

# Opportunity knocks

The coming months represent a real test for decision makers in creating an efficient and sustainable EU, writes **Lefkios Sergides**

**T**he next six months will be a key test of the ability of the council and the parliament to change a series of fundamental European policies to restore and safeguard depleted ecosystems, both in Europe and globally. The reforms of the common agriculture policy (CAP), the cohesion policy and the common fisheries policy (CFP) will be entering a decisive time, with first readings for all scheduled in the European parliament. In spite of the efforts of the Danish presidency, the outcome of the first six months of council negotiations is extremely disappointing. As regards the CAP, governments have made “flexibility” a synonym for reducing environmental standards, going as far as considering removing the water framework directive as a condition for receiving farm funds. This is an extraordinary sign, especially at a time when the European commission and Cyprus presidency are preparing for the adoption of the blueprint to safeguard EU’s waters.

WWF is calling on all EU decision makers to redress the balance and secure a real shift of focus in the CAP, moving from rewarding intensive production to an effective support to a broader based environmental and rural development policy. This would be targeted at delivering sustainable food production, sound land management and prosperous rural communities. The current CAP budget represents an annual contribution of €105 per EU citizen of which €80 go towards direct payments to farmers. There are extremely limited requirements of compliance with basic environmental provisions. In time of economic crisis, WWF believes it is high time for CAP and all EU policies to deliver public goods to society as a whole.

Regarding fisheries, WWF calls on MEPs to work towards sustainable fisheries and respond to massive public and industry support for ambitious reform. Superficial changes alone will not save Europe’s fish and fisheries sector from collapse. The CFP basic regulation must include ambitious timelines and implementing tools for the achievement of maximum sustainable yield; the establishment of multiannual plans; the end of wasteful fishing practices, and an end to the overcapacity of EU fleets both

inside and outside EU waters. Perpetuating the status quo, and wasting this once-in-a-decade opportunity to put the fisheries sector on the road to recovery is not an option. A 31 per cent decrease in fishing jobs since 2002 reveals the bleakness of the European fisheries crisis, which can only be remedied by a root and branch reform.

In October, Cyprus will lead the EU delegation for the 11th conference of the parties to the convention on biological diversity, in India. This comes just two years after the adoption of the 2020 Aichi global biodiversity targets, which included the sustainable reform of land-use policies and the mobilisation of resources for global biodiversity conservation. Therefore progress in increasing the level of ambition for the new CAP and CFP will be a test for EU member states to demonstrate their credibility, coherence and leadership, vis à vis other nations which have a much lower footprint on the planet.

Terra Cypria, the Cyprus conservation foundation, is looking forward to working with WWF, the Cypriot presidency and the EU institutions to uphold the EU level of ambition for these crucial reforms setting a new course towards a truly resource efficient and sustainable EU. ★



Lefkios Sergides is the conservation officer of TerraCypria



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