member States deal with it and nobody wants to lose. But if you have convergence, somebody has to lose, otherwise the other part can't win. And so this will be a trade-off to be made. But I think we have to go as well a little bit further and think about the next steps, because we are speaking as well about further enlargement of the European Union. So we need to future-proof our common agricultural policy, as well as the income policy that we have in there, and this needs to be sustained not just for the next 2 or 3 years, but further on. And therefore, I think a thorough assessment of how we did it back when Central European countries joined the European Union, but as well the next step, because as well there we will have similar discussions.

1-0041-0000

Cristina Maestre (S&D). – Señor comisario, muchas gracias por sus palabras de apoyo a nuestro país, a España, como consecuencia de la DANA. Sin duda vamos a necesitar el apoyo de la Unión Europea, por lo tanto, se agradece.

Al hilo de esto, y también al hilo de los comentarios que ha hecho, a mí me gustaría preguntarle directamente por esas medidas específicas sobre el cambio climático: ¿qué medidas específicas se podrían aplicar desde el ámbito de la cartera de la que pretende encargarse, desde el ámbito de la agricultura?

Luego, en otro orden de cosas, me gustaría preguntarle por otro tema que ha sacado: el tema de la reciprocidad y las cláusulas espejo. Ha dicho casi exactamente que las defiende siempre dentro de los límites que establece la OMC. Me gustaría que usted —que tiene una trayectoria también en el ámbito del comercio internacional— me explicara con un poquito más de detalle la visión que tiene sobre cómo se pueden sortear esos límites que establece la propia OMC y sobre qué posibilidades tenemos de cara a la próxima reforma para que, verdaderamente, podamos decirles a los agricultores que nos lo piden que sí, que les podemos ofrecer una garantía de cláusulas espejo. ¿Y cómo va a garantizar que las importaciones de los productos agroalimentarios reflejen todas las normas de producción de la Unión Europea, es decir, que se apliquen y que además sean justas?

Por último, quisiera preguntarle qué opina sobre el Fondo de Transición Justa que establece el diálogo estratégico de la PAC, y si cree que es posible llevarlo a cabo también.

1-0042-0000

Christophe Hansen, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you very much. Many questions in one question. So I will try to reply to all of them.

Of course, I believe the dramatic events we have lived in Spain need to show us, as well, that we need better preparedness. And better preparedness is not just in the agriculture sector, but it will be a cross-cutting priority to be better prepared to extreme situations and by 'better preparation', I don't just mean financial compensation, but as well we need to prepare that those events come often and beneath as well to see how the rescue is organised in such situations and how as well the first deliverables of the European Union and neighbouring countries can be better targeted in all the situations we have lived currently. So I think there is a lot to be done.

And then on the cost side, we have the agricultural reserve. That is as well in this case going to be helpful, but it is by far not sufficient. The agricultural reserve is EUR 450 million a year. We had already floods in Central Europe, we had floods in France, we had forest fires in Portugal, so for 2025, it is already almost used. So that is a huge problem. And I think on this reserve we really need to do better, not only for natural disasters but as well for animal diseases, for example, and from perturbations from the market that can be caused by imports from third countries. And there you were arguing on the mirror clauses and we have them already for some products in place – the neonicotinoids, for example, but this is legally contested, so we have now to see. I'm quite confident that we will win this fight because it is in the interest of our own health. So we can argue this at the WTO. It is the so-called 'green box' in there. So I think we have to explore what are other elements that we really need to have those more effective. And, as well, we need to work on our border controls where mainly Member States are as well in charge to better control what is coming in and what the quality is.

1-0043-0000

Carmen Crespo Díaz (PPE). – Señor Hansen, la DANA ha azotado a mi país, a España: a Valencia, a Andalucía, a Castilla-La Mancha. Le mandamos el pésame a todas las familias afectadas.

Los agricultores, con los tractores, fueron los primeros que estuvieron allí, en Valencia, y, aparte de las familias, ellos también esperan muchas respuestas. Yo creo que hay que hacer una reflexión, y claro que hay que hacerla: ¿estamos dispuestos a obviar, en este caso, los embalses de regulación o también la restauración de los cauces, que son temas importantísimos?

Pero me alegra escuchar de usted que la activación de la reserva de crisis es una de las posibilidades, además de otras, para estos agricultores, agricultores que tenían claras sus peticiones en las manifestaciones: clamaban sobre la competencia desleal y la preferencia comunitaria. En este caso, me ha alegrado muchísimo escuchar —y esa es la pregunta— que, además, está dispuesto a ser el comisario que impulse las cláusulas espejo en los acuerdos con terceros países y, por tanto, creo que también es una magnífica noticia para nuestros agricultores.

1-0044-0000

Christophe Hansen, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you very much, Ms Crespo, for your question. And I indeed believe EU solidarity will and is key at this very moment. We have seen in the satellite-mapping, where the EU is helping. Here you have mentioned the European Solidarity Fund. We have as well cohesion funds, where flexibilities are now possible. This was agreed on

21 October, so very recently. We have also the Recovery and Resilience Facility. And, of course, we have inside our strategic plans, the possibility to restore production potential. And I think those tools need to be used here appropriately. We have as well in the frame of the rural development now agreed that the Member States can provide additional funds up to EUR 42 000 in the case of natural disasters and, of course, the agricultural reserve. But I think as well, when we speak about the geopolitical and environmental challenges that we are living, that we need to work on a stronger instrument there as well.

On the unfair trading practices and different standards, this is, of course, as well sometimes difficult to explain to our partners because we are changing our laws, sometimes very quickly, and then we expect immediately that the other side accepts this from one moment to another. That, of course, goes through phasing-in but, as I said, when we do agreements, when we negotiate, this needs to go much further, faster, because otherwise everything that was in the mandate is not up to date at the moment of signature. We have seen with Mercosur that we need this additional protocol. But I think the trade and sustainability chapters from the new generation of trade agreements are very much going in that direction. And I will look at further products that are prohibited in the European Union to set them on the list of non-imports.

1-0045-0000

Gilles Pennelle (PFE). – Madame la Présidente, il y a quelques mois, partout en Europe, nos agriculteurs ont dit non au traité de libre-échange. Apparemment, ils n’ont pas été entendus, parce que, dans le plus grand secret, loin des députés européens, loin de cette commission AGRI, l’Union européenne négocie avec le Mercosur l’un des plus importants traités de libre-échange de son histoire. Monsieur le Commissaire, vous devez savoir que nos éleveurs, nos agriculteurs et nos paysans ne veulent pas de ce traité de libre-échange avec le Mercosur. Ils ne veulent pas de concurrence déloyale. Ils ne veulent pas importer de produits qui ne respectent pas nos normes. Ils ne veulent pas qu’une nouvelle fois l’agriculture européenne soit sacrifiée pour qu’on vende des voitures allemandes. Même habillé par quelques clauses miroirs, ils ne veulent pas de ce traité.

En tant que député, vous aviez pris position officiellement pour ce traité avec le Mercosur. Je vous pose une simple question: qu’en est-il aujourd’hui, puisqu’on nous annonce que dans quelques jours devrait être annoncé ce traité de libre-échange avec le Mercosur?

1-0046-0000

Christophe Hansen, commissaire désigné. – Merci beaucoup, Monsieur Pennelle, pour cette question très importante. J’aimerais vous rappeler que l’Union européenne exporte elle aussi beaucoup de denrées alimentaires. J’ai évoqué le chiffre de 230 milliards concernant la filière agroalimentaire l’année dernière.

Pouvoir exporter constitue un atout pour notre agriculture européenne. Nous devons conclure des accords avec des pays tiers. Sur la forme, vous êtes évidemment libres de faire ce que vous avez à faire sur la question du Mercosur, parce que moi, je ne pourrai pas voter sur ce sujet. Vous, vous pourrez le faire au Parlement.

Je pense néanmoins qu’il est important de reconnaître un accord, qu’il s’agisse du Mercosur ou de l’accord que nous avons conclu avec la Chine sur la protection de nos indications géographiques protégées, par exemple. Ces accords sont dans l’intérêt de nos agriculteurs. Il faut aussi le voir.

Tout à l’heure, sur la question de M. Fidanza, j’ai évoqué le parmesan: l’Amérique du Sud veut acheter nos denrées alimentaires, mais elles sont pour l’instant encore trop chères, donc il nous faut un

accord. Mais vous avez raison: il y a certains secteurs, notamment celui de la viande bovine, mais également d'autres, qui sont déjà exposés et fragilisés au sein de l'Union européenne.

À ce jour, on importe déjà, sur notre marché, 200 000 tonnes en provenance de ce fameux bloc du Mercosur, malgré l'absence d'accord. Je ne peux pas me prononcer, je ne sais pas si les négociations vont être menées à leur terme ou pas. Mais cette viande-là est déjà sur nos marchés. Nous devons vraiment faire attention à bien contrôler les normes sanitaires. Nous avons eu le cas de viandes bovines provenant du Brésil, où des hormones avaient été administrées aux vaches. Il faut que nos contrôles soient efficaces, parce que de tels produits ne sont pas conformes à notre production européenne et n'ont pas le droit de pénétrer le marché européen.

1-0047-0000

Waldemar Buda (ECR). – Szanowny Panie kandydacie na komisarza! Ja chciałem zapytać o sprawę rzeczywiście Mercosuru, tu moi przedmówcy już po trosze tego tematu dotknęli. Nie ludźmy się co do tego, że zagwarantowanie klauzul da nam szansę na równą konkurencję. Na papierze rzeczywiście wszystko będzie wyglądało pięknie, natomiast ostatecznie Komisja Europejska nie będzie miała narzędzi kontrolowania spełniania tych wymogów, które będziemy stawiali na papierze w umowach handlowych.

I ja bym chciał, od Pana Komisarza oczekuję, żeby wyjść – jeżeli Pan komisarzem oczywiście zostanie – żeby wyjść z roli osoby, która reprezentuje Luksemburg, reprezentuje w tej skali kraj, tylko reprezentuje Pan potężną dziedzinę rolnictwa, jaka jest właściwie w Unii Europejskiej, potężną dziedzinę, która stanowi jedną trzecią budżetu Unii Europejskiej. I musi Pan być silnym komisarzem, który będzie się rozpychał w wielu sprawach w dyskusji z innymi komisarzami.

I w przypadku Mercosuru w sposób oczywisty jest to niekorzystne dla rolnictwa. I powinien Pan tutaj twardo stawiać to stanowisko, a my będziemy Pana w tym wspierać. I w wielu innych sprawach również. Mówi Pan na przykład o WPR, że nie rozstrzygnięto jeszcze sprawy finansów na kolejną perspektywę. Ale z Pana punktu widzenia i rolnictwa potrzeba jest jak najwięcej pieniędzy, a przynajmniej utrzymanie tego, co mamy dzisiaj w WPR. A więc mam wielkie oczekiwanie, żeby przyjąć taką rolę, i my będziemy Pana w tym wspierać.

1-0048-0000

Christophe Hansen, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you very much for those two questions as well. Again on the Mercosur, I think we have to make sure in all trade agreements in general, that products that are as well produced in the European Union respect a certain level of similarity. So reciprocity will be key. And that is something we have to further strengthen. I think I have been very clear on that. On the other hand, we need as well a certain agri input. And there we come, for example, when we feed our animals, 25 % of the proteins that we are currently using to feed our animals are coming from third countries, where we have very little impact on the quality of that, and we are highly dependent. And when I say 'dependent', I say as well that we are vulnerable. So the livestock sector is at risk as well if we have not the stability there. So we definitely need to work on more autonomy when it comes to the production of such protein crops as well in the European Union, and there we need to look as well at how we can finance them. That will be important as well to have a sustainable livestock sector for the future, and that will be part, as well, of the vision on the future of agriculture and food.

And then also, I think what is very important is that we do our negotiations at WTO level. There I will be as well present and I will be as well at the level of Codex Alimentarius, where we need to put products on the lists that are not fit for our market, and we have to do that on a scientific basis and you can count on me. The same way you can count on me is that I will defend a strong and dedicated

budget for our agriculture sector and for the broader rural areas. That is very important. That has done its proof over the last 60 years, and we need to stand very strong. That will not be only me deciding, that will be you deciding, as well the Member States, and we have to make our point and fight this fight together.

