



European news

Dworp, near Brussels: CEETTAR General Assembly

On 24 June, approx. thirty CEETTAR members met in the majestic setting of the Kasteel Gravenhof hotel, close to Brussels. Eleven countries were represented: Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Slovakia, Sweden, Netherlands and the United Kingdom. There was a noticeably large delegation from Ireland, which is not yet an official CEETTAR member, but in the process of becoming one.

After a few words of welcome from Annie Van Landuyt, co-president of Agroservice (Belgian contractor association) and president Gérard Napias, CEETTAR director Eric Drésin presented the June 2013-June 2014 activity report. "CEETTAR's main priority for the last few months has been to ensure that contractors are given greater consideration in the Common Agricultural Policy for 2014-2020," explained Eric Drésin. He also emphasised that CEETTAR's key objective is to reduce the distortion of competition between agricultural/forestry service contractors and farmers, particularly in terms of CAP subsidies for

investments in equipment.



During the last financial year, the CEETTAR secretariat has also worked actively to increase the role of forestry in its initiatives. "Forestry is a specialist sector, which suffers from the absence of a separate forestry policy in Brussels," underlined the director, who also mentioned that three working groups were recently created within CEETTAR. These

working groups met for the first time in early April, in order to focus on agricultural machinery, the sector's image and forestry. The aim of these working groups is to join forces, share skills within CEETTAR and reinforce the sharing of information between its members. This is also the aim of the improved version of the bulletin, which now includes a European information section. Another part of the bulletin focuses on what is happening with the member organisations and aims to further develop links them.



Increased representation

CEETTAR is continuously working to increase member numbers. Initiatives have enabled the organisation to include agricultural contractors from Luxembourg and Spain. More recently, strong relationships have been developed with the Irish and Finnish organisations. These organisations still have observer status, but will soon become CEETTAR members. At the same time, initial contact has been made with the Austrian and Swiss associations. Last but not least, since January 2014, CEETTAR has been in contact with the Turkish ministry of agriculture, which wishes to modernise agriculture in Turkey and, with this in mind, find out more about the agricultural contractor sector in Europe. "This request from Turkey strengthens our position with the DG Agri and shows that demand for our profession exists in other countries," remarked Gérard Napias.

This general assembly also provided an opportunity to place the closer relationship between CEETTAR and ENFE on an official footing. The European Network of Forestry Entrepreneurs (ENFE) was represented in Dworp by its president Simo

Jaakkola from Finland. Since March 2012, ENFE and CEETTAR have met and exchanged information even more frequently, by attending each other's general assemblies as observers. "It is only logical that our two organisations should decide to further develop links, in order to protect the interests of forestry contractors more effectively," explains Eric Drésin. "This closer relationship enables us to have a more effective and credible lobby," added Simo Jaakkola during this speech, which also highlighted the other advantages of the two organisations joining forces. These benefits include improved information sharing, increased coverage across Europe and providing a better service, with an improved cost/efficiency ratio for member organisations.

"Why not think of a common brand, in order to improve how we communicate at European level?" suggested Jan Maris from Dutch organisation Cumela. This will be an important project this year, after the vote is taken on the negotiating mandate for CEETTAR's board. "CEETTAR remains a place for discussion and information sharing, which enable us to develop other structures," concluded Gérard Napias.



Tim Hamers presented the priorities of CEMA.

The general assembly was also attended by UNEBO (Union Nationale des Entreprises du Bois) from Belgium and CEMA (European association of agricultural machinery manufacturers). CEETTAR held regular meetings with this organisation during 2013-2014, in order to inform the European institutions of its views on amendments to the agricultural machinery legislation.

European delegations welcomed by Annie Van Landuyt

The CEETAR delegates then travelled to the municipality of Braine le Château, near Dworp, where they were welcomed by Annie Van Landuyt at the premises of her agricultural services company.



CEETAR delegation in Annie Van Landuyt's company

The latter really is a model enterprise and immediately impresses visitors, with its sense of order and organisation, as soon as they set foot in its yard full of agricultural machinery sheds. "My father was already an agricultural contractor and I took over the business from my former father-in-law and husband in 1982," explained Annie by way of introduction. At the time, the company had two combine harvesters, two small baling presses and only one shed where the machines could be stored.

