

Telephone and on-line conference
**Promoting & Labelling a socio-economically &
environmentally sustainable agriculture**

Monday, 27th April 2009

Agenda of the conference

- General introduction of the conference and of the speakers (Marilena Di Stasi, Vice-President, European Citizens' Seminars association - Moderator)
- Summary of the Proposals on labelling a sustainable agriculture made by the participants to the Seminar (Laurent Zibell, President, European Citizens' Seminars association)
- Intervention by the speakers: Efficiency and perspectives of implementation of sustainability labelling of European agriculture (Jan Mulder – MEP; Michael Mann, Spokesman of the European Commission, Agriculture & Rural Development)
- Questions & Answers with the on-line audience
- Closing remarks and conclusions (Marilena Di Stasi)

The full text of the Public Policy Proposals being discussed during the conference may be downloaded for free at

http://www.citizenseminars.eu/Downloads/ECS_SustainableAgri_2009-03.pdf

with an Executive Summary available at

http://www.citizenseminars.eu/ExecSum/SustainableAgri_2009-03.html.

The speakers



Jan Mulder¹ has been a Member of the European Parliament (MEP) for the Dutch liberal party "VVD" since 1994 and is a member of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) in Parliament. He was vice-chairman of the Parliament Budget Committee and spokesman for ALDE on the Budget Control Committee. Furthermore he is Parliament rapporteur for the 2004 EU budget and a substitute member of the

Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development and the Committee on Fisheries.

He was born on 3rd October 1943 in Diever, in the province of Drenthe, the Netherlands, where he still lives. Jan Mulder graduated as an agricultural engineer from Wageningen University and has subsequently worked as an agricultural specialist in developing countries for the FAO, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the European Commission. He lived in Kenya from 1970 to 1975.

¹ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/members/expert/alphaOrder/view.do?id=1965&language=EN>

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'Europe for Citizens' Programme

<http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship>



<http://www.fph.ch>

Jan Mulder has a long-standing interest for issues of Quality of agriculture products. He has been the President of the Land Use and Food Policy Intergroup in the European Parliament (LUFPIG)², an informal internal think-tank of the European Parliament on agriculture issues. He has recently organised a conference on "Food Quality Certification – Adding Value to Farm Produce" in February 2007³ that opened the way for the Green Paper of October 2008.



Michael Mann is Spokesperson of the European Commission for Agriculture and Rural Development since November 2004. He is of British nationality.

Michael Mann was born on 2nd November 1966 in Farnborough, Kent, United Kingdom. He received his MA (Honours) in German and Politics from Edinburgh University in June 1990.

He started his professional life as a freelance writer and teacher in Berlin (1990 - 91). He then worked for the professional journal *Agra Europe*, focused on European agriculture affairs, both in the UK and in Brussels (1991 - 95). He was then successively correspondent in Brussels for *European Voice* (1995 - 97), *Bloomberg News* (1997 - 99), *Reuters* (1999 - 2000) and the *Financial Times* (2001 - 2002).

Michael Mann then started working for the European Commission, first as Spokesperson for Administrative Reform (Neil Kinnock), and for Forward Planning and Enterprise and Information Society (Olli Rehn) (2002 -2004).

Interventions by the speakers

Jan Mulder is fascinated by the subject of food quality and labelling in Europe. For him, it is to be related to the general trend towards liberalisation, at a time when the European Union has an agricultural policy that stresses animal welfare, environmental protection, birdlife habitat, and that enforces these requirements through cross-compliance mechanisms. These policies entail a cost, that places European farmers at a competitive disadvantage on world markets. The World Trading Organisation, on the other hand, only allows restrictions to food imports if the country may prove that they are dangerous for human health. This is why Jan Mulder advocates the creation of an European food quality label, stating that it was obtained following the stringent rules of European agriculture.

Michael Mann expressed a positive opinion of the Erfurt meeting organised by the European Citizens' Seminars association. He believes it to have been done at the right timing, just before the release of the Commission's Communication on Food Quality, planned in late May 2009. This Communication follows the Green Paper of October 2008 that drew a record number of 560 contributions, which illustrates how complex the issue is. The CIAA (Confederation of the European Food and Drink Industries) and Copa-Cogeca (Committee of Professional Agricultural Organisations - General Committee for Agricultural Cooperation in the European Union) have recently started organising a "European Food Sustainable Consumption and Production roundtable" that addresses these same issues of sustainability in the food production and processing chain.

² <http://www.lufpig.eu>

³ http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/events/qualityconference/index_en.htm

The European Commission has a strategy that is clearly focused on sustainability issues:

- The CAP (Common Agriculture Policy) reform of 2003, sets up the cross-compliance system, in which farmers only receive payments if they comply with the sustainability rules
- a new, unified logo for organic farming is being set up, and will be mandatory as of July 2009.