1-0049-0000

Christine Singer (Renew). – Vielen Dank, Frau Vorsitzende, lieber Herr Hansen! Zahlreiche bedeutende Aspekte sind heute schon diskutiert worden, und als Stimme der land- und forstwirtschaftlichen Praxis hier im Europaparlament ist auch der Wald ein Herzensthema, das ich ansprechen möchte.

In den letzten Jahren hat die Kommission immer mehr Initiativen mit Waldbezug ergriffen, ohne dass die Stimmen derjenigen Gehör fanden, die tagtäglich mit Leidenschaft für die Pflege und Klimafitness unserer Wälder arbeiten. Ich schlage Ihnen daher vor, einen strategischen Dialog zum Wald ins Leben zu rufen, analog zum Dialog zur Zukunft der Landwirtschaft, einen Dialog, der die Waldbesitzer und -bewirtschafter in den Fokus rückt und Subsidiarität achtet.

Werden Sie diesen Dialog gemeinsam mit Ihren Kollegen starten, um den Bewirtschaftern unserer natürlichen Ressourcen den Rücken zu stärken und das Subsidiaritätsprinzip klar zu bekräftigen? Und wie wollen Sie erreichen, dass wirtschaftlich genutzte Wälder auch als ökologisch wertvoll wahrgenommen werden? Ziel dieses Dialogs muss eine Balance zwischen Naturschutzinteressen und wirtschaftlich produktiven, aktiv bewirtschafteten Wäldern mit Zukunftspotenzial sein. Das muss sich künftig in der Forstpolitik widerspiegeln.

1-0050-0000

Christophe Hansen, designiertes Mitglied der Kommission. – Vielen Dank, Frau Singer. Dann werden wir meinen Jobtitel noch einmal anpassen und auch noch Forstwirtschaft dazu setzen. Aber Spaß beiseite. Ich denke, es ist wichtig, dass wir auch unsere Forstwirtschaft verstärkt einbinden. Ich habe das vorhin bei der Frage von Frau Katainen auch schon gesagt: Viele Landwirte sind auch Forstbesitzer, brauchen dies, um Holz zu haben, wenn sie ihren Zaun errichten, um das zu machen, aber auch zu anderen Zwecken, eben auch als zusätzliche Einkommensquelle.

Aber ich denke, wir müssen das im weiteren Blick haben, auch wenn wir über Kreislaufwirtschaft reden, wenn wir über *Carbon Storage* reden. Da gibt es viele Möglichkeiten, wo der Wald auch produktiv bleiben kann – oder sogar bleiben muss –, um eben auch zu dieser erweiterten Bioökonomie beizutragen. Ich bin auf jeden Fall bereit, diesen Dialog zu verstärken. Den gibt es schon, die Kommission steht in regelmäßigem Austausch, aber ich denke, da kann man auch noch verstärkt etwas machen. Ich denke, das ist nicht nur meine Verantwortung.

Einige sagen immer: Die Forstwirtschaft liegt in den Händen der Mitgliedstaaten. Das ist nicht ganz richtig, denn – wie ich es vorhin gesagt habe – wir haben auch über 180 Forstprojekte, die von der Gemeinsamen Agrarpolitik mitgetragen werden, in einer Größenordnung von 4,2 Milliarden Euro. Das ist schon ein wichtiger Punkt. Und ich denke, dass wir einen ähnlichen Dialog führen können. Wir müssen das nicht eins zu eins kopieren, aber trotzdem: Dieser Dialog muss verstärkt werden, wenn wir eine richtig funktionierende Bioökonomie haben möchten. Und das möchte ich dann auch zusammen mit meiner hoffentlich zukünftigen Kollegin Roswall und dem Sektor – das ist ganz wichtig – zusammen machen. Ich glaube, darin liegen die Lösungen, und da möchte ich auch gerne mit Ihnen zusammenarbeiten.

1-0051-0000

Stefano Bonaccini (S&D). – Signor Commissario designato, il nuovo regolamento sulle indicazioni geografiche apre una fase decisiva per il sistema delle DOP e delle IGP.

Serve un impegno costante a supporto di questa straordinaria storia di successo europea, che genera valore senza bisogno di alcun fondo-volano per la crescita di interi territori; ad esempio l'Emilia Romagna, che ho guidato negli ultimi dieci anni, ha il primato tra tutte le regioni europee con 44 prodotti che generano valore economico per 4 miliardi, che diventano 20 miliardi per l'Italia e diventano 80 miliardi per l'intera Europa.

Commissario designato, per continuare a valorizzare le eccellenze agroalimentari dei nostri territori è pronto a mettere in campo un piano d'azione europeo per lo sviluppo delle indicazioni geografiche? Un piano adeguatamente finanziato, che abbia tra i suoi obiettivi la maggior collaborazione tra i produttori e la promozione di una cultura alimentare più consapevole, in particolare tra i giovani consumatori e sui mercati terzi.

E proprio in merito a questi, ai mercati terzi, chiederei un'attenzione particolare, data la Sua esperienza in commissione INTA, affinché i prodotti agroalimentari europei smettano di essere bersaglio ingiustificato di dazi e di altre misure di ritorsione all'interno di contenziosi commerciali.

1-0052-0000

Christophe Hansen, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you very much for that question. I think we had already touched a little bit on the GIs, and, indeed, we have 3 600 registered GIs in the European Union that, firstly, protect our intellectual property. But as well, as you mentioned rightly, it is our export – let's say, a logo – that is really helping to get our products and their identity on the ground. That is very important. And we have, as well, because those products usually have a higher added value as, let's say, a standard non-transparent product. So I think it is really important that we continue it.

And, of course, we have the GI review – it's very recent – that we have to acknowledge. And the secondary legislation to that is only coming now. It has been presented now, I think, last week or two weeks ago. So we have now two months of scrutiny here. And then in January it will enter into force. So I think it would be good to have such a development of a GI roadmap. That would be a good initiative and that could take the form of an action plan.

I think we have as well to make an outreach exercise because, as I said earlier, some Member States are doing good, others are not yet there. So this could bring even more for the entire agriculture sector. And I think we have, as well... We can do this as well for the action plan, maybe not immediately now or next year, because the legislation is recent, but in 2026 that could be something we could do. But this needs, as well then, to go together with the promotion programmes that Mr Fidanza asked for as well.

This is very important to have, as well, our European roadshows, together with the Member States, to promote, because what we are promoting is the sustainability, if it is now wine or if it is meat or other products or cheese – it is as well the way we produce that is our logo and our brand and that we have to promote better. And the GIs are the perfect instrument for that.

1-0053-0000

Wouter Beke (PPE). – Thank you. Thank you, dear Commissioner-designate, dear colleague as a Member of the Parliament already – and this is not irrelevant, it's significant, and it's also hopefully a good idea for the future in the relations between the Commission and this Parliament.

I have a question about the next enlargement of the European Union, because this enlargement would undoubtedly change the conditions of competition in the internal market, as Ukraine's accession to the EU would involve globally competitive agriculture producers with large-scale productions. The difference in the scale of production and farm structures are significant. The impacts on global markets resulting from the war in Ukraine was a clear evidence of that. Therefore, we need to start appropriate preparations of the European agri-food sector. My question is very clear: how will you ensure the European farmers do not suffer because of the possible future enlargement of the European Union? I look forward to your answer. Thank you and I wish you good luck.

1-0054-0000

Christophe Hansen, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you very much, Mr Beke, and indeed, enlargement is in all the discussions I had so far a very prominent subject because farmers are concerned.

I think always the elephant in the room is Ukraine because it has the biggest agricultural potential. I think it equals one third of European production. So it is really a gigantic production machine, a powerhouse of agriculture that might be joining the European Union. So this needs to be properly prepared. And I think that is very clear, because the solidarity that we currently have towards Ukraine is not something we should take for granted. We need that our farmers and our rural areas continue to support this. And this then, of course, needs to be as well bearable, and we don't need to make losses to our farming sector because of another country or other countries joining. I think that is very clear, but we have already had the experience in the past. I'm coming from a farm, and I remember that my brother in 2004 was really, really upset when several new Member States joined the European Union because he was as well fearing for the prices of his crops. Was it now true or not true? In the end, I will not judge that. But in the end we had found solutions. Those solutions are solutions of not, let's say, penetrating the internal market from one day to another. This needs to be gradual. And already now we have a very close relation with the autonomous trade measures, where we take several products in. For five of them, we have already the safeguards we needed to use them, not yet for maize and for chicken, but we have to see. So we really need to see as well now when we have already the access to the market that there is as well already gradual adaptation and let's say, joining the standards of production that we have in the European Union. That will be very crucial.

So I think this, let's say, 'getting closer together' needs to be accompanied by aligning as well production standards. That will help. But of course we need as well to see at the financial side, enlargement will cost in the end, but will maybe allow us as well to be more independent on protein crops. We have to see that and discuss with the Ukrainian side. That will be one huge task not only for me to discuss with the Ukrainian side, but I think, in general, enlargement needs to be properly prepared.

1-0055-0000

Anna Strolenberg (Verts/ALE). – Thank you, Commissioner-designate Hansen. Let's talk about something different: plant-based proteins. Because science shows that the need for plant-based food production and consumption is important. The FAO, the WHO and IPCC stress the importance of this shift to achieve a healthy and sustainable food system. The Strategic Dialogue also concludes with the societal consensus on this topic. So science and society are clear. So now the EU must take action. Protein diversification is also of strategic importance for the EU, as – you also mentioned, and the report of the Joint Research Centre also shows – the EU is very strongly dependent on feed

imports to sustain our intensive livestock system. So reducing this dependency is necessary to preserve our food security and – not important – it can boost our competitiveness.

So what do we do? We rebalance our diets. We produce more plant-based proteins in Europe, and we support extensive and circular livestock systems.

My question would be, will you bring forward an action plan for plant-based foods, as proposed in the Strategic Dialogue? Will this action plan include elements to tackle both consumption and production? And lastly, will you commit to policy actions to reduce our dependency on imported feed?

1-0056-0000

Christophe Hansen, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you very much. I read very intensively the Strategic Dialogue report as well. I had a slightly different reading from yours, but I will not go into the details of that. I think it is very tricky to say and impose top down who has to eat what. And that is something we really and I want to avoid, because that is not how the European Union should work. Meat products are also a recognised part of a balanced diet. Of course, everything we consume needs to be consumed in moderation. My doctor told me as well to eat less red meat. That was the medical advice to me, but I think it would be very dangerous to impose this top down. That would even make us further away from citizens.

But where I completely agree with you is that we are heavily under-producing plant-based proteins in the European Union. And they have, I would say, at least two benefits, one of them being that they are beneficial as well for the climate because they store as well emissions and are, in that sense, already very important. Secondly, we are heavily dependent on their imports: 25 % of our animals need to be fed with proteins coming from outside. This dependency is to be brought down. And I think it will be very important that we update as well the plant protein needs. We have a strategy dated from 2018, if I'm not mistaken, and I think we need to update that, definitely. And I think this has been asked as well by several resolutions from this House, so I will include this as well in the sustainable livestock strategy. That will be part of my vision related to the proteins as well.

But I think it is very important that we look as well into other opportunities. I mentioned Ukraine; we have to maybe steer as well and negotiate with them that they produce part of what we would need to import. But as well, I think this will be a task for the follow-up of the Strategic Dialogue, the so-called European Board on Agriculture and Food, to discuss this question in detail, because in the report it was rather a vague formulation, and that needs to be discussed more in detail.

1-0057-0000

Céline Imart (PPE). – Monsieur le Commissaire désigné, l'agriculture européenne est à la croisée des chemins. Dans un contexte où elle est la première victime et la première source d'atténuation du changement climatique, l'accès à l'eau est le premier outil de gestion des risques pour sécuriser la production agricole et les agriculteurs du continent.

C'est la gestion anticipée de l'eau et notamment l'augmentation des capacités de stockage qui permettront à notre agriculture de répondre aux défis de la souveraineté alimentaire et énergétique de l'Europe, aux antipodes d'une approche décroissante prônée par certaines ONG ou organisations écolo-extrémistes particulièrement actives en France, mais pas uniquement. L'accès à l'eau est la première assurance récolte pour les cultures et l'élevage et se situe résolument dans une approche multi-usages: lutte contre les incendies, maintien de l'étiage, protection de la biodiversité, rétention de l'eau qui tombe en excès dans des laps de temps extrêmement courts.