A second shed has now been built and Annie stands before an impressive fleet (including eight New Holland combines, four New Holland baling presses, two Ropa beet harvesters and two forage harvesters – one Claas and one Krone). These machines enable her to offer a wide range of services, including seeding (400 ha beets/400 ha maize), fertiliser application, mowing and silaging, harvesting (1100 ha winter barley/wheat, over 250 ha maize), manure spreading, beet harvesting (600 ha) and ploughing, as well as scrub clearing and snow removal services for the municipality during the winter. The company generates just over one million Euros in turnover. The team consists of four employees, in addition to Annie and her 24-year

old son Guillaume, who joined her in 2014, and six seasonal workers during peak periods.

Which types of work are the most profitable? "Beets, followed by silage and harvesting," answers Annie, before giving us an idea of her rates: 155 €/ha for harvesting, 195 €/ha for maize harvesting and 265 €/ha beet harvesting. Will her son's contribution enable the company to increase its turnover?

"We are going to develop in new areas, such as the Jumbo Combiline self-loading wagon, which has just been put into service," replies Annie. She also explained that her customers' land is highly fragmented, due to the company being located very close to Brussels. "We have seen our profitability fall steadily over the last few years," comments the co-president of Agroservice (Belgian agricultural contractor association), which now numbers approx. 750 members, two thirds of whom are from Flanders and one third is from Wallonia.



Annie Van Landuyt and her son Guillaume, a 24-year old talented contractor

European Parliament: the new members of COMAGRI

The Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (COMAGRI) consists of 45 members, against 44 in the previous term. It consists of thirteen EPP (against 17 previously), nine S&D (against 11), five conservatives and reformists of ECR (4), four liberals of ALDE (4), four members of the United Left or GUE (1), four greens (3), three members from European direct democracy & freedoms EFDD (2) and three without affiliation to any parliamentary group (2).

The two largest political groups of the Assembly, EPP and S&D, have no longer the majority of seats (22 out of 45) as it was the case in the COMAGRI during the previous legislature (28 out of 44).

If it seems certain that the chair of this committee will be awarded to Polish Czeslaw Adam Siekierski (EPP), the (mathematical) possibility that the first vice-president returns to a member of the highly Eurosceptic group EFDD, namely the Italian Giulia Moi, causes tensions. A vote that looks stormy, is already planned.



The members of the Committee on Agriculture are as follows:

– EPP

Daniel Buda (Romania); Michel Dantin (France); Albert Dess (Germany), who will be the coordinator of the political group for agriculture; Herbert Dorfmann (Italy); Norbert Erdos (Hungary); Esther Herranz Garcia (Spain); Peter Jahr (Germany); Jarosław Kalinowski (Poland); Elisabeth Köstinger (Austria); Mairead McGuinness (Ireland); Nuno Melo (Portugal); Majjana Petir (Croatia); Czesław Adam Siekierski (Poland).

– S&D

Clara Eugenia Aguilera Garcia (Spain); Éric Andrieu (France); Paul Brannen (United-Kingdom); Nicola Caputo (Italy); Vasilica Viorica Dancila (Romania); Paolo De Castro (Italy) who will be the coordinator of the political group for agriculture; Maria Noichl (Germany); Constantin-Laurentiu Rebeaga (Romania) ; Marc Tarabella (Belgium).

– ECR

Richard Ashworth (United-Kingdom); Beata Barbara Gosiewska (Poland) ; Zbigniew Krzysztof Kuzmiuk (Poland); James Nicholson (United-Kingdom); Janusz Wojciechowski (Poland).

– ALDE

Jan Huitema Jan (The Netherlands); Ulrike Müller (Germany); Marit Paulsen (Sweden) ; Jens Rohde (Denmark).

– GUE

Matt Carthy Matt (Ireland); Luke « Ming » Flanagan (Ireland); Antje Anna Helena Hazekamp (The Netherlands); Maria Lidia Senra Rodriguez (Spain).

– Greens

José Bové (France); Martin Häusling (Germany); Bronis ropé (Lithuania); Jordi Sebastià Talavera (Spain).

– EFDD

John Stuart Agnew (United-Kingdom); Giulia Moi (Italy); Marco Zullo (Italy).

– Not-affiliated

Diane Dodds (United-Kingdom, Democratic Unionist Party); Édouard Ferrand (France, Front National); Philippe Loiseau (France, Rassemblement bleu Marine).

Member organisations' activities

France

At the FNEDT Congress in Dunkirk: President Gérard Napias calls for greater visibility

The 82nd FNEDT Congress, which took place on 15-17 May in Dunkirk, provided an opportunity for president Gérard Napias to summarise the issues currently affecting agricultural and forestry contractors. "Greater visibility will make it easier for us to manage our businesses," said Mr Napias in his closing speech, referring to win-win partnerships between contractors and manufacturers.