The reactions to Green Paper on Food Quality clearly set the goal of improving the exchange of information between farmers and consumers. In that perspective, improving the coherence of labelling is a requirement. Specifically, there is a flurry of private "low-carbon" schemes, that would need an objective indication of CO₂ emissions. The main conclusions that may be drawn at this stage from the Green Paper are the following:

- there is a need to simplify marketing standards, without deregulating
- the location where the farming of the product took place needs to be better specified
- the organic market needs strengthening
- some guidelines for private labels are necessary.

As a general observation, we should acknowledge that the European consumer is discerning: there is a market for informed consumption of food, and people are interested in how their food is produced. The main issue is the plethora of systems.

We may also observe that the European Union has very strict procedures for the agreement of genetically-modified organisms.

The issue of non-tariff restriction to trade in the World Trade Organisation is very much in the background of the current negotiations. One of the objectives of the EU in these negotiations is to have the WTO endorse officially the Geographic Indications of Origin: this is a very important issue, a "red line".

Discussion with the on-line audience

For **Frank van Oorschot** (Southern Organisation for Agriculture and Horticulture – the Netherlands), having a compulsory indication of geographic origin would be too costly. Michael Mann argued that the purpose of the upcoming Communication is not over-regulation, but rather simplification.

For **Luigi Tozzi** (Confagricoltura, Italy), it may be difficult to justify labelling about animal welfare, specifically if one compares the situation of cattle in the vast Argentine pampa with that in Europe. For Michael Mann, this would rather be an issue of the DG Sanco (Health & Consumers). However, the main point is to tell the consumer something that is meaningful to him/her. For Jan Mulder, one needs to consider objective criteria along the whole production system, at all stages of the animal's life.

For **Lawrence King** (Bayer Cropscience, France), there are always differences in the implementation of European Directives between Member States meaning we do not have a level playing field. Specifically for pesticides, we see this today in the availability of new products for farmers (already much slower in some countries and getting much slower through EFSA). This causes difficulties in supply of new and better pesticides which are much needed since the overall number of available pesticides has been reduced through the registration review programme from about 1000 to about 300.

With the Framework Directive for the Sustainable Use of Pesticides, differences in restrictions between Member States will add to this and with the new regulation for registration we will have 3 different zones to contend with in Europe. How will this lack of harmonisation fit with a unified 'European Labelling' approach for agricultural production?

For **Richard Perkins** (WWF, United Kingdom), there is an issue of measurability beyond the baseline requirement that are expressed in the cross-compliance mechanism. Would this performance beyond the baseline then be an occasion for labelling? Jan Mulder underscored the need to simplify measurement. Michael Mann agreed in the consideration that measurement is essential. The Commission's objective is to move away from historical payment levels, and to increase the proportion of payments dependent on the compliance with regulatory criteria.

Frank van Oorschot asked if there would be a possibility to re-use the results of one audit to fulfil the requirements of another control body, and insisted on the need to limit regulation. For him, quality requirements, even if they are not explicitly mandatory, become a necessary condition to enter some market segments, and therefore *de facto* compulsory.

Michael Mann concluded by stating that innovation will be a strong component of the review of the CAP, and that quality is necessary to survive in world competition, specifically against Brazil on bulk production. He opened the floor for further proposals, following the publication of the Communication by the Commission in late May 2009.

Download of the full audio recording of the conference

The full audio recording of the conference is available on-line under the following URL:
http://www.citizenseminars.eu/Downloads/Conf_SustainableAgri_2009-04-27.mp3

The registered participants

The participants registered to the on-line conference were the following.

Family name	Given name	Organisation	Position
Calame	Matthieu	Fondation Charles Léopold Mayer - FPH	Programme Manager
Cordonnier	Vincent	European Commission, DG AGRI, Unit H2	Policy Officer
Eymontt	Andrzej	IBMER	Adjunct professor
Farquhar	Sarah	Europe Analytica	Account Manager
Gulliver	Hazel	Scotch Whisky Association	European Affairs Manager
Guttenstein	Elizabeth	ISEAL Alliance	
Jacobs	Nicholas	Agra Europe	Brussels correspondent
Jenkins	Charles	Economist Intelligence Unit	
King	Lawrence	Bayer CropScience	Agri-Environmental Affairs Manager
Maris	Johan	Control Union Certifications	Managing Director
Milar	Tomas	IFOAM EU Group	
Perkins	Richard	WWF - UK	Senior Policy Adviser Agricultural Supply Chains
Pesce	Francesca		
Peter	Roman		
Schmid	Otto	fiBL	Senior Researcher
Sengul	Nihat	Sustainable Living Community	Member
Tozzi	Luigi	Confagricoltura	Food Safety and Quality Officer
van Oorschot	Frank	Southern Organisation for Agriculture and Horticulture	International Affairs