Ma question est donc la suivante: dans la stratégie sur l'eau, comment envisagez-vous de traduire cette ambition? Pouvez-vous vous engager à lever les freins réglementaires et à favoriser les investissements liés à l'aspect quantitatif de l'eau?

1-0058-0000

Christophe Hansen, *commissaire désigné*. – Bonjour, Madame Imart, et merci pour cette question, qui est, je pense, plus que jamais d'actualité. J'ai récemment parlé avec une collègue suédoise qui m'a dit qu'il y avait eu, dans la même année, des problèmes de sécheresse, des problèmes d'inondation et des feux de forêt en Suède, un pays où je n'aurais pas suspecté que de tels problèmes se posaient. Je pense que c'est assez significatif. Il ne s'agit pas de la peut-être future commissaire, c'est une autre collègue. C'était très frappant pour moi, parce qu'il n'y a donc pas que certaines zones de l'Union européenne qui sont concernées; c'est l'Union européenne tout entière et ces problèmes se manifestent dans des régions où on ne l'aurait pas suspecté.

Je pense donc qu'il est très important de constater que dans le cadre des plans stratégiques, 21 % des terres agricoles sont déjà couvertes par des programmes qui protègent l'eau, non seulement contre les inondations, mais aussi du point de vue de la qualité. En outre, vous l'avez dit, il faut une véritable stratégie; la présidente von der Leyen m'a demandé de contribuer à la stratégie sur la résilience de l'eau avec ma future collègue suédoise, à nouveau. Je crois qu'il est très important d'y défendre les intérêts des citoyens, de l'environnement et des agriculteurs en même temps. Je pense aussi que l'on prend déjà un certain nombre de mesures pour la prévention dans le cadre de la PAC actuelle, avec la protection de zones humides et de tourbières qui sont très importantes.

Vous avez raison, l'infrastructure va devenir de plus en plus cruciale. Il faudra de la rétention d'eau quand il y en aura trop et une libération progressive quand il n'y en aura pas assez. Je pense que là, politiquement, on a connu une sorte de blocage au cours des dernières décennies, lorsque l'on n'a plus réinvesti et cela va être nécessaire pour maintenir de l'agriculture dans certaines régions parmi les plus exposées.

1-0059-0000

Arash Saeidi (The Left). – Monsieur le Commissaire désigné, vous avez notamment annoncé deux objectifs: donner envie aux jeunes de s'installer – cela passe inévitablement par une rémunération juste – et aller vers une agriculture durable. Dans le même temps, nous nous apprêtons à signer un nouvel accord de libre-échange avec le Mercosur et, donc, à accroître la pression que des concurrents bien moins regardants sur les aspects environnementaux et sociaux exercent sur l'agriculture européenne. La mise en place d'un fonds de compensation pour nos agriculteurs et la baisse de nos ambitions écologiques sont la démonstration évidente que les accords de libre-échange, celui avec le Mercosur en particulier, se font au détriment des intérêts des agriculteurs européens, en les soumettant à un dumping social, environnemental et chimique insupportable.

Quels outils comptez-vous mettre en place pour sortir de cette contradiction criante, protéger nos agriculteurs de ce dumping, leur permettre d'être justement rémunérés pour leur travail et pas seulement indemnisés, en somme pour leur éviter de toujours payer le prix des contrats juteux dont ne manqueront pas de bénéficier les multinationales des deux côtés de l'Atlantique, grâce à cet accord de libre-échange que vos prédécesseurs sont en train de négocier?

1-0060-0000

Christophe Hansen, *commissaire désigné*. – Merci beaucoup, Monsieur Saeidi, pour cette question qui rejoint celles déjà posées par certains collègues. Je pense qu'il est essentiel que le commerce international ouvre en même temps des perspectives pour nos agriculteurs et notre secteur

agroalimentaire. Nos exportations s'élèvent à 230 milliards par an et nous avons une balance positive de 70 milliards par rapport aux importations. C'est un chiffre dont il faut avoir clairement conscience et il y a un secteur au sens large, agricole et agroalimentaire, qui profite du commerce international.

Évidemment, il y a des secteurs qui sont très exposés, notamment parce que les marges actuelles sont déjà minimales et parce que des produits moins chers sont importés. Il faut donc effectivement que l'on regarde très attentivement ce qui va être négocié et ce qui est en train d'être négocié, à savoir ce protocole additionnel au Mercosur. Pour ma part, je ne l'ai pas encore vu; peut-être que vous l'avez déjà vu, mais ce n'est pas mon cas. Il faudra l'analyser en détail: ce sera le travail et le devoir de ce Parlement européen de le faire et de prévoir les arguments nécessaires pour le ratifier ou non. Je pense qu'il présente des atouts, mais qu'il crée aussi des défis. Il faut trouver le bon équilibre.

En tout cas, ce que je peux vous dire, c'est que je vais consentir tous les efforts possibles pour que ce qu'on a fait, par exemple avec les néonicotinoïdes, soit aussi appliqué à d'autres produits qui ne sont pas autorisés dans l'Union européenne et qui rendent l'agriculture plus chère. Il nous faut travailler pour atteindre une certaine réciprocité: c'est très important.

Pour le juste revenu, il faut évidemment voir toute la chaîne alimentaire, depuis l'agriculteur jusqu'au consommateur, parce que le consommateur doit aussi être prêt à payer. On a souvent des problèmes dans ce domaine, mais je pense que les traités requièrent aussi que l'on produise un bien qui reste abordable pour le consommateur final. Ce point est très important ici, mais ce que j'ai dit sur l'OCM, l'adaptation pour les organisations de producteurs et pour l'application transfrontalière des pratiques commerciales déloyales, on va le faire tout de suite et cela va aider nos agriculteurs.

1-0061-0000

Maria Grapini (S&D). – Domnule comisar desemnat, s-a vorbit aici de o posibilă extindere și de situația politicii agricole comune după 2027. V-aș întreba care este punctul dumneavoastră de vedere? Cum vedeți viitorul plăților directe?

Apoi, legat de intrările din Ucraina, considerați că în prezent este necesară reglementarea în continuare a intrării produselor ucrainene pentru a evita destabilizarea piețelor agricole din Uniunea Europeană?

Știți bine, țara mea și alte țări au fost afectate în anii din urmă. Considerați că măsurile de protecție în vigoare din iunie anul trecut sunt suficiente? Ce părere aveți despre actuala renegociere a acordului de liber schimb cu Ucraina?

Și pentru că s-a vorbit de crize, domnule comisar desemnat, aveți de gând să instituți un instrument suplimentar pentru managementul crizei și să măriți pachetul de rezervă agricolă? Pentru că, știm bine, avem probleme cu crize succesive.

1-0062-0000

Christophe Hansen, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you very much, Ms Grapini, for this question that is as well complementary to other questions on Ukraine that I have already been asked. So I think we have to consider that the autonomous trade measures that are in place are there to help Ukraine. It is kind of their lifeline in the current war. So it is important that we have them.

But we have seen – and I think that was as well partly in some countries – that farmers went to the streets because products that were not destined for the markets entered or leaked into the market. That is a problem that we need to address. I think now the autonomous trade measures we have as

well, the safeguards for seven sensitive products – and this is already activated, I mentioned it for five products, except for maize and for poultry – these autonomous trade measures will expire next year in June.

So I believe the best solution would firstly be to learn what went well, what went wrong with the autonomous trade measures that we had, and let them flow into the negotiations on the deep and comprehensive free trade agreement that we have with Ukraine. That needs to be updated. I think those lessons learned needs to be flowing in.

And this is as well, in my opinion, already a certain preparation for future enlargement. The future enlargement will not be in 1 or 2 years. I think we all agree on that. First, the war needs to be over and then the alignment procedures need to take place. The different chapters where Ukraine needs to comply for the adhesion – we will not make exceptions there. I think it is very important that the same quality we produce comes in as well and will enter the internal market. So the internal market problematic will be at the heart, of course, of these negotiations.

And I think we have to remind that I think we need as well when we talk about this – and I said it earlier as well – we need a gradual adaptation of production standards as well. So we have as well on the standards the level playing field and the rest will follow. I think we will have a lot of discussions on that, but we need to make it work for our farming sector. And I know that yours in particular and several other neighbouring countries are very concerned by this.

1-0063-0000

Tomáš Kubín (PřE). – Vážený pane navrhovaný komisaři, vzhledem k tomu, že máte být komisařem pro zemědělství a potraviny, tak mám pro vás dvě otázky, z každé z těch oblastí jednu, přičemž větší důraz kladu na tu první. Ta se týká zaměření podpory ze společné zemědělské politiky. Podle Vašeho jmenovací dopisu byste měl zajistit, aby byla podpora zaměřena na ty, kteří ji potřebují nejvíce. Jak k tomuto hodnocení přistoupíte a na základě jakých kritérií? Zohledníte hlavně produktivní charakter zemědělství, který je klíčový pro zajištění evropské potravinové suverenity? Nebo něco jiného? A ta druhá otázka se zaměřuje na potraviny: Myslíte si, že označování potravin, jako například med bez včel – *Bee Free Honey* –, který je již k dispozici na trhu EU, je dostatečně jasné a transparentní? Nebo si myslíte, že informace poskytované spotřebitelům ohledně názvů potravin potřebují v tomto ohledu zlepšit? A pokud ano, tak jak?

1-0064-0000

Christophe Hansen, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you very much. On your question concerning the better targeting of the financial support delivered by the CAP, I believe it is important, and that is as well if I get the conclusions right from the strategic dialogue, that it needs to come to those, firstly, who are active farmers; secondly, to those who are most in need – and most in need is not necessarily a company that has 10 000 hectares. I think we agree that a certain degressivity and a certain redistribution will be essential if we take it serious with that conclusion of the strategic dialogue. So there needs to be a re-shifting and a redirection.

But what will be the exact limits? I think that is difficult to say, because in one sector with two hectares you can be an active farmer depending on the crop you are doing, and in another Member State, you wouldn't even be an active farmer. So I think this is very important to consider when we redirect this, that we take as well the territorial approach, because I think our European agriculture is so diverse that 'one size fits all' will be very difficult.

And then on the labelling issues, I think that we have to do better. We have already an EU-wide obligation for the country of origin labelling when it comes to fresh or chilled meat, for example, for dairy products. We have it also for fresh vegetables and fruits.

You mentioned honey as well, and on honey I think we have made now progress. I think we have now as well the percentage of the plant, because I agree that when I used to take a pot of honey, it just mentioned EU and non-EU honey. So it's now 5 % EU honey and non-EU 95. I think that was definitely misleading, and I think we can do better there. And I think as well that on blends that is for me a difficult position, because we know that there is a lot of counterfeiting honey, as honey is a product that has a certain cost.

So on this qualitative point of view, I think we need to do more as well and control better when it is altered, for example with sugar. That is not acceptable and is misleading the consumers.

1-0065-0000

Sergio Berlato (ECR). – Signor Commissario designato, riteniamo che sia un sacrosanto diritto di tutti i cittadini conoscere le caratteristiche e la provenienza degli alimenti di cui si nutrono.

Ci sono fasce di consumatori che non possono permettersi di scegliere, perché non hanno i soldi per poterlo fare e saranno inevitabilmente attratti dal basso prezzo dei prodotti; ma ci sono altre fasce di consumatori che possono permettersi di scegliere e sono disposti a riconoscere un prezzo superiore ai nostri imprenditori agricoli per i prodotti di qualità, tipicità e salubrità, certificate e garantite, magari attraverso un'adeguata etichettatura, anche obbligatoria.

Come intende, Commissario designato, garantire un'adeguata informazione affinché il cittadino consumatore sia libero di fare le sue scelte alimentari e garantire contestualmente ai nostri imprenditori agricoli di avere un reddito adeguato?

1-0066-0000

Christophe Hansen, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you very much, Mr Burlato, for this important question, which goes a little bit into the direction of the colleague just asking the question. I think it was the labelling issues. I have to say that it is not my entire responsibility as future Commissioner, as far as I know, but I think what must be at the heart is that the consumers are not misled by information that is on the package. I think that is the very first: the consumer needs to get a better information and shouldn't be confused with the false allegations, because there are as well some voluntary labelling that is sometimes misleading and makes people think that the product is more sustainable than others and in the end, that is not the case. And I think that is something where we have to work. We have so many voluntary labels that are not harmonised. So I think we have to make a streamlining exercise of what is out there and to see a little bit that we have more coherence. That is as well in the interest not only of the consumer, but as well in the interest of the internal market. That would make it work better. And I think this would as well help our companies to deal better with it. I'm coming from a very small country. When we need to label, of course, this is very tricky when you have to deliver to several countries. When you are just one company delivering to one single country, it might be easier. So I think the internal aspect is very important.

