



**Brussels, 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2017**

**Jean Arthuis MEP, hosted the MEP Horse Group on future agricultural policy in the European Parliament.**

At this beginning of consultation for the future Common Agricultural Policy, CAP, the objective of the meeting was to show the place of the horse in agriculture and its numerous benefits. The activities linked to the horse correspond perfectly to the criteria of the CAP such as expressed in the previous reform and could bring much more after 2020.

In support of that, coherent financial tools and tax system are necessary to support this sector which presents benefits for the rural employment and the European environment. Jean Arthuis reminded that last October, during a Conference that he had initiated with the European Horse Network, had been raised multiple weaknesses in the European policies as regards equines. The horse has no specific status, and according to its affectation, it is protected and taxed in various ways. "It is extremely problematic for the future of this sector and for the maintenance or the disappearance of the horse from our territories. Nevertheless 7 million Equidae, it is 400 000 jobs in Europe, on more than 6 million hectares of pastures without pesticides" concluded Jean Arthuis.

The first debates on the CAP after 2020, are a new opportunity to highlight the position of the animal in agriculture. Agricultural financial support, in numerous countries are nevertheless forgotten as reminded by James Murphy, President of the Horse Working Party in the COPA. The horse meets the criteria for a green CAP, farming is not an intensive activity, land and landscapes are protected, maintained and James Murphy, added that "the implementation of agricultural rules should be done consistently, the farmers should be rewarded for their efforts in low environment impact activities". Equines must remain an agricultural product and be supported by Pilar 1 of the CAP as well as benefit from the many opportunities on social and environmental values of Pilar 2.

All horses should have a value.

Pit Schlechter, Chairman of the Draught Horses Federation, presented the strengths of the use of the working horse in the fields of agriculture, forests, rural development, environment but also identified the image problem of such animal. Working horses could directly and indirectly contribute to solutions concerning the harmful effects of climate change: "We should have the courage to overcome prejudice and to seriously consider the use of working horses as an option and as a field where imagination and innovation could bring sustainable solutions to specific challenges."

Luis Carazo-Jimenez, Head of Unit Animal Production of DG AGRI in the European Commission reaffirmed the eligibility of the sector in the CAP and the rural development programme. In the consultation on the future common agricultural policy, the EU Commission has received more than 100 000 contributions.

Will Lambe, Director of Public Affairs at the British Horseracing Authority, showed the many advantages of the return from betting in France and the newly implemented UK Betting levy for a sustainable future of the industry. On 21<sup>st</sup> April, the European Commission has endorsed the reform of the existing UK Horserace Betting Levy scheme as in line with EU state aid rules. Like for the French Parafiscal Tax in 2013, the Commission has approved the measure recognising that it is “essential for the improvement of horse breeding and horseracing without giving rise to undue distortions of competition”, a model to spread.

Constance Popineau, Director of French Thoroughbred Breeders, asked for more flexibility for the reduced VAT rate and a "generous" extension of Annex 3 of the VAT Directive 2006/112, in the new proposal that should be adopted in September. A fair, simple and consistent VAT rate also means recognition of the equine status. Convergence is essential to strengthen the link with agriculture and sport.

### **European Horse Network members ask for:**

- **Regard the Horse as an agriculture animal with a high environmental and social value**
- **Adopt a coherent fiscal and social system to promote the development of the horse industry in Europe**

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More information about EHN: [www.europeanhorsenetwork.eu](http://www.europeanhorsenetwork.eu)

European Horse Network members:

*European and International Associations linked to horses (Breeders, Sport, betting, research)*

CBC - Belgian horse Confederation EFTBA - European Federation of Thoroughbred Breeders Associations, FEI - International Equestrian Federation, EEF - European Equestrian Federation, EPMA - European Pari Mutuel Association, Hippolia - Pole Filiere Equine (Normandy), FEIF - Icelandic Horses, WBFSh - World federation of Sport horses Breeders, HNS - Swedish Horse Industry Foundation, EMHF - European, Mediterranean Federation of Horseracing Authorities, UET - European Trotting Union, WHW - World Horse Welfare, FECTU - European Draught Horse Federation, FNRS - Equestrian Centres in Netherlands , GESCA - French equine professionals, ETF - European Trainers Federation, FITE – Equestrian Tourism, BETA - British Equestrian Trade Association, EEN - Equestrian Educational Network, ESSA- European State Studs Association, FEEVA - Federation of European Equine Veterinary, IFCE - French Institute for equestrian sport, Hippolis - The National Equine Competence Association of Finland.

The European Horse Network has collected the numbers from different studies to give an estimate of the horse industry in Europe:

- 100 billion by the economic impact
- 400 000 full-time equivalent jobs provided by the sector
- 7 million horses in Europe
- 6 million hectares of permanent pastures devoted to pasture

EHN Office: Square de Meeus, 40 - B-1000 BRUSSELS