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European Organisation of Agricultural, Rural and Forestry Contractors

Confédération Européenne des Entrepreneurs de Travaux Techniques Agricoles, Ruraux et Forestiers

Europäischer Zentralverband der land- und forstwirtschaftlichen Lohnunternehmer und ländlichen Dienstleistungsunternehmen

CEETAR MANIFESTO for the EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS 2019

CEETAR is the European Organisation of land-based contractors, which provide services in the agricultural, rural and forestry sectors.

For the new parliamentary term, CEETAR is asking:

- ✓ **A level playing field in the Common Agricultural Policy direct payment calculation AND rural development policy: the CAP should stimulate use of technology by beneficiaries, not the ownership;**
- ✓ **The authorisation of national exemptions to the harmonization of road circulation requirements;**
- ✓ **An accessible financial instrument to contribute to the challenges of digitisation by small, contractor companies;**
- ✓ **A standardized approach for the production of big data and a single EU wide data-sharing platform;**
- ✓ **An extension of EU support to education programmes to learners and further exchange of mutual learning practices on digital innovations;**
- ✓ **Clearly set goals to develop the forestry sector in the new EU forest strategy.**

The European Confederation of Agricultural, Rural and Forestry Contractors – CEETAR - represents the interests of land-based contractors in Europe.

Land-based contractors carry out a wide range of work, in particular for agricultural, rural or forestry companies or public authorities, such as harvesting, soil manuring, plant protection treatment and cultivation or forestry work. They use a large amount of precision farming technologically advanced machinery, hence supporting the use of innovative technologies instead of direct purchase of technology by farmers. They contribute to a better use of resources by saving costs; provide more profitability for farming activities and more environmental protection. They also employ skilled workers specially trained for driving and working with agricultural and non-road machinery by using the newest technology.

In the last years, politicians at all levels have increasingly recognised the important role of land-based contractors in Europe's society and have understood that these latter have different needs

compared to traditional farmers. However, new approaches to integrate land-based contractors in the value chain of agriculture and forestry activities have not yet become a reality. Land-based contractors are missing a dedicated policy addressing their concrete needs and we want this to change.

Main concerns of Land-based contractors

While land-based contractors generally have a positive view of the European Union, they are facing common challenges, which need to be addressed at European level:

- The difficulties experienced when driving agricultural and forestry machinery on public roads are a major problem for contractors. The population increasingly complains about the presence of large machines and the dangers that they could present for local traffic. In addition, some Member States have strict regulations on the speed and size of machines, combined with maximum axle loads, which do not make it easy to operate the vehicles available;
- The problem of driving machines is accentuated by the urban sprawl, which leads to the fragmentation of land used for agriculture and which forces contractors to make more movements with their machines in areas where the population is increasing and is criticising the presence of these machines;
- A crucial problem is the lack of qualified workforce and a shortage of students. CEETAR Members are now working on youth programmes to make the sector attractive for young contractors and employees. This lack of skilled young workers is particularly blatant in the forestry sector, though modern forestry with modern techniques offers new kind of opportunities for educated workers;
- Contractors are having increasing difficult to access proper funding, in particular to support innovative and environmentally friendly digital solutions. In the absence of direct support from the Common Agricultural Policy, contractors may sometimes benefit from support from some regions through the European Regional Development Fund to invest on innovation, environment and employees training.

Six CEETAR priorities for the new parliamentary term:

1. Common Agricultural Policy reform: The CAP can no longer limit itself to defining agriculture as being the exclusive domain of the farmer. The profound changes in European agriculture during the recent decades have been supported by the emergence of new production methods developed by agricultural contractors. CEETAR is in favour of an involvement of all sectorial and territorial actors in agriculture and rural development, which may be requesting contractors' services. CEETAR considers that direct payment calculation and rural development policy shall **not discriminate between farmers with employees and farmers who are adopting a strategy to build on services from external contractors**. The EU also has to set criteria in the new CAP for the comprehensive strategic planning at the Member State level. These criteria must contribute to a level playing field between farmers having their own employees (and equipment) and farmers who choose for services by land-based contractors.
2. Road circulation: CEETAR believes it is recommendable to include masses and dimensions requirements when addressing mobile machinery construction, but is in favour of **authorising national exemptions to the harmonization of road circulation requirements**. In particular, CEETAR is in favour of authorising wide tires or twin-wheels, higher masses or axle loads for mobile machinery on roads, in order to reduce soil compaction.

3. Digitisation of machinery: CEETAR welcomes the allocation of 10 billion for food and natural resources researches in the new Horizon Europe programme. This increase clearly reflects the wish of the European Commission to support a more technologically advanced agriculture by switching money allocation from CAP to research programmes. However, land-based contractors should also be supported in using the manifold possibilities of digitisation in the framework of their current work and business processes. An **accessible financial instrument should contribute to the current challenges faced by land-based contractors in terms of digitisation of equipment and staff training.**

4. Big data management is also of major concern for contractors and CEETAR already issued an EU Code of Conduct on Agricultural Data Sharing with other stakeholders¹. Nowadays, contractors integrate data collection costs in the service costs, at real costs. By using different equipment and brands, they are confronted with conflicting technologies, systems and interfaces. Despite EU funded projects on the interoperability of data, further cross-border exchanges of information is necessary. CEETAR proposes a **standardized approach for the production of data at European level** and the **creation of a single EU wide data-sharing platform.**

5. Support programmes to enhance workforce qualification and digitisation: CEETAR particularly welcomes the future Erasmus programme 2021-2027 to support transnational mobility. However, the specific needs of land-based contractors must be taken into account. This means simple applications procedures, less bureaucracy and the **extension of the programme to learners in continuous and higher vocational training.** In addition to this, CEETAR sees the need to promote **further exchange of good practices and mutual learning on digital innovations**, the acquisition of digital skills and the use of digital tools for learning and teaching.

6. Add a human dimension to the European Forest Strategy. As volumes of industrial round wood and energy wood is increasing in Europe, accompanied by higher volume of silvicultural work, a new European Forest strategy should definitely set goals and targets to develop the sector. CEETAR proposes three priorities: **improve databases on forestry actors** in order to identify windows of opportunities for the sector, **set goals and targets to get new skilled workers to forestry** (which includes extension CAP provisions for rural business start-ups to forestry contractors). Finally, the strategy should **provide financial support to improve the image of the sector.**

About CEETAR:

The European Confederation of Agricultural, Rural and Forestry Contractors, established in 1961, represents about 150,000 companies and nearly 600,000 workers. It aims to represent the interests of land-based contractors in Europe. In 2014, the European Network of Forestry Entrepreneurs decided to merge with CEETAR, resulting in a stronger and more representative single organisation representing land-based contractors at EU level.

CEETAR aims to be a proactive force to benefit the contractors and the rural economy at European level. Its objective is to:

- Represent the national federations and defend their professional interests in relation to the institutions of the EU. This way, CEETAR is recognised as representative organisation for contractors towards the European Institutions,

¹ <http://ceettar.eu/publications.php?item=69&cat=4&year=2018>

- Represent the national federations and defend their professional interests towards other private organisations, which are active at European level and beyond. CEETAR maintains constructive relations with COPA-COGECA (farmers), CEMA (agricultural machinery industry), EFFAT (workers)...
- Help organisations in the new Member States to fulfil their national objectives as rapidly as possible and under the best conditions through the expertise transfer developed by the CAP 50 years ago.