Then I think we need to have a thorough discussion before we go to a front-of package-labelling. I think that is something we shouldn't go too quick and we have to see as well there what is the cost of it – because we are talking about affordable food. Well, if the food gets more expensive, I have a problem with it. We have small and medium-sized enterprises that need to comply with all those

packaging rules. We need to take this into account before we take the decisions because I don't want to overburden our SMEs, and I don't want our consumers to be misled and pay higher prices.

1-0067-0000

Asger Christensen (Renew). – Fra dansk side ser vi meget frem til at få en ny kommissær for landbrug. Som landbrugskommissær er det dit ansvar at sørge for, at den grønne omstilling og landbruget går hånd i hånd med ny incitamentsstruktur, for eksempel til precision farming, carbon farming og eco schemes? Hvad ville du konkret forpligte dig til at reducere CO₂ i vores landbrug samtidig med at sikre en økonomisk bæredygtig udvikling for vores europæiske landmænd?

1-0068-0000

Christophe Hansen, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you very much, Mr Christensen. And, indeed, the emission part of our agriculture and food sector is always in the focus. I would just like to remind a few figures. The EU agriculture sector stands for 11 % of the global European greenhouse gas emissions. Just to give you a relation to that, and 85 % of those 11 % are done by our livestock sector. So I think we know where we have to do more work, and this is on the livestock sector.

But on the other hand, I think it is very important to say as well that our livestock in the European Union is declining. The last 10 years we have -7.8 % livestock in the European Union, and I know it from experience. My brother died last year. He had cattle. Nobody took it over. So the cattle is really going down as well for such reasons.

And I really believe we have to be careful what we are doing, but we need to fix there the problem where it is the most important. And we know that there are certain regions in the European Union where the density is very high and the negative externalities are very high as well. We need to go firstly with technical solutions before imposing blunt cuts – I think that would be very important – and then, as well, see how this can be financed.

We need to do more on the research and innovation part. I think that is very important as well. And also, we need to look into, for example, food additives that can help as well. And this is something that is already being developed. I wouldn't close any of those doors before that.

And then it is important as to say as well here, not one size fits all, because when you are in the mountains here in the European Union or the Ardennes, the most sustainable you can do is livestock, and that needs to be acknowledged. Even biodiversity is enhanced – that we should keep in mind as well, and not have addressed the problem where it lies and not squeeze everybody out and helping nobody in the end.

1-0069-0000

Paulo Do Nascimento Cabral (PPE). – Muito obrigado, Senhora Presidente, Senhor Comissário, antes de mais, queria dar-lhe os parabéns por esta audição. Espero que, no final da minha questão, continue com esta posição. Quero também desejar-lhe as maiores felicidades para o futuro. Venho falar-vos das regiões ultraperiféricas – e saúdo a referência que fez logo na sua intervenção inicial – e da importância da agricultura para a manutenção dessas comunidades rurais, dessas comunidades vibrantes e também dessa autonomia estratégica. Mas falar da agricultura nas regiões ultraperiféricas é também falar da questão do POSEI. E o POSEI é um programa que já não é atualizado há mais de 20 anos – há cerca de 20 anos – e que tem um fator de inflação de 2%. Estimamos perdas a preços correntes à volta de mais de um terço, mais de 30%, o que é perfeitamente lamentável. Diria também que depois dos estudos da Comissão e das várias

resoluções, e também relatórios, do Parlamento Europeu que defendem a sua atualização, nada tem sido feito. Por isso, questiono Senhor Comissário, se está disponível para, em conjunto com as autoridades locais, trabalharmos numa atualização justa do POSEI e garantir que ele esteja em pé de igualdade com todos os outros programas que são atualizados, ao contrário do POSEI. Queria referir ainda a questão dos 85% do FEADER e termino com um convite para visitar os Açores e a Madeira, duas regiões ultraperiféricas, para que perceba as dificuldades que estas regiões e os seus agricultores têm e, acima de tudo, para que garanta um acesso equitativo ao mercado único europeu, nas condições de competição e de competitividade que os outros agricultores também têm.

1-0070-0000

Christophe Hansen, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you, Mr Do Nascimento. I have explicitly mentioned the outermost regions. I know you are not the only one; Mr Rodrigues also comes from such a region. So I have been made aware, and several others in the room – I don't know everybody – are coming from regions with special needs. I think as well that the Treaties require us to give special attention and do special efforts, not only because of distance – you are further away, so energy costs impact directly your production, all the input costs and as well when you resell the product. So this is the first part. And then secondly as well you are sometimes in different climatic zones. So as well there you have special attention and special needs. And I think we have to support them. So I stand fully behind the POSEI.

And I also see it as a necessity to protect our traditional landscapes for which you are worldwide famous. I think that is very important. And, indeed for the POSEI from 2021 to 2027, the amounts have been maintained. You might say that is not enough, but in other regions it has been cut. So that is why it could have been worse, but I think the European Commission has as well launched an evaluation of the POSEI in 2022, and this evaluation needs to guarantee long-term security of the agri-food sector in our outermost regions. And I will stand very strongly that its effectiveness as well the global amount at least be maintained. I think that is very important to say. I will fight for you in that case.

1-0071-0000

André Rodrigues (S&D). – Senhor Comissário indigitado, as zonas rurais e o setor agrícola enfrentam desafios significativos que aguardam respostas políticas adequadas. Pergunto-lhe, por isso, quais são as principais medidas concretas e ações que irá desenvolver para defender as zonas rurais? O meu colega já falou da questão do POSEI, mas gostaria ainda de saber se, para além de contarmos com o seu compromisso na tentativa de reforçar esse mesmo orçamento, pode garantir que irá defender o papel e a participação das regiões na discussão e na futura PAC. Como irá garantir que a anunciada visão para a agricultura e a alimentação promoverá o desenvolvimento sustentável do setor, garantindo um rendimento justo aos agricultores e resiliência face aos desafios ambientais e climáticos. Esta visão terá um calendário e compromissos, metas e objetivos, um cronograma com o qual se possa comprometer com medidas políticas concretas? Gostaria ainda de perguntar o seguinte: que ações e medidas irá tomar para apoiar as autoridades locais e regionais na concretização do pleno potencial das comunidades rurais?

1-0072-0000

Christophe Hansen, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you very much for that question that is very broad as well. I think we have, in general, the issue that our rural areas are getting less and less attractive, especially when we speak about the generational renewal in the agri-food sector. We have a problem not only because companies and enterprises are not viable, but as well – and I mentioned it in my introductory speech – that simple needs and opportunities are not there in the rural area,

and I think that is something where the CAP and especially the second pillar of the CAP, together with cohesion funds, of course, can contribute to make our rural areas more lively, and I think it is very important. And I said that in the beginning as well, because we have huge differences from region to region in the European Union.

We are talking now about outermost regions, which I know honestly a little bit less than some of the the continental Europe. I definitely need to be as well on the spot to see with the regions where are the missing links. And I will promise you that I do that and that I will as well, in my mandate, be around and not only in the Brussels office. That will be very important to see what what can be done.

Then on the specific calendar, now I think we have, of course, some things that are quite fixed. We will have the discussions on the MFF that will be by the end of next year. At the same time, we will work on the reform and start the reform works of the common agricultural policy. But before that we have also the first deliverables, which will be the vision for agriculture, and I think it will be very important to bring those elements as well in. And I'm at your disposal and I will contact many of you – because I know you now from meetings and bilaterals – we had to get your special input in there, because I think we need to make sure that this vision is as well, not something where I just think about it, but it needs to be something that is workable for all our regions and the entire agriculture sector.

1-0073-0000

Salvatore De Meo (PPE). – Signor Commissario designato, nella lettera di missione che ha ricevuto dalla Presidente von der Leyen Le viene dato un incarico gravoso e impegnativo, cioè rafforzare la posizione degli agricoltori nella catena agroalimentare, difendendoli dalla concorrenza sleale ma soprattutto da condizioni di vendita sotto il costo di produzione. È un obiettivo ambizioso.

Allora Le chiedo, quali strategie specifiche possono essere adottate per migliorare il potere negoziale degli agricoltori, soprattutto nei confronti della grande distribuzione? Potere da parte degli agricoltori di intervenire nella formazione di un giusto prezzo di vendita, tenendo conto delle dinamiche di mercato e delle sfide attuali del settore, con particolare riferimento a quelle sulla sostenibilità che inevitabilmente incideranno sui costi di produzione.

Al riguardo, Le chiedo anche se la Commissione intende riconoscere e avvalersi, all'interno della filiera agroalimentare, del ruolo dei mercati all'ingrosso, strutture logistiche di interesse pubblico, di prossimità agli agricoltori e in grado di poter garantire una filiera corta e un monitoraggio del prezzo, a garanzia dei produttori e dei consumatori.

1-0074-0000

Christophe Hansen, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you, Mr De Meo, for your question, and I will start by your last remark how important it is to as well bring together the final consumer and the primary producer and everything that is in between, because it is the entire value chain. And I think we have to make clear that those value chains are more sustainable as well, economically speaking, and that everybody gets his fair share out of it.

And I think one important point is the so-called AFCO, the Agri-Food Chain Observatory, that is aimed to bring more transparency into the supply chains. And if we have that transparency, that increased transparency, I believe that we can as well identify the weak points or the weaker points better and to find fixes for that.

On the other hand, I think we have as well tools that we can do in the short term. I mentioned already the reform or the targeted reform of the common markets organisation to reinforce producer organisations, which will deliver better prices for our farmers in the end. That will be a very first deliverable and therefore we don't have to wait for the reform.

Of course, after that, in the frame of the CAP reform, we will look at the CMO again. But I think here we can do some targeted amendments to help. We have the Unfair Trading Practices Directive with the margin for improvement when it comes to cross-border implementation. That will be crucial. And those are the first big steps that I will do.

But, of course, I will discuss this very intensively as well at the follow-up that will be given to the Strategic Dialogue – the European Board on Agriculture and Food – because there everybody is sitting on the table from the workers to the farmers to the consumers to the processors. Everybody is on board. And I think it needs to be a solution that works for the entire chain and not only just one part of it.

1-0075-0000

Katarína Roth Nevedálová (NI). – Ďakujem pekne, pani predsedníčka. Pán kolega Hansen, musí byť zvláštne sedieť na druhej strane. Mám na vás päť otázok. Prvá. Pochádzate z Luxemburska, ktoré je síce malou krajinou, ale dozvedela som sa, že vaša sesternica je ministerka poľnohospodárstva pre Luxembursko. Zaujíma ma, či nás môžete ubezpečiť, že budete naozaj zastupovať všetky európske štáty, nie iba Luxembursko.

Druhá otázka. Ak chcete byť komisárom pre všetky európske krajiny, to znamená aj pre krajiny východnej Európy a východná Európa zastupuje asi štvrtinu obyvateľstva Európskej únie. Nepáčilo sa mi veľmi, ako ste odpovedali na otázku o priamych platbách, pretože po dvadsiatich rokoch si myslíme, že by sme si zaslúžili naozaj rovnaké priame platby ako naši kolegovia zo západnej Európy. A neviem, či 20 rokov je málo podľa Európskej komisie. Takže by som chcela vedieť, že kedy máme očakávať dorovnanie priamych platieb pre východnú Európu.

Ďalšia tretia otázka. Ako chcete ochrániť rozpočet pre poľnohospodárstvo v Európskej únii? Pretože vidíme, že teraz budú nejaké nové priority Európskej komisie? Takže čo chcete konkrétne urobiť? Štvrtá, ukrajinské produkty, ktoré sa dovážajú na naše územie. Pán kolega, to nie je iba kukurica a to nie sú, nie je kuracie mäso, ale my hovoríme veľmi vážne o obilninách ako takých. A hovoríme aj o veľmi významnom náraste dovozu cukrovej repy, ktorý ničí naše poľnohospodárstvo v Európskej únii. Piata otázka. Ako chcete ochrániť farmárov pred negatívnymi dopadmi zelenej politiky Európskej únie? Ďakujem.

