

Horses in Agricultural Policy

A briefing by the European Horse Network

Update June 2018



The Horse Industry rears!

On the basis of the Communication on the Future of Food and Farming¹ published on 29 November 2017, the European Council and the European Parliament have discussed the proposed options, the reform of direct payments and the adaptation to future societal needs.

On 30th May 2018, the European Parliament adopted the report on the future CAP². This report is a clear call for a strong common policy framework at EU level, aiming to «secure farmers' income and more effectively meet the expectations of society as a whole».

The future Integrated Farm statistics proposal³ does not include equines. The Parliament will vote the text in July 2018.

On 1 June 2018, the European Commission presented the legislative proposals on the future of food and farming⁴. The European Commission has put on the table all the elements of its agricultural strategy for the period 2021-2027.

The Commission's spending plans for the period 2021-2020 include a reduction in CAP spending, with greater cuts targeted on rural development spending.



Grassland is mostly important for the EU horse industry.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/sites/agriculture/files/future-of-cap/future_of_food_and_farming_communication_en.pdf

² <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+REPORT+A8-2018-0178+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN>

³ <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/05/08/agricultural-statistics-eu-agrees-on-improved-data-collection-system/pdf>

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/publications/natural-resources-and-environment_en

Has the European Institutions chosen deliberately to exclude equines from the CAP beyond 2020?

The reform of the European Agriculture Policy is putting pressure on all farmers and on the Equine breeding industry.

Land is an increasingly scarce resource, which is non-renewable, threatened, on the one hand by urban development, infrastructure projects, afforestation and the spread of desertification caused by climate change, and, on the other hand, by the concentration of land in the hands of large-scale agricultural undertakings and investors from outside the farming sector.

However, broad distribution of agricultural land is an essential principle for social cohesion and job creation in rural areas. At the moment, we are witnessing a real battle for the land.

The equine industry is concerned by the scarcity of lands. In Bulgaria, Equines could be removed from the list of grazing animals with the consequence that it will not be regarded as an agriculture activity and therefore be excluded from subsidies, access to land, rural development programmes and lower taxation. Such pressure exists in Belgium where farm units have been greatly reduced in number and prices of land have dramatically increased.



Photo by Jean-Léo DUGAST

Vinyard

Reducing agriculture to strict food production is outdated. Equine breeding and training are also land-based activities, so that when the horse-keeping is aimed at realizing a yield, it falls under the definition of agriculture.

When listing farm animals, the horses should certainly be mentioned.

Horses are pasture animals and belong in agricultural areas.

Horse breeding is a non intensive, land protective and landscape conservation activity. Although horses are the smallest group of farm animals, the breeding activity for the 7 million horses (86 million beef/veal animals) is the one with the least adverse impact on nature and presents many opportunities for rural employment.

It is well known that the biodiversity of grasslands is improved by extensive grazing of horses. It is



Photo by Helena GÖRNEROVA

Horses pulling tractor

also recognised that horsemeat produced for human consumption is healthier than other meat.

Mare's milk is the animal milk that comes closest to mother's milk because of its composition. It contains eight times more vitamin C than cow's milk. Mare's milk is a fairly poor casein milk (protein). It makes it a much more digestible milk than cow's milk, one of the reasons why mare's milk may be recommended for young children whose liver has had difficulty assimilating the components of cow's milk. Mare's milk is also recommended for adults whose body does not tolerate ruminant milk.

A good balance between horse keeping and agricultural production priorities is essential taking into account that the professional horse industry and the competition sport have become significant business activities.

Indeed the use of horses for training and the keeping of horses needs agricultural land as they cannot be kept in housing, industrial, forest or nature area's and they need close human control and feeding.

Use of horses is also to be integrated in rural development and is a factor for the integration of rural communities (i.e. racecourses and paddocks).

Equine breeding activities meet the recognition of the multifunctionality of agriculture.

As farming becomes ever more diversified and environmental land management becomes ever more important, it also paramount to fully integrate horses in the reflexion and strategy for the future CAP and the rural agenda.

The sector has a powerful tale to tell to EU policy makers, not just in terms of business and employment growth, but also to promote sustainable growth for agriculture and rural areas in an ecologically balanced way.

As well as being a growing sector, equine enterprises also provide an added benefit as they can help support other farming sectors, by their need to buy grain, hay, straw, and other items provided by other farms and rural businesses. In addition, horses provide excellent opportunities for further farm diversification. A further plus is that diversification is often a viable possibility in the more difficult upland and remote farming areas – through the natural synergies between horses and tourism for example.