Like the agricultural sector as a whole, the French organisation is waiting for a European debate to be initiated and followed up on the (at least partial) harmonisation of social and tax regulations within the European Union. "We could then increase our profile in the eyes of our customers, without being subject to the same government scrutiny, in terms of taxation and social affairs, as they are constantly challenging what we have only recently achieved," said the FNEDT president with regret. He also touched on several technical issues, such as training for young people and safety for employees who work with phytosanitary products. "The contractors have played the game and EDT has pulled out all the stops to assist them with certification," stated Mr Napias. He pointed out that 10,000 agricultural contractors have been accredited in just under two years, not to mention the training provided for 16,500 employees who apply phytosanitary products.

This 82nd congress has also been an opportunity to award ISO 14001 certification to 23 agricultural contractors. Of course, competition was one of the subjects discussed by the FNEDT president, as this organisation is facing "large-scale competitors, which provide services but fall far short of complying with the requirements that contractors have to meet".

President Napias also mentioned that companies feel discouraged when they look at the regulations and FNEDT is calling for "greater account to be taken of the seasonal factors, which affect agriculture, in the working time regulations." Finally, on the subject of the new CAP, Gérard Napias stressed that contractors do not see themselves as the active farmers mentioned in the new CAP. "I

believe that agricultural workers act as farmers, partners and ARCs, but we are not covered by the CAP," regretted Mr Napias. This will have to be followed up at the next congress in March 2015 in Bordeaux.

Saint-Omer: Making future MEPs aware of farm saved seed

On 7 May, European contractors from six countries met in Saint-Omer (Pas-de-Calais). They appealed to new MEPs, who will soon be travelling to Brussels, to take real steps to protect the right to use farm saved seed in the future.

"Farm saved seed is legal and the right to save seeds from harvested crops is recognised by European Regulation 2100 from 1994," stressed Nigel Day, president of EMSA (European Mobile Seed Association). This right currently enables over 50% of European farmers to produce their own cereal seed from their harvests, under economic conditions that are favourable for them. "Farm saved seed is therefore worth over €500 million to the European agricultural economy," emphasised the English spokesperson on behalf of European contractors from this sector.



Despite it being legal in the European Community, the participants pointed out that seed companies have already managed to have farm saved seed banned in some countries, such as Italy. Representatives from other countries, including Germany, described intimidating administrative measures, which aim to discourage farmers from using farm saved seed. In France, research has

focused systematically on hybrid seeds, which leads us to believe that the seed companies want to strangle the market. "The manufacturers want to take advantage of a clause in the current European regulation, which excludes hybrid varieties from the right that applies to farm saved seed," explained Sylvain Ducroquet, president of STAFF (French trade union of mobile seed processors) and founder member of EMSA.

C In this context of smouldering conflicts, the reform of the European regulation needs to be discussed after the European elections. European mobile seed processors want the excessively arbitrary restrictions

on farm saved seed to be lifted. They are pushing for the list of authorised species (21) to be expanded and, above all, for the ban on hybrid varieties to be abolished. Agricultural arguments are often put forward to justify this ban. "These arguments do not apply. Hybrid varieties can reproduce," confirmed Nigel Day..

"The farmers are sufficiently responsible to judge for themselves whether farm saved hybrid seeds lose some of their benefits. There is no need to ban farm saved seed for hybrid varieties, in order to protect the interests of farmers," stressed Sylvain Ducroquet.

United Kingdom: NAAC publishes its 2014/15 price guide

NAAC (National Association of Agricultural Contractors) informed us that its 2014/15 price guide is now available.

Published every year, this guide is aimed at contractors and their farmer customers. It lists rates for all services (ploughing, harvesting, etc.), which are based on the prices charged by NAAC members, but should only be used as a guideline.

In the introduction to its price tables, NAAC warns us that "in practice, prices vary considerably between different regions, soil types, travelling distances, equipment and individual contracts." The prices are based on red diesel costing 70 pence per litre (ppl), which has doubled in price within ten years. "The prices shown in our guide do not take into account any arrangements that can be made between contractors and farmers for diesel," explains NAAC in its press release.

The British association observed that, while some prices remain stable or are rising slightly, others are falling. "The contractors have steered clear of passing the increased red diesel prices on to their customers," says the NAAC, which believes that its members need to charge prices that allow them make a living, complete training and invest in efficient machinery.

