



PES Discussion Paper

Reducing emissions in the agricultural sector

Monday, 09 November 2009

The agricultural sector is responsible for approximately 9,2 % of the EU emissions. Although there has been a reduction of 27,4% since 1990 (2006 figures)¹, the emission reduction potential still remains high². The Agricultural Council on the 13th of July has discussed the topic of greenhouse gas emissions in the agricultural sector but agreed not to put forward any binding legislation. Instead they agreed to better inform farmers about emission reduction potentials. EU agricultural policy also needs to take into consideration that global food needs will increase considerably until 2050, with increased pressure on arable land use and negative climate effects.

In order to prevent a global temperature rise of more than 2°C, all possibilities to reduce emissions should be taken advantage of. While binding targets for other sectors have been introduced, either through their inclusion in the emission trading system or thanks to binding emission reduction targets, for example in the transport sector, no such targets exist for the agricultural sector. In order to ensure a fair and equal treatment of all sectors, we as progressive parties should discuss the necessity or possibility to introduce binding agricultural emission reduction targets in the EU or to include this sector in the Emission Trading System. Furthermore we should discuss alternative or additional political measures

¹ European Environment Agency (2009): CSI 010 - Greenhouse gas emission trends - Assessment published Mar 2009. See:

http://themes.eea.europa.eu/IMS/IMS/ISpecs/ISpecification20040909113419/IAssessment1220277858018/view_content.

² The study "Cooking up a Storm" quotes UK figures that emission reduction of up to 30% in the livestock sector would be possible with the right measures. In: Tara Garnett (2008): Cooking up a storm. See: http://www.fcn.org.uk/fcnPubs/publications/PDFs/CuaS_web.pdf.



to reduce agricultural emissions, amongst others:

- Introducing taxes or levies on emissions from agriculture and associated climate-relevant inputs (mineral fertiliser, pesticides).
- Reforming the CAP: introducing a third pillar with climate related agriculture and specific funding programmes in this direction.
- Increase the efficiency of agriculture: more food and biomass production with less land use and less inputs (such as fertilisers and feeding stuff).
- Using manure as a renewable energy source (especially biogas), instead of allowing it to rot outside emitting methane, one of the most damaging of the green house gases.
- Increase raw material and energy efficiency of farming and reduce emissions from transport related to agriculture.
- Reducing the consumption of meat and milk products would contribute to considerably decreased emissions. Information campaigns should therefore be offered and carbon labelling for agriculture products introduced.
- Farming on moorland, swamps and marshes emits much more greenhouse gases than farming on other surfaces (in Germany, farming on these surfaces emits 30% of emissions, although the area concerned is only 8% of the entire farmed area)³. A change in the land use of the member states concerned should be considered.
- Full life cycle-strategies with the aim of reducing the emissions of major agriculture products should be developed by the European Commission and implemented on all levels concerned.

³ Foodwatch (2008): Klimaretter Bio? Der foodwatch-Report über den Treibhauseffekt von konventioneller und ökologischer Landwirtschaft in Deutschland. See: http://www.foodwatch.de/foodwatch/content/e6380/e24459/e24474/foodwatch_report_on_the_greenhouse_effect_of_farming_05_2009_ger.pdf.