1-0076-0000

Christophe Hansen, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you for very much for your five questions. I will try to deal with those in the 2 minutes.

Firstly, on the sensitive products, I think I already replied to that: that we have safeguards for several products already in place, that it is very important that we monitor the markets and that we get as well safeguards up and running. That will be very important. So this is not just sugar beet, but we have as well other critical sectors where we need to address it.

Then, on the convergence of payments, I was last time here in the European Parliament when we negotiated the reform. And some of you can still likely remember this. There was a strong will here in the European Parliament to go in that direction. But the Member States – not the Commission and not this Parliament – the Member States were not agreeing on that. So I think there you have

your solution when you want to address this, because I will fight for this, as the previous Commissioner did as well. But in the end, it's the co-legislators that decide. And this is how it works.

Then, you were minimising a little bit my origin. If that helps you, my mum is Dutch as well, so I can speak Dutch to you, if you prefer. But I think you shouldn't minimise somebody just because of his origin. My brother used to be a farmer on the Belgian border, so he farmed as well, not only in Luxembourg, but as well in Belgium.

And then on your first remark about my cousin: you know, my mum were eight children and my father were eight children, and we are seven children, and we come from a farming community, so it is very likely that somebody of your family is in that business. I have, by the way, as well, a cousin in the Netherlands who is a socialist, but he is a mayor in that community. So you will have a lot of those interactions.

But if that reassures you, I will have as well to give an oath before the European Court of Justice, and I will do my job as a European Commissioner for the agriculture and food sector, and not as a Luxembourger or whatever else, or half-Dutch or whatever you want to call me. Thank you.

1-0077-0000

Mireia Borrás Pabón (Pfe). – Señor Hansen, estamos en la Comisión de Agricultura y, tras la tragedia de la DANA, lo primero que quiero hacer es dar las gracias aquí, públicamente, a nuestros agricultores de toda España, que no han dudado ni un momento en salir a nuestras calles con sus tractores para ayudar a todo el pueblo valenciano ante la inacción incomprensible de nuestro Gobierno. A ellos no ha tenido que pedírselo nadie, como al señor Sánchez. Han salido voluntariamente con todo lo que tienen para demostrar una vez más que están al pie de cañón cada vez que se les necesita.

Como sabrá, señor Hansen, los agricultores de las regiones afectadas lo han perdido todo. ¿Cómo plantea en este sentido flexibilizar y simplificar la PAC para garantizar que las ayudas lleguen lo antes posible? Me gustaría, además, que concrete: ¿cómo pretende aumentar la capacidad de mitigación y adaptación del sector agrícola ante los próximos desafíos climáticos?

También quiero denunciar aquí que esta catástrofe ha sido agravada por unas políticas ecologistas totalmente irresponsables, como la Ley de Restauración de la Naturaleza, que prohíbe la gestión activa de nuestros montes y ríos. Frente a este fanatismo ecológico urbanita tan perjudicial, ¿propondrá usted medidas racionales que permitan a la gente del campo trabajar la tierra o el pastoreo en zonas que ahora mismo están protegidas?

Y termino con algo que todavía nadie ha comentado: ¿cuál cree que debe ser el papel de la caza, especialmente respecto a la gestión cinegética del lobo? ¿Hay que esperar a que se coman a otro poni de Von der Leyen para que puedan proteger de una vez por todas a nuestros ganaderos...

(la presidenta retira la palabra a la oradora)

1-0078-0000

Christophe Hansen, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you very much for those questions.

First of all, I will not comment on the crisis management. That is not up to me and I think we should take care of the victims all together and not blame one or the other. I think this is not being helpful at all.

The second point, I think we have our European response mechanisms that are being deployed. That is very important. We have given support as well with the European Solidarity Fund. The cohesion funds are now more flexible, which can give additional support, and we have as well the Recovery and Resilience Facility that is deployed. So this comes additional to the instruments that we have under the common agricultural policy, like, for example, the restoration of production potential that is deployed not only there in Spain, but I look as well at my colleague from Las Palmas, Mr Mato, where banana productions, for example, have been destroyed by a volcanic eruption, so this is as well done for that.

But of course, I think it is very clear that we have crises that are becoming ever more frequent, and we need to step up our tools, therefore. And I think there lies a lot of response in the Niinistö report that has been published last week, not only for the agricultural sector, but including the agriculture sector. And I think there as well, farmers will be key. Farmers are the first to suffer consequences from climate change and that is a reality. But they are as well our best defenders and they want to contribute. We need to give them the right incentives so that they can assist. And you have seen it as well, and I saw the images as well, how farmers are willing to help in the catastrophes. They were on the streets with their tractors to help people. And that gives me my deepest respect for the agricultural community in the Valencia region that help and stick together, and that is the most important to come out of that crisis the strongest possible.

1-0080-0000

Maria Noichl (S&D). – Ganz herzlichen Dank, Herr designierter Kommissar, dass Sie uns heute Rede und Antwort stehen. Ich würde Sie gern zu fünf ersten Schritten befragen.

Punkt 1: Was werden Sie unternehmen, dass die Ausbeutung von menschlicher Arbeitskraft in der Landwirtschaft beendet wird? Es gibt zahlreiche, ganz, ganz viele anständige Landwirte, die gute Arbeitsplätze bieten, es gibt aber auch Landwirte, die wirklich Menschen ausbeuten. Was machen Sie dagegen? Erste Frage.

Zweite Frage: Was machen Sie zur Beschleunigung, dass wir schneller zu einem Lebensmittelsystem kommen, das nachhaltig ist? Wir brauchen ein nachhaltiges Lebensmittelsystem. Der Blick nach Spanien macht uns deutlich, wie wichtig es ist, dass wir es bald bekommen, schnell bekommen. Deswegen würde mich das Beschleunigungssystem interessieren. Was machen Sie?

Dritte Frage – ich bin ja auch im FEMM-Ausschuss: Was machen Sie in Ihrer Position für Frauen in der Landwirtschaft, als ersten Schritt?

Vierter Punkt: Was machen Sie in Sachen Tierschutz in Ihrer Position? Zum Beispiel das Thema Transport von Lebewesen in Drittstaaten würde mich interessieren. Was ist Ihr erster Schritt in Sachen Tierschutz?

Und als letzte Frage: Was ist Ihr erster Schritt bei der klaren Ansage „Subventionen können kein Marktversagen aufheben. Marktversagen muss man anders bekämpfen als mit Subventionen“. Was tun Sie als Erstes?

1-0081-0000

Christophe Hansen, Commissioner-designate. – Fünf Fragen in zwei Minuten, ich gebe mein Bestes.

Also, erstens: Ich denke, es ist wichtig, dass wir die Warnungen, die wir jetzt haben, die tödlichen Warnungen, dass wir die ernst nehmen. Und die müssen bitter ernst genommen werden. Aber ich will auch noch einmal sagen: Die Landwirtschaft ist nicht der einzige Sektor, der CO₂-Ausstoß

bringt. Wir haben da auch einen Bericht von der Europäischen Kommission, der an das Parlament weitergereicht wurde, von letzter Woche. Und der sagt ganz klar: Die Landwirtschaft hat von 2022 auf 2023 -2 % erreicht. Sagen wir, das ist nicht viel? Der Transportsektor hat nur 1 % erreicht. Das heißt, die Landwirte sind schneller als wir, die wir unser Auto nehmen im Transportsektor. Das will ich aber auch erst einmal verkünden.

Dann ist es wichtig, dass auf jeden Fall der Landwirt mit auf den Weg genommen wird. Denn das Schlimmste, was wir machen können, ist, wenn wir nur den Daumen drauf drücken und dass die Produktion dann irgendwo anders stattfindet – das möchte ich verhindern.

Frauen in der Landwirtschaft, das ist ein Riesenproblem. Nein, es ist eine riesige Bereicherung, aber es gibt nicht genug Frauen – das ist das Problem. Und wir sehen, dass weniger als ein Drittel der Betriebe von Frauen geleitet werden. Frauen haben auch systematisch mehr Schwierigkeiten – und das habe ich auch bei den Finanzen gesagt –, genauso wie Junglandwirte, überhaupt an die Investitionen und an die Darlehen der Banken zu kommen. Das müssen wir verbessern. Und ich denke auch, dass wir uns einige Mitgliedstaaten anschauen können. In Spanien zum Beispiel werden Frauen stärker unterstützt, wenn sie als Junglandwirtin anfangen, um sich zu etablieren. Ähnlich ist es in Irland, bei Herrn Flanagan wird das auch gemacht. Ich denke, diese zwei Beispiele sollten wir uns im Detail anschauen, wie wir das besser gestalten können. Und jetzt, Frau Noichl, sind meine zwei Minuten schon wieder um.

1-0083-0000

Pekka Toveri (PPE). – Thank you, Chair. Mr Commissioner-designate, even though forestry is not in your portfolio, it cannot be bypassed today. Forests and the entire forest-based value chain are a crucial part of rural areas. Forests provide jobs, ensure economic welfare, store carbon, offer health benefits, and combat desertification.

The EPP believes that the best know-how for sustainable forest management lies within the Member States like Finland, which is 75 % covered by forests. We respect the Member States' competence on forest-related legislation. Forestry and the forest-related economy is of vital importance and a big part of income for many farmers and rural communities in many EU Member States. Forestry is a national competence and it should remain like that. However, different EU policies, mainly environmental ones, diminish this competence, set limitations and give unnecessary bureaucratic burdens to forest-owners, SMEs and the whole forest-related value chain, including agriculture.

Mr Commissioner-designate, how will you act to ensure that the real competence of the Member States is utilised, and how will you help to secure the economic sustainability of European forestry?

1-0084-0000

Christophe Hansen, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you very much, Mr Toveri, for that question, which rejoins a little bit the question earlier on from Ms Singer from Renew when it comes to forests, and I think it is right to say that a lot of competences or most of the competences for forests lie with the Member States. But on the other hand, also, and I mentioned it, many farmers are forest owners where they are a little bit in the same boat.

And then I believe that we have to find the right balance between what the Member States are doing, because we have as well, let's say, the environmental rules, for example, that apply as well to forests, but they are European legislation. So I think we need to find the right balance.

There, we have also some elements in the common agricultural policy that also are financing projects in agroforestry. I think this needs to be acknowledged: EUR 4.2 billion is the figure, so this

is not nothing. So I think we have to at least coordinate way better. And I think this, in the frame of the wider bioeconomy, can play a crucial role because goods produced in forestry could be used in agriculture and vice versa, and this could as well be used for energy generation, etc., etc. and all the applications that are out there.

So I think we need to have a broader discussion together with the Commissioner for Industry, but as well Commissioner for Environment, and together with the stakeholders, of course, and this Parliament, about how we can make this bioeconomy work that it delivers not only for farmers, for foresters, but as well, in general, for rural areas, and makes us more independent on certain inputs. And I think there is a huge room for manoeuvre and for enhancement, and we need to design this together.

So I would rejoin a little bit the idea that Ms Singer said as well, to have more discussion and exchange. It doesn't have to be a formalised Strategic Dialogue like we had for agriculture, but I think that would be a good way forward to go together in identifying ways to make this bioeconomy work with foresters.

1-0085-0000

Pär Holmgren (Verts/ALE). – Thank you, Chair. And thank you, Mr Hansen. First of all, the EU Court of Auditors' latest report on the CAP's environmental performance is not, as you say, that the current CAP is on the right track. Also, your repeated attribution of one third of the EU budget to environmental protection is at odds with their conclusions, as that one third depends on the conditionality that actually was slashed in what was called 'simplification' back in March, when climate adaptation rules, like soil protection, were cut. Does that mean simplification means less protection against floods and droughts?

Second, will you, as recommended by the Court of Auditors, set quantified climate and environmental targets for the next CAP? What about the target for the reduction of pesticides, as one example?

And third, did we hear correctly that you would propose mandatory capping to limit the unfair distribution of payments and free up money for critically needed climate and environmental measures? If so, at what level?