Slovakia: the ZZTSPL association is looking for new members

Pavel Števíčik provided information from Slovakia, where the situation facing contractors is still worrying for two reasons. On the one hand, the country has powerful agricultural cooperatives with their own equipment, who therefore do not need services provided by contractors. On the other hand, some members of the Slovak ZZTSPL association, which currently has only four members, are about to retire. "I need to find new members very quickly," confirmed Pavel. His organisation is eager to remain a CEETTAR member and has signed an agreement with the ministry of agriculture and agricultural trade unions, in order to actively search for new members. One of the barriers to finding new members is that the contractors, who are often based close to towns, do not own any land, which is a requirement if they are to benefit from European subsidies.



Germany: BLU advocates greater cooperation between contractors

In an article entitled "Cooperation between contractors: transforming competitors into allies," the June edition of LU Aktuell, the magazine of German association BLU, encourages agricultural contractors to cooperate more closely. The article highlights in particular the German saying "Kumpanei ist Lumperei" ("familiarity breeds contempt"), which has hardly encouraged contractors to work together or jointly invest in machinery.

"There are various ways of working together," explains the article, which can start with sub-contracting during peak periods, particularly in the field of transport. The article goes on to say that "huge opportunities exist for ARCs to work together – from jointly investing in machinery to developing a range of shared services," before explaining that it is in contractors' interests to cooperate with each other and identify compromises. This cooperation also has advantages in human terms (personnel management). "A contractor cannot buy one third of a combine harvester or half a maize harvester," says the magazine ironically. It also includes other practical examples of what contractors need, in order to improve their profitability, by working together more closely.

Spain : ASEMFO launches the Agua Forestal II project

The Spanish association ASEMFO (Asociación Nacional de Empresas Forestales) recently launched its Agua Forestal II project, as part of the green jobs project introduced by the Biodiversity Foundation of the Spanish ministry of agriculture and forestry.

This project covers the period from 1 June 2014 - 31 January 2015 and includes initiatives funded by the European Social Fund. It aims to reclaim rainwater that falls on forestry land, which it considers a key production factor. It also aims to create a platform for professional water management services in forests, with the underlying objective of developing a specialist market for forestry services in this sector. The project will be launched in the Extremadura region, where over 65% of land consists of forest, and Castilla-La Mancha (over 44 % of which is forest). These two regions are characterised by their Mediterranean climate (with dry summers), which greatly limits the growth of trees, so that water is a

key factor from an environmental and economic point of view. The people affected by the Agua Forestal II project belong to primary economic sectors (forestry, animal husbandry, agriculture) and include all types of forestry and agricultural landowners. This project provides forest owners with opportunities to make long-term investments in initiatives and works aimed at improving the direct availability of water

The Netherlands: CUMELA at the TKD exhibition

CUMELA Nederland actively participated in the latest edition of the TKD (Technische Kontakt Dagen) by organising a stand and workshop for its members.



This year's event was held on a 10 ha site in Almere on 22 - 24 May. TKD is an exhibition where public works equipment is demonstrated (cranes, bulldozers, articulated dump trucks, etc.) from different brands. CUMELA Nederland, whose members buy over 70% of this type of equipment, is one of the organisers. It is estimated that there are 3,000 "Cumela companies" – including earthworks, landscaping and motorway maintenance companies/contractors – which represent over 30,000 machine/tractors drivers and powerline workers. TKD is recognised by the professionals and welcomed over 20,000 visitors this year.

CUMELA Nederland took advantage of this opportunity to launch its IJzersterk naar morgen campaign (Strong into the Future), which aims to reduce the diesel consumption of machine drivers, by means of a guided training vehicle that records each participant's diesel consumption. At the TKD, over thirty Cumela companies signed up for this programme, which is scheduled to begin next August.





Agenda

3-4 July: Brussels. Meeting of the Reference Group Agriculture, aquaculture, forest of ESCO project.

7 July: Brussels. European Parliament : Constituent meetings of the committees.

9 July: Brussels. Meeting-introduction to European Biomass Association.

14 July: Brussels. Meeting with ENFE, preparatory talks for the merger of both associations.

14 July: Luxembourg. Council of the Ministers of Agriculture.

14-17 July: European Parliament: Inaugural plenary session

3-4 September: Hambourg. Meeting of CEETTAR Board.



Rue de l'hôpital/Gasthuisstraat 31 b2 – 1000 Brussels

Tel.: +32 (0)2 274 22 06

Fax: +32 (0)2 400 71 26

e-mail: ceettar@ceettar.eu

website: www.ceettar.eu

EC Register: 15086733813-03

Confédération Européenne des Entrepreneurs de Travaux Techniques Agricoles, Ruraux et Forestiers

European Organisation of Agricultural and Rural Contractors

Europäischer Zentralverband der Lohnunternehmer