



The Common Agricultural Policy Monitoring Committee must include organisations representing civil society. Do not neglect transparent and participatory processes in the monitoring of public funds.

Open letter from environmental organisations to the Minister of Agriculture Zdeněk Nekula

Dear Minister of Agriculture
Ing. Zdeněk Nekula
Těšnov 65/17
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Cc:
Dear Mr. Director of DG Agri
Dr. iur. Wolfgang Burtscher
Rue de la Loi 130/Wetstraat 130
1049 Brussels, Belgium

Prague, 15 December 2022

Dear Minister Zdeněk Nekula,

First of all, allow us to congratulate you on the approval of the Strategic Plan of the Common Agricultural Policy (SP) by the European Commission. This is a crucial step for farmers and nature.

Our organisations, Hnutí DUHA (Friends of the Earth Europe Czech Republic) and the Czech Ornithological Society (Czech national partner of Birdlife International), which are members of the Green Circle association of environmental organisations, as well as the World Wide Fund for nature - Central & Eastern Europe, **have been following the developments around the SP for a long time and have commented constructively on them, as we are aware of the key role of agricultural subsidies for the state of the landscape and agriculture.** We have commented on every version of the SP, actively participated in the vast majority of working groups, developed our own proposals for subsidy measures, informed the public and the media, and some of us have even met you in person on the topic.

However, it is clear that the approval of the SP is not the end of the story. Implementation of the measures will need to be continuously evaluated and flexibly adjusted. There may also be necessary changes during the period 2023-2027, as the legislation allows and as was also announced by Commissioner Wojciechowski at Monday's press conference on the occasion of the AGRIFISH Council. It is essential to maintain public oversight of this process and public funds, with representation of all relevant perspectives, including civil and expert society. **The CAP Monitoring Committee (MC)**, which is to be established as **a new body** under Regulation 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council, will play a key role here.

Unfortunately, the process of setting up the MC has so far been completely unsatisfactory for a number of reasons and we would therefore like to ask you to rectify this. We expected a transparent process in which the environmental perspective and civil society would get the necessary representation. As active participants in the process of drafting the SP, we approached officials of the Ministry of Agriculture with an interest in representation in the MC. However, we have not yet received a satisfactory response, so we are now turning to you on the day of the first meeting of the new MC. **We consider it regrettable that we are not allowed to attend today's meeting.**

We therefore ask you to urgently create a seat in the MC for the Green Circle - an association of environmental NGOs, in analogy with the structure of representation of other umbrella organisations in this body. **We are ready to participate in further activities of the MC and ask you to urgently reconsider and correct the current process.** We hope that you will see to it that the approach is changed in the future as well.

Here we summarise the reasons why we consider the process of filling the MC to be completely unsatisfactory and even inconsistent with European legislation and government regulations:

- 1) **The existing process for the creation of the MC has been completely non-transparent and has offered no space for our organisations to apply for a place on it.** We have not seen any call for applications either publicly or in working groups. Moreover, according to information from Ministerial Assistant Principal Tabery, the structure of the MC was already approved before the SP was approved by the European Commission. However, according to Article 124(1), "Each Member State shall set up a national committee to monitor the implementation of the CAP Strategic Plan within three months of the date of notification to the Member State of the Commission implementing a decision approving a CAP Strategic Plan." However, the Commission's implementing decision had not yet been notified at that time, so the approval of the structure of the MC prior to that notification violates the process set out in the Regulation.
- 2) **Civil society is not sufficiently represented in the MC, as required by European legislation.** According to Articles 124(2) and 106(3), 'relevant bodies representing civil society' are to be equally represented in the MC with public authorities. **Our organisations have been the ones that have been constructively involved in the preparation of the SP for a long time, and from this perspective we are convinced that we should not be absent from the MC as representatives of civil society.** Here we can also highlight, for example, the petition of Czech Society for Ornithology and Czech-Moravian Gamekeeper Association "Let's put life back into the landscape", which has been signed by over 56,000 people, or the appeal of Hnutí DUHA and Czech Society for Ornithology "For a healthy and varied landscape", which has been signed by over 23,000 people so far. Yet we could not even apply for participation in the MC.
- 3) **The current process of creating the MC is completely contradictory to the "Methodology for the participation of NGOs in advisory and working bodies and in the creation of state administration documents",** which you as the Government, through the Government Council for NGOs, adopted. According to it, ministries should always use "participatory processes and principles" when forming groups used to monitor strategic documents, and any exceptions to the application of the processes should "be justified from the outset" (p. 11). For example, already at the time of the intention to create a body, it should "inform about the intention by various means (...) together with the expected timetable for the creation (...), the nomination process, etc." and "inform directly all networks and umbrella organisations" working on or affected by the topic (p. 12). Similar applies to the nomination process, where, among other things, "all NGOs, umbrellas and networks known to you that are active in the thematic area" should be contacted (p. 13). Sufficient time should also always be given to allow NGOs and umbrella associations to go through their own set internal processes.

It is clear from the above that there has been a significant procedural error on the part of the Ministry of Agriculture and we therefore ask you to correct this. We believe that more open communication and cooperation between NGOs and the Ministry of Agriculture will continue to benefit everyone in the future.

We also ask you to be transparent in informing us about relevant working groups that are working or being set up in the framework of the CAP modifications. We would like to apply our expert perspective in some of them. We believe that sufficient

representation of relevant perspectives can help from the beginning to search for solutions that will most effectively address the complex challenges facing our landscape.

Sincerely,

Petra Kolínská, Green Circle authorised Chair

Anna Kárníková, Director of the Hnutí DUHA - Friends of the Earth Czech Republic

Zdeněk Vermouzek, Director of the Czech Society for Ornithology

Lenka Fryčová, Head of the Czech WWF Representation