1-0086-0000

Christophe Hansen, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you, Mr Holmgren. A lot of questions in one question. So, on the one third. Well, where does this come from? I think it is important to say that 70 % of the EU's agricultural land is under eco-schemes; 90% is under conditionality. So this is very important to acknowledge. And the same report I was referring to is not only saying we have a -2% greenhouse gas emissions from 2022 to 2023, but also says that we are on track to meet our 2030 objective contribution. So this is an official document and it has been sent as well to the European Parliament last week. So for me it is very important to put this right.

Then, of course, how do we better assess? Because that is sometimes the problem at farm level. What is the progress actually made? And there I think it is very important that we go into the direction of an on-farm benchmarking system to better assess this. This needs to be discussed, of course, with the farmers, because there is not one farm that is identical to the other, not one sector identical to the other. So I think this data collection will be very key to assess progress and identify as well future ways to go.

Then on the next question, I was not saying that I will impose capping. You know how the legislative process works. I think we have to work on that, because for me, it is very clear that as from a certain point, you don't need the same amount per hectare as you would need for the first 10 or 15 or whatever hectares. So this is the key point. And if we get this degressivity right, that would already help a lot in my opinion.

Then on your question on pesticides, of course we have to; I think all the farmers say they want to reduce it, but they need alternatives because for them, buying the product, spraying the product, is expensive and that is something they don't want to do, but the crop needs to be in some way protected. So we need to speed up the alternatives before we take products out. And then we need as well to support investments in innovation, not only in biocontrol, but as well in some machinery that will be helpful to reduce. There are ways – precision farming is one of them, but this costs money, this costs innovation and we need to deploy it. And we have this investment gap – I mentioned it – of 62 billion. That needs to be blocked, that hole.

1-0087-0000

Anna Zalewska (ECR). – Panie kandydacie na komisarza! Jeżeli zostanie Pan komisarzem, to w pierwsze 100 dni zapraszam na granicę polsko-ukraińską po to, żeby zobaczył Pan prawdę o tym, w jaki sposób ta liberalizacja handlu i te nasze europejskie decyzje wpływają na rynek polski, rynek europejski. Rolnicy są zagniewani, trzeba z nimi porozmawiać. Mam nadzieję, że takie spotkania się odbędą, bo trzeba to bezwzględnie zmienić.

Jednocześnie rolnicy wyszli na ulice dlatego, że jest im coraz trudniej. To nie tylko biurokratyzacja, ale kolejne obciążenia. Wspominał Pan o strategicznym dialogu. Czemu nie rozmawiamy o tym, co martwi rolników? Jak Pan wyobraża sobie, że oto rolnictwo zostanie objęte systemem ETS? Jak Pan sobie wyobraża, że zostanie opodatkowane mięso w momencie, kiedy z dosyć dużym przyzwoleniem mówi Pan o podpisaniu umowy z Mercosurem? W Pana ustach brzmiało to tak, jakby Pan podjął decyzję. W związku z tym proszę o odpowiedź na pytanie.

1-0088-0000

Christophe Hansen, Commissioner-designate. – First of all, I think I have made a balanced approach on the Mercosur agreement, saying that there are advantages, but there are clear challenges, and I rightly highlighted as well the problems that, for example, we face with meat that is not produced in the same manner as we produce. I mentioned Brazil, for example. So I think it was very, very clear. But as well we have an agri-industry export that is largely benefiting. So I wanted to show you the two sides of the same coin, which is one side, a challenge for certain sectors, but the opportunity for another part of the agriculture sector. So this was my intention.

I didn't say that I wanted an ETS for agriculture. I said that this was very unclear in the Strategic Dialogue, firstly. And secondly, for example, New Zealand tried to do something like that but they abandoned it – for a reason. New Zealand is known as being a very environmental, progressive country. I want to know why they abandoned it. You talked about taxes. We have some Danish colleagues inside; in Denmark they are trying to do so. I will look at how it works. But I believe that an ETS for agriculture is not the way forward because it will be administratively hugely challenging with 9 million farms in the European Union sized from 0.5 hectares to some thousands of hectares. That is not possible. Who is going to pay for the goods afterwards? It is the consumer if we make it more expensive. It is the farmer who does the administrative work. So I am not convinced it is the right way forward. But that is the discussion that is going. That is my personal opinion. And I wanted to clarify that.

Then on the Ukrainian-Polish border, the last time I travelled there it was in February when I crossed the border to Kyiv, namely in Poland. So I have seen the situation, but I'm fully aware of that. And that is what I mean when I say that we need to look at these autonomous trade measures, what is currently working and what is not working. And I believe that we need to learn the lessons from it. And I will come to the border. I invite you to invite me. I will do so and take the challenges on board. But you know, this is not just the agriculture sector. This is generally trade as well. And I want to be on the ground and I will do so.

1-0089-0000

Barry Cowen (Renew). – At Renew, we're seeking a stronger budget for CAP. It must be more true to its original remit: supporting farm income and bolstering food production systems across Europe, with no more conditionality than already provided for to date. That said, though, we do need concrete eco and enviro-incentives to support new sustainable farming practices and to encourage the access to, and uptake of, such practices and techniques.

I would argue for a distinct funding pillar separate from CAP, and after what I heard from you earlier, maybe funded by the EIB funds, by NextGenerationEU funding and Just Transition funds, which should – and would – reward those that recognise, realise and achieve best practices: for example, in the likes of carbon sequestration, on-farm power generation to national grids, carbon trading, also rewarding the delivery and implementation of new innovations around genomics, fertilisers and foodstuffs for example, with bonuses and rewards for meeting targets, and also bonuses and rewards for such incentives and initiatives that are realised that are linked to generation renewal.

So what I want to ask you is: will you, within the first 100 days, put forward concrete, measurable steps to deliver on such goals as I have outlined?

1-0090-0000

Christophe Hansen, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you, Mr Cowen, for your questions. I might be repetitive, but I think it is important: I would like to have the strongest possible budget for our farmers, of course, but I'm not the only one who is going to decide that. I will argue that case very strongly, and I will do it with all my efforts in the future College.

But of course, we know that there are different political priorities in the European Union, and I cannot say that I will reach this or that target – that is simply not in my hands. And it is not to my use that I promise things that I can't keep in the end. So I will fight for it, but on the result there, of course, I'm not the only captain on board when it comes to that.

Then on your second question or related question on the incentives, you say that we need alternative financing not only from EIB, like I mentioned earlier, but as well that we look into the environmental. Let's take, for example, the Nature Restoration Law. I take that as an example, because in the strategic dialogue, the report said that we need extra funding for that.

That is, of course, something where I say, okay, that's good to ask for, but where is the money coming from? And that is, of course, something where I would prefer where we could do something in the short term. In the short term, we have the Just Transition Fund that is so underused for the very moment that we need access. Make this fund that exists already – before we argue for a new one – make it accessible for the farming sector. That will be crucial, and that could as well deliver on the short term.

That would be my preferred version, because I think farmers don't have the time to wait. What will be coming out of this MFF negotiation is a Pandora's box, because there are so many cooks that are

on that same stove. So I think it is important to seize the opportunities that are there, and not promise things that sound good but are not achievable in the short term.

1-0091-0000

Maria Walsh (PPE). – Thank you, Commissioner-designate. I have a very serious topic to discuss that hasn't been addressed quite yet. Suicide rates of our farmers can be 20 % higher than the national average. Research by Doctor Tomás Russell and Professor McHugh from University College Dublin in Ireland outlines that 22.8 % of Irish farmers last year were 'at-risk for suicide', with top stressors including national and EU policies – that we design here – the perception that they are to blame for the climate crisis and concerns over the future of their farms, especially in the lack of focus on generation renewal, which you've mentioned this evening.

In 2023, the Commission had a communication on mental health and recognised that rural communities, including farmers, have extremely limited access to mental health services. Training programmes for agricultural workers should include mental health awareness and stress management techniques.

And my question to you is this: can you commit to ensuring mental health is a political priority for our farmers and rural communities? What specific measures can you implement to protect and promote the mental and physical health of our farmers, ensuring that they receive the appropriate measures they need?

1-0092-0000

Christophe Hansen, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you very much, Maria, for this question. I have a little problem to reply to this question, I have to say, because my brother, who took over our family farm, died last year in an accident at his home. He was 55 years old and he fell on the stairs. This is not because of mental health directly; it was an accident.

But I'm sure it was caused by many factors that impact the rural areas and impact our farmers. Because they are under pressure; they have financial issues that they can't cope with; they have huge investments; they have subsidies that are not paid in time. And the bank doesn't forgive any delay. And they don't have access and they don't have time for that – to go to consult somebody.

What my brother did, he went to see my mum to have a cup of coffee. Yes, that was good, but that is not being helpful. And I think in this case, if appropriate, service and help would have been available. He would have gone out earlier, because he stopped at some point milk production. Because you know how it is when you don't have a robot: it's seven days a week; it's 24 hours. And he got divorced. Everything together. And when you are in such a situation, you work 14 hours a day. Sorry, I'm not good now to reply to that.

But we need to know more. We have our CAP network and we need to bring services to those farmers that are very, let's say, they don't want to speak. Nobody wants to speak if he has issues and pressures and everything, but those people are under particular pressure and we need to take them into account.

And we need to do better because of the suicide rate – you mentioned it – but there are as well many others that suffer accidents because they don't get to sleep, because they don't get to rest for a moment. They can't switch off at any moment because they can't even go on holidays to have 3 days. When my brother got married, I took care of his cows for 3 days and he called me three times a day because he trusted me. But nonetheless, it's a stress permanently and you never get off

of it. And we need to deal with it, and we need to acknowledge it. And that those people earn 60 % of the EU average – it is unacceptable and it is killing me. Sorry.

1-0093-0000

Giuseppe Antoci (The Left). – Signor Commissario designato, la nostra battaglia contro la criminalità organizzata in Italia, che stava per costarmi la vita, ha dimostrato come le mafie possano infiltrarsi nel settore agricolo, sfruttando terreni e finte produzioni al fine di frodare per milioni di euro le risorse della PAC.

Osserviamo come le organizzazioni criminali approfittano della disparità legislativa tra gli Stati membri per replicare crimini e frodi in quei paesi dove la normativa contro il crimine organizzato è meno stringente, spostando così le loro attività fraudolente all'interno dell'Unione europea.

Questa presenza malavitosa non solo danneggia l'integrità e la sostenibilità del settore ma scoraggia anche i giovani, potenzialmente attratti dall'agricoltura ma allontanati da un campo intriso di incertezze e rischi.

In questo contesto, quali strategie specifiche intende implementare per proteggere i nostri agricoltori e i loro terreni dall'usurpazione e dalla criminalità organizzata?

E come prevede di rafforzare le misure di sicurezza e di integrità delle risorse della PAC per evitare che vengano sfruttate dalle organizzazioni criminali, garantendo così che l'agricoltura possa ristabilirsi come settore attraente e sicuro per le nuove generazioni?

1-0094-0000

Christophe Hansen, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you, Mr Antoci, for your question.

On the issue specifically in Italy, I have to say that I'm not aware of the details of that situation involving mafia involvement, so I cannot comment directly on that. But believe me that I will, of course, have a look to that, because the access to land is one of the key barriers that our young farmers face to start with agriculture production.

And I think it is very important that we bring more transparency into that land market, not only because we have spoken earlier as well about the problem that certain billionaires or companies belonging to billionaires have access or massive access to CAP funds, but as well, in the case that you mean, that young farmers don't even get the chance, so I think this is really crucial. And I think that the land observatory that I have announced earlier on will bring more light into the shade of this land market. I don't say that only because of the situation you mean, but as well, we have a lot of foreign investments in European agricultural land where we risk to give away our production potential, which is our fertile soil, to third countries. I think this is not at all in line as well with the Niinistö report on the security, and there we need as well to maintain the security of production in the European Union, and I think this is one of the the ways where we should go to bring this into the light and grant better access for young farmers to farming land.

1-0095-0000

Antonio Decaro, Presidente della commissione ENVI. – Nella recente relazione sul funzionamento del regolamento LULUCF, la Commissione sottolinea la dimensione preoccupante delle emissioni di metano provenienti dall'agricoltura.

Nelle risposte alle domande scritte, Lei, Commissario designato, indica che il settore zootecnico deve proseguire la transizione verso pratiche più sostenibili. Come intende realizzare questa transizione e ridurre le emissioni di gas a effetto serra in questo settore?

Per quanto riguarda la silvicoltura, la Commissione afferma che i pozzi LULUCF sono in preoccupante diminuzione. Quali misure forestali e agricole intende attuare per rafforzare l'importante ruolo delle foreste e di altri terreni, come i pozzi di assorbimento del carbonio, e invertire la tendenza attuale?

1-0096-0000

Christophe Hansen, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you very much, Mr Decaro, for this question on behalf of the ENVI Committee. I believe it is very important and I underlined it earlier on that 11 % of the EU greenhouse gas emissions are indeed caused by the agriculture sector, out of which 85 % are caused by the livestock sector. So I think it is very clear that we have to do there.

On the other hand, we have as well, a decrease in livestock. Over the last 10 years, the livestock in the European Union has decreased by 7.8 %, while consumption of meat has a little bit switched in the kind of meat – people eat more chicken, eat less red meat – but the meat consumption remains the same. Nonetheless, livestock is going down by 7.8 % over the last 10 years, and the trend seems to go into the same direction.

Then I mentioned also the data from the EU Climate Action Progress Report: -2 % in the agriculture sector; other sectors like transport have done weaker. So I think we really see that livestock has problems, especially in the high-density areas, and that we need tailored approaches there to see how we can, because those are usually quite big installations. There it is easier to capture as well, and to deal with the negative outcome of livestock. It is easier than, for example, in the Austrian mountains, where some cows graze on the mountains, and I think that is something where we need a tailored approach.

Then, of course, I think we also need to design our... And this will be part of the vision, because in the vision for the future of agriculture and food will be a point on the livestock strategy. And as well, it should give as well as stability and predictability to the sector. That's very important. We will develop, as well, the on-farm benchmarking system that will help to assess properly as well the outcomes.

And then, just while we are on the forests, I think we need to see it together with agriculture as a wider contribution to the bioeconomy, where we can as well have projects that clearly help to reduce emissions, to produce bioenergy, etc. So there are a lot of ways forward, but this needs to happen in a sustainable manner. And that's why we need to speak together, not only with the agriculture committee, but as well very strongly with the environment committee.

1-0097-0000

Carmen Crespo Díaz, *presidenta de la Comisión PECH*. – Señor Hansen, la alimentación, la ganadería y la agricultura son fundamentales, pero también la pesca. En este caso, la Unión Europea está lejos de tener garantizado el suministro de pescado y marisco: importa el 70 % de fuera de la Unión Europea. Además, las tensiones geopolíticas y la pandemia están afectando gravemente a nuestra pesca, y el consumo de productos pesqueros está bajando hasta el 20 %. A todo ello se suma la competencia desleal de otros productos de fuera, que además tienen menores exigencias. Europa se exige mucho a sí misma pero poco a las importaciones, y con esto hay que acabar.

Por lo tanto, hay que garantizar la soberanía alimentaria. La proteína del pescado es fundamental para la buena salud alimentaria de los europeos, y deseamos que en esa visión que tenemos de la alimentación esté incorporado el tema de la pesca. ¿Qué estrategia impulsaría para reforzar la seguridad y la soberanía alimentaria de los productos del mar, incluidos en esa visión, así como la igualdad de los requisitos para acabar con la competencia desleal de los productos importados para la alimentación?

1-0098-0000

Christophe Hansen, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you, Ms Crespo, for that question. Indeed, on fisheries, I'm not the big expert, coming from a landlocked country, so indeed there I need to do my homework.

But I have as well looked into this very intensively over the last weeks because, as you rightly mentioned, 70% of the fish – and we consume a lot of fish in the European Union – is coming from third countries. So I think there is a huge margin for improvement. And I think we have as well already done some progress because fresh fish needs to be labelled, when it's in the pure form, with the origin. This is a good first step, but I think we can do more and we should as well look into process the seafood that is being used in several processed foods. So if it is in the EU's and the fishermen and fisherwomen's interest to label as well those processed foods where it is an ingredient, we need to do a thorough impact assessment as well, because it needs to help the consumers, but if the consumer is rightly informed, I think he can make as well better choices for sustainable fishing and as well for European fishing to support more actively our fishermen community.

And I think we have as well, to further promote the blue economy. It is on a good track and but we can do more. We have also, I think, a little bit of side effects. We have, of course, the European Fisheries Fund, but we have as well the Rural Development Fund, where I think there can be interactions as well, where we help in general rural communities, and I think there is something more to be done. And then of course, I think what needs to be done, but this will rather be the part from my trade colleague is, as well, the access to the fisheries grants, because this is as well a very crucial topic, because there as well, fishermen need predictability where they can fish and where they cannot.

1-0099-0000

Luke Ming Flanagan (The Left). – Thank you very much. I've listened with great interest to what you've said throughout this hearing. It is now reported widely, as a result of what you've said earlier, that you support the Mercosur agreement. It is also clear from listening to you that when it comes to money for nature restoration, we're going to have to rely on private money for public goods, which isn't guaranteed through the EIB. And I'm also hearing that when it comes to an increased CAP, there isn't much hope. When it comes to unfair trading practices, it hasn't been going on for long enough, this new regulation, and you basically can't say whether it's working or not, even though it's quite clear that as long as it's voluntary for people to engage on the UTP, it's never going to happen. So can you give us some good news, please? Because mental health was touched on here.

(The President cut off the speaker)

1-0100-0000

Christophe Hansen, Commissioner-designate. – I will try to be very brief. On the unfair trading practices, I think I have made it very clear that this is a very recent legislation that you adopted in this Parliament. It is now up and running, but we already see that there are problems, namely when

it comes to cross-border enforcement. And I think I was very clear when I said as well that we will address this and I will put this on the table on the first days of (hopefully) my mandate, when we get more than 1.5 minutes to talk. But I was very clear that I will do that because it will also help prevent selling below production price from becoming systematic. So that is very clear.

Then on the nature restoration law, well, what I clearly said is that the Strategic Dialogue requested an additional separate budget. But if you see it somewhere, please let me know. And I will argue for that one. But I don't see it currently. I see nevertheless existing funds like the Just Transition Fund that could be leveraged for that and that are underused for the moment. So I would go into that because it is immediately available and we don't have to fight with the Member States on that. So that would be deliverable.

On Mercosur, I was having a very balanced approach, saying that there are safeguards, that there are advantages, that there are threats and that we need to properly address them. And this will be as well the task of this Parliament to address and assess and analyse what is currently being negotiated and that needs to be done in the due time and the necessary time and properly.

1-0101-0000

David Cormand (Verts/ALE). – Madame la Présidente, cher Commissaire désigné, Monsieur Hansen, j'ai compté: il y a eu huit questions sur les traités de libre-échange et sur le Mercosur, issues de cinq groupes différents, et vous avez donc répondu plusieurs fois. Je vais être très clair: votre collègue désigné, M. Šefčovič, a eu des questions sur ces sujets et n'a pas nié le fait qu'il pourrait y avoir un *split* qui permettrait de contourner les votes des parlements nationaux. J'aimerais avoir une réponse très claire de votre part là-dessus.

Question très rapide sur l'agriculture biologique, Monsieur le Commissaire désigné: qui va s'en occuper? La Cour des comptes européenne a indiqué que nous étions très en retard sur nos objectifs. Je souhaite clairement que ce soit vous, qu'il n'y ait pas dix pilotes dans l'avion, mais qu'il n'y en ait qu'un seul au niveau de la Commission. Est-ce que vous pouvez nous rassurer sur ce fait et nous dire que c'est bien vous, commissaire à l'agriculture, qui vous occuperez de l'agriculture biologique?

1-0102-0000

Christophe Hansen, commissaire désigné. – Je vais commencer par la deuxième question. Effectivement, sur le biologique, nous promovons l'agriculture biologique dans le cadre, par exemple, de nos plans stratégiques, et entretemps, tous les États membres ont un plan pour développer la production biologique. Donc c'est bien dans notre compétence, mais vous avez raison, d'autres volets demeurent actuellement dans le domaine de compétences de la DG SANTE et, à mon avis, il faudrait discuter pour voir si cela ne serait pas plus logique que ces volets soient réunis dans un même portefeuille. Les lettres de mission telles qu'elles ont été présentées ne précisent pas toujours explicitement qui est compétent sur quel sujet. Vous avez posé la question, je vais la relayer et je vais évidemment voir ce que cela donne, mais en tout cas, c'est une audition publique et tout le monde sera donc informé de votre question.

Pour ce qui est de ce que M. Šefčovič a dit lors de son audition, j'étais malheureusement déjà en train de préparer la mienne, donc j'ai évité de regarder les autres. J'ai un peu regardé M. Micallef. Je ne sais donc pas sous quelle forme cela va être présenté, mais en tout cas, je pense que M. Šefčovič est responsable de ce sujet. Nous sommes responsables des questions qui nous reviennent. Malheureusement, ce n'est plus le moment de négocier. Pour les prochains accords, ce sera à moi de négocier les volets agricoles.

1-0103-0000

Charles Goerens (Renew). – Monsieur le Commissaire désigné, cher Christophe, nous savons que la sécurisation des chaînes d'approvisionnement contribue à améliorer la résilience du secteur agricole. La rupture des chaînes d'approvisionnement, notamment dans le secteur des engrais, a été patente en 2022. Notre dépendance, dans une très large mesure, d'États peu fréquentables a fait apparaître la vulnérabilité du secteur agricole en particulier.

Ma question est très simple: quelles initiatives entendez-vous prendre pour apporter un peu plus de prévisibilité au secteur agricole en la matière?

1-0104-0000

Christophe Hansen, commissaire désigné. – Cher Charles, je ne vais pas vous répondre en luxembourgeois, mais en français.

Vous avez tout à fait raison, nous avons un sérieux problème de dépendance en ce qui concerne les intrants dans la production agricole. D'une part, les prix de l'énergie ont indubitablement flambé. D'autre part, le prix des engrais, auquel vous faites à juste titre référence, s'est lui aussi envolé, pour partie à cause des prix croissants de l'énergie au sein de l'Union européenne, liés aux sanctions envers la Russie, mais aussi, pour partie, car un grand pourcentage des engrais viennent toujours de Russie et sont effectivement devenus plus chers.

Nous devons donc avoir des partenariats d'approvisionnement plus stables. Nous avons avec le Maroc un accord, qui comporte d'autres problèmes – je regarde mes collègues espagnols, qui les connaissent très bien –, mais c'est un autre grand fournisseur. Il y en a d'autres dans le monde, nous devons donc nous diversifier du point de vue de l'approvisionnement et nous rendre moins dépendants d'un seul fournisseur, ce qui est extrêmement dangereux. Nous avons besoin de cette diversification pour avoir plus de prévisibilité et plus de sécurité quant à l'approvisionnement.

Cette diversification sera également essentielle pour garantir une agriculture productive dans les années à venir. Il y a bien entendu aussi la bioéconomie ainsi que d'autres ressources qui peuvent aider notre production, dont certaines à mettre en œuvre sur le territoire européen.

1-0105-0000

Bert-Jan Ruissen (ECR). – Voorzitter, mijnheer de kandidaat-commissaris, de landbouw weer aantrekkelijker maken voor jonge boeren is voor u een belangrijk speerpunt. Daar ben ik blij mee, want hier ligt inderdaad een heel belangrijke opgave. U noemt daarbij een aantal belangrijke factoren, o.a. de toegang tot landbouwgrond. Maar ja, dan moet die grond er natuurlijk wel zijn. Nu kom ik uit een regio waar momenteel grond massaal aan de landbouw wordt onttrokken en de bestemming "natuur" krijgt, mede in het kader van Natura 2000-wetgeving en natuurherstelwetgeving.

Jongeren die ik daarover spreek, zeggen me: als deze nieuwe commissaris toegang tot landbouwgrond wil garanderen, moet hij ook fundamenteel iets in het beleid veranderen. Mijn vraag is dus concreet: bent u het met mij eens dat we moeten stoppen met het massaal opofferen van landbouwgrond en landbouwbedrijven ten behoeve van natuur, dat we zuinig moeten zijn op onze landbouwgrond en dat we vooral moeten streven naar het combineren van landbouw en natuur, bijvoorbeeld via agrarisch natuurbeheer.