The use of horses as working animals on farms and in forestry is growing, and is in perfect harmony with the growth of organic farming and the search for less polluting methods of farm maintenance.

The total number of working horses in the EU is estimated at about 1 million, most of them being used in Central and Eastern EU-countries. However, working horses are making a come-back in the western and northern part of Europe.



Photo by Mark WENTEN – Hippo Revue

Agri-tourism with heavy farm horses in the Flemish lowlands and countryside.

The horse is now being seen as an example of efficient, modern and sustainable technology. It perfectly addresses the need of small and family farms.

There is a real renaissance of the working horse in vineyards, for instance, in France. High quality estates such as Château Latour or Romanée Conti replace tractors by horses, with remarkable results: young vines growing in a vineyard worked only with horses start to fruit one or even two years earlier than those growing in soils compacted by tractors. The roots of the vines go deeper, the soil structure regenerates, the water balance is improved and the biodiversity of soil organisms is increased.

The importance of horses in EU Regions

In some countries horses are vitally important for regional economic clusters. For example in the area of Basse-Normandie in France you will find 10% of the whole French horse population, and 20% of the foals, the sector there provides more than 10 000 jobs. In Basse Normandie, where the flagship racecourses, Deauville and Cabourg are located, 93,000 horses of 44 different breeds occupy more than 25% of agricultural land.

In County Kildare, home to 11% of Irish breeders and 23% of Irish horse trainers, the famous Punchestown Festival generates about EUR 43m in economic impact, and close to 2,000 part-time jobs.

The KINCSEM" Horse Cluster is based in Kecskemét in middle of Hungary - the town itself is called the horse capital of Hungary and the horse cluster initiative concentrates on the education of all kind of horse races and activities. It provides major jobs in the region and regularly organises national and international horse events, and also exists to promote horse clusters at a European level and international cooperation.

One example of combining ecological conservation with tourism within national parks and areas of special scientific interest is the part-EU funded Lake Pape project in the remote region of south-west Latvia along the Baltic coast close to the border with Lithuania where a key feature of the project was the re-introduction of wild horses to help

maintain important grasslands.

Another example is in Romania in the Carpathians where a scheme is being set up to support local communities within the nature conservation policy of protected areas by developing ecotourism products focused on horseriding.



Photo by SHUTTERSTOCK

Traditional ales are brewed with selected agricultural ingredients. For marketing and promotional reasons; historical draught horses are still used for corporate identity.



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European Horse Network members insist on:

Horse is an agricultural product. Its historic and close connection to the land and how it is farmed means that equines are to be considered along with other livestock such as cows and sheep, not least because of the millions of hectares which they graze, but obviously also because the horse breeding and production often takes place as a valued part of a diversified farm unit.

Horse is a rural product. Equines are bred in small farms, are part of

activities that are not delocalised, creating links and projects between territories, providing jobs and services.

Horse is a green product. Horses graze a significant percentage of Europe's permanent grassland, and therefore contribute to the upkeep of many areas, as well as providing significant sources of income for local population. The horse produces only a very small amount of green-house gases: no carbon dioxide and little methane.

EHN and its Members

The EHN is a non-profit network composed of many equine organisations operating in Europe.

ATA - Animal Transportation Association



BCP-CBC - Belgian Horse Confederation



BETA - British Equestrian Trade Association



DBK - The Horse Carriage drivers from Bruges



EEN - Equestrian Education Network



EFTBA - European Federation Thoroughbred Breeders



EEHNC - Equine Health & Nutrition Association



EPMA - European Pari Mutuel Association



ESSA - European State Studs Association



EEF - European Equestrian Federation



EMHF - European and Mediterranean Horseracing Federation



ETF - European Trainers Federation



FECTU - European Federation for the promotion of the use of Draught Horses



FEEVA - Federation of European Equine Veterinary Associations



FEI - International Equestrian Federation



FEIF - International Federation of Icelandic Horse Associations



FITE - International Equestrian Tourism Federation



FNRS - Dutch Professional Equestrian Centers Federation



GESCA - French Horse sector professionals



HIPPOLIA - Equine Cluster (innovation) and research Foundation



HIPPOLIS - National Equine Competence Association of Finland



HNS - Swedish Horse Council Foundation



IFCE - French Institute for equestrian sport and equines



UET - European Trotting Union



WBFSH - World Breeding Federation for Sport Horses



WHW - World Horse Welfare



"Which legislations for Equidae in Europe?"

A current situation on the equine sector in different countries of the European Union. Publication created in partnership between the French Equine Institute and the European Horse Network

<http://www.ifce.fr/produit/quelles-legislations-equides-europe/>