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**Title:** Reshaping farmers' role in climate action: promoting sustainable farming through soil carbon sequestration

**Questions to the ministers:** Does the post-2020 CAP proposal provide a suitable framework to improve soil carbon sequestration in your Member State? Are there any best practices supporting soil carbon sequestration which you would like to share?



## Introduction:

Minister Leppä, Ministers, Commissioner Hogan, ladies and gentlemen, good morning to you all. I wish to thank the Finnish Presidency and Minister Leppä in particular, for giving me the chance to be here today. It's an honour to address this Council.

I wish also to extend a special thanks to Commissioner Hogan whose tenure as Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development is coming to an end. He has worked tirelessly to further the cause of Europe's young farmers and we are truly grateful for this.

I myself am a 27-year-old dairy farmer from Belgium. I'm also the President of CEJA, the European Council of Young Farmers, which is the umbrella body for young farmers' organisations in Europe.