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PRESS RELEASE

How can agriculture contribute to sustainable development

Speaking at the fourth European Motor Biofuels Forum on 24 November 2003, in Berlin, Germany, the President of COPA, Mr. Peter GAEMELKE, said that COPA believes that non-food production and the production of biofuels and other renewable energy products is an important part of the future multifunctional role of agriculture.

An important role that agriculture could play in the future is as a supplier of biomass from energy crops, industrial crops and by-products from food and feed production.

The environmental advantages of bioethanol and biodiesel are primarily the substitution of fossil fuels and hence the reduced emission of greenhouse gases and the reduction of the EU energy dependency on fossil fuels.

However, it is too restrictive only to focus on bioethanol and biodiesel and derivatives thereof as the possible contribution from agriculture. There are huge not utilised resources in manure and slurry from livestock and organic waste and residues from crops and residues of animal and plant origin from the food processing industry, said Mr. GAEMELKE. For example, when the manure is digested in biogas plants the quality as fertiliser is improved and the risk of leaking of nitrates is reduced explained GAEMELKE.

The President of COPA said that the decisions of the EU Council of Ministers on the promotion of electricity from renewable sources and on the use of biofuels in transportation together with the EU framework for the taxation of energy products and electricity are on the right track to boost the development of biofuels and green electricity.

However, Mr. GAEMELKE said that farmers cannot switch to non-food production unless they know that governments are committed to encourage the use of renewable raw materials which replace fossil oil and other traditional sources that may be cheaper but are far more damaging to the environment.

EU farmers are concerned about environmental threats and are willing to contribute to solutions that will ensure Europe's commitments to reduce CO₂ emissions, said Mr. GAEMELKE. Now the challenge is to realise this strategy towards renewable raw materials across the entire European Union. It is not enough to have indicative targets – we need a targeted action, concluded the President of COPA.

Note to editors:

COPA-COGECA's position paper on renewable raw materials is available on www.copa-cogeca.be, section position papers, title: biofuels.

An information brochure on "How can agriculture contribute to a better environment" is also available on: www.copa-cogeca.be.

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