1-0106-0000

Christophe Hansen, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you, Mr Ruissen. I think it was rather a comment than a question, but I think it is a real concern not only in your Member State, but as well

in others, that the access to land is getting increasingly difficult. It is on the one side, of course, because we have demographic evolution. So there is pressure from, let's say, the housing side in your country. We have a very high density population density. So this is of course causing huge problems. And on the other hand I remember in Luxembourg as well, my brother went to an auction to buy land and there was a big landlord that was going to build something and he bought the whole 50 hectares just for compensation. That is counterproductive. We need to maintain agricultural land and as well to delimit, on certain points, agricultural land. That will be important because we know that other sectors can pay more than farmers.

So I would think as well about initiatives – this has to be done together with the Member State – to preserve agricultural land and that can happen nothing else than agriculture, but the same needs to go as well for nature-based, so we don't need then to grab on other parts that are forests, et cetera, so we need to be very careful. This is a very difficult balance which needs a lot of adaptation according to the regions.

1-0107-0000

Vilis Krištopans (PFE). – Sveicināti! Kā jūs plānojat novērst pretrunas zaļā kursa mērķu sasniegšanā? Minēšu dažas no tām. Pirmkārt, graudkopības saimniecībām tiek prasīts zemes aršanu aizstāt ar minimālo apstrādi - kultivēšana, diskošana, lai mazinātu gāzu emisijas, bet reizē, neiearot nezāļu sēklas un slimību patogēnus, lauki ir biežāk jāsmidzina, kas ir pretrunā bioloģiskās daudzveidības mērķiem.

Otrkārt, Eiropa veicina govju skaita mazināšanu, bet tas ir pretrunā ar bioloģiskās lauksaimniecības attīstību, jo tai kūtsmēsli ir vienīgais mēslojuma avots.

Treškārt, mežu īpašniekiem virza aizliegumus izstrādāt vecus mežus, bet reizē liek stādīt jaunus, lai koksne piesaistītu CO₂. Bet, neveicot veco mežu izstrādi, gluži vienkārši nav kur jaunus kokus stādīt.

1-0108-0000

Christophe Hansen, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you very much for those comments and questions. I think what must be made very clear, I haven't heard of any European legislation, or at least I haven't read any, that explicitly says you have to reduce your cattle. What is said is that you have to reduce your emissions, your negative output of the agriculture sector. But saying top down that you have to reduce, I haven't read that. That is maybe some political will on certain sides, but it is certainly not in EU legislation.

And as I said earlier on as well, cattle and livestock in general has reduced over the last ten years by 7.8 % without such a ban. So it is really difficult to maintain people that are willing to have cattle, because that is something you need to get up at 4 a.m., if the cow is calving. That is like that and nobody wants to do that, or fewer and fewer people want to do that. So I think it is very important that as well, when we talk about security, that we make sure that still there are some people that are willing to take care of cattle and ensure production, including production in remote areas. That will be very crucial.

And then on the forest situation that you mentioned, I think this could also be the transposition of EU law, or at least the adaptation nationally, but I don't know the details. But I would be willing to analyse it if you could send that to me.

1-0109-0000

Eric Sargiacomo (S&D). – Madame la Présidente, Monsieur le Commissaire désigné, avant de commencer à poser ma question, je voudrais vous dire que j’ai été très touché par l’émotion dont vous nous avez fait part tout à l’heure, parce qu’elle rappelle que l’agriculture, ce sont des hommes et des femmes qui œuvrent dur, très dur, parfois trop dur, au quotidien pour nourrir nos populations.

L’alimentation a été rajoutée à l’intitulé de votre portefeuille. Malheureusement, on en a peu parlé depuis le début de notre réunion, et pourtant, c’est une bonne chose. Cela paraît indispensable de reconnecter les politiques agricoles et les politiques alimentaires, afin de repartir de la fonction première de l’agriculture: produire l’alimentation nécessaire à notre subsistance. Précarité alimentaire croissante chez les Européens, inflation alimentaire qui déstabilise nos économies, constitution de stocks alimentaires stratégiques en prévision des prochains chocs... Les sujets sont très nombreux. Si vous êtes confirmé dans vos fonctions de Commissaire à l’agriculture, quelles seront vos priorités?

(La Présidente retire la parole à l’orateur)

1-0110-0000

Christophe Hansen, commissaire désigné. – Merci, Monsieur Sargiacomo, pour votre question et je suis tout à fait d’accord que l’agriculture et la production alimentaire, c’est bien plus que juste l’agriculteur lui-même. Il y a toute une chaîne derrière, il y a des entreprises, il y a beaucoup de PME qui travaillent le produit et qui font aussi face à des défis similaires à ceux de nos agriculteurs, il faut le reconnaître et il faut aussi les soutenir. Il faut aussi, et c’est mon intention, avoir une vision de durabilité économique, environnementale et sociale.

On a parlé des conditions de travail qui sont déplorables dans certaines régions et dans certains secteurs. Ce n’est pas seulement dû à ça, c’est aussi une question d’investissement personnel. Je pense donc que l’on doit faire mieux, parce que toute la compétitivité de la chaîne alimentaire dépend aussi des investissements qui sont faits dans la chaîne. On constate, non seulement dans l’agriculture, mais aussi dans la transformation, qu’il n’y a pas assez d’investissements, donc nous ne sommes plus compétitifs et donc nous perdons des marchés. Il faut corriger cela et je pense que ce sujet va être très important.

On a aussi beaucoup de sujets transversaux, on n’a pas non plus beaucoup parlé, aujourd’hui, du bien-être animal, mais les agriculteurs tiennent au bien-être de leurs animaux, pas seulement parce qu’ils les aiment et les connaissent depuis qu’ils sont venus au monde, mais aussi parce qu’ils veulent que l’animal soit en bonne condition quand il arrive à l’abattoir, parce que c’est à cette condition qu’ils obtiennent un prix juste. En conclusion, les agriculteurs veulent contribuer, mais on doit aussi le faire dans une approche un peu plus englobante.

1-0111-0000

Norbert Lins (PPE). – Herr designierter Kommissar! Ich habe die Ehre, der letzte Redner heute Abend zu sein. Ich will auf die desaströsen Ernteergebnisse von diesem Jahr eingehen – wir haben 255 Millionen Tonnen Getreide und haben einen Verbrauch von 257 Millionen Tonnen – und wollte Sie fragen: Wie schaffen wir ein Gleichgewicht zwischen Extensivierung und Intensivierung? Wie schaffen wir es, nachhaltige Produktionsverfahren zu gestalten, aber gleichzeitig unsere Erträge zu erhalten und bestenfalls diese zu steigern? Ich glaube, das ist aufgrund dieses Ernteergebnisses eine wichtige Frage, auch für den zukünftigen Kommissar.

Ich will am Ende sagen: Ich finde, wir haben einen gut aufgelegten, bestens präparierten und auch empathischen Kommissarskandidaten heute Abend erlebt. Und ich glaube, dass er, wenn es notwendig war, auch Kante gezeigt hat. Ich würde mir wünschen, dass er nachher bei den Koordinatoren auch mit großer Mehrheit bestätigt wird.

1-0112-0000

Christophe Hansen, *designiertes Mitglied der Kommission*. – Vielen Dank, Norbert, für deine lieben Worte zum Schluss. Und du weißt, die Landwirtschaft liegt mir extrem am Herzen. Ich komme von dort und ich fühle deshalb auch mit, wenn es um solche Jahre geht, wie dieses Jahr, wo wir effektiv beim Getreide, aber auch in anderen Bereichen Ausfälle hatten. Ich habe kürzlich mit Zuckerrübenbauern gesprochen, die auch extreme Ausfälle hatten, weil sie keine Neonicotinoide mehr verwenden können. Das ist ein Problem. Die Produktion in einigen Zonen ist anscheinend um 40 % niedriger als in einem normalen Jahr. Wenn uns 40 % in den Taschen fehlen, dann sind wir auch nicht zufrieden.

Wir müssen daran arbeiten – auch verstärkt, glaube ich –, dass wir, wenn wir Pflanzenschutzmittel vom Markt nehmen, dass wir auch die Alternativen bereit haben bzw. sie beschleunigen. Das ist extrem wichtig. Und wir müssen auch dafür sorgen, dass wir uns Gedanken darüber machen – und das ist etwas, was auch Herr Sargiacomo kurz angesprochen hat –, wie wir die Preisstabilität garantieren können. Und da gibt der Niinistö-Bericht ja auch einige Anhaltspunkte, die ich gerne analysieren möchte, wie wir auch in schlechten Jahren und eventuell auch in guten Jahren – und einige Mitgliedstaaten machen das – Reserven halten, um die Preise zu stabilisieren. Das soll nicht systematisch passieren, aber es könnte in einigen Fällen hilfreich sein. Danke.

1-0113-0000

Veronika Vrecionová, *Chair of the AGRI Committee*. – Thank you very much and now it's time for the conclusion of the meeting, and I would like to ask Mr Hansen to make a brief closing statement, so you have five minutes, please.

1-0114-0000

Christophe Hansen, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and, well, I had the opportunity to meet many of you already before this hearing. Some of you I haven't met yet, but I think we can of course – and we should – definitely do this better in the future. That is really my part of working. And for those who know me longer, I am the one that is coming to the table and that is going to discuss and is not staying away. So this is, for me, very important. I announced it that I would like to be the boots on the ground Commissioner, which means that I would like as well to come to see the specific problems, not only come to the big agriculture events when you can have a picture, but as well go to the zones where, really, disaster happened. And I would like, if I'm allowed as well, for one of my first destinations to come to the Valencia region to see what has happened and how we can better help. That is really how I would like to work.

Then, of course, you have all read my admission letter that I will have to deliver on the first 100 days on my vision for the future of agriculture. I don't want that to be something that I do in isolation, so I will come to you to discuss this. This will as well depend, and the co-legislators definitely have their role to play there. And I think what is very important as well, and I mentioned it, is to see the agri-food sector as an entirety, so with the entire supply chain and value chain, and not only one actor or the other in isolation. That will be very important.

Generational renewal – I think I will start, if you give me the opportunity, very early in December as well with the youth dialogue, that should be very important as well to address and identify issues

for our future generations that we want to take up agriculture in the future, and I think in there lies a lot of potential as well. I think we have to make our rural areas more attractive, so that young people want to stay there as well, give them other opportunities, because if one person of the family is doing agriculture, maybe the other person wants to stay on the farm, but work something else. We need to give more opportunities, and I think the common agricultural policy is the best possible tool for that.

We need fairer revenues for our farmers. I addressed very clearly that I will work on the common market organisation to come up with a targeted review in the very first days of the mandate to strengthen our producer organisation and give a better position for the farmers in the entire value chain. I have also said that we will address the problems in the Unfair Trading Practices Directive with the cross-border enforcement.

That is the first deliverable on there, and then I think we have as well some sectors we haven't talked at all today about, for example, the wine sector is going to a very difficult crisis in this moment because of consumption trends and because of climate events. So there will be the high-level group on wine which will come up with its conclusions. That will be very important as well.

We need to prepare better for crisis and ramp up our possibilities. I think we are not already where we need to be to face the multiple crises: the climate crisis, the environmental crisis, sanitary crisis, and, as well, trade disruptions. Therefore, I think we need to do way more, and there I think we have, as well, to work as a Commission more horizontally together. Maybe in the beginning, it is more difficult to get new legislation out because you will have to decide or discuss and coordinate with others, but once it gets out, it is not going to be environmental legislation on its own and it hadn't been discussed with agriculture before. That is not the way forward. And that is something where I will really engage very strongly to have this horizontal cooperation between the different ones. And there was some people that analysed with how many different commissioners I would have co-operations – at least 10. And so this will be, of course, challenging, but I think we have to bring it, and we owe it to our farming community, we owe it to our quality food production in the European Union, and I will be there to fight for them, to fight as well, Mr Flanagan, for a very strong budget, but of course, I will need your support and this is your decision tonight, so thank you very much. And I think I'm almost at the five minutes. Thank you.

1-0115-0000

Veronika Vrecionová, *Chair of the AGRI Committee*. – Thank you very much. And I would like to thank all the Members for their participation. And you, Mr Hansen, for your informative answers. Your contributions have ensured the success of this hearing. As a next step, the coordinators of the agri committees and I will meet in camera from 10:30 p.m. to assess the responses. Coordinators will then be invited to state their opinion on whether the Commissioner-designate is qualified both to be a member of the College and to carry out the particular duties he has been assigned. Thank you very much and good evening. Have a nice evening.

1-0116-0000

(The hearing closed at 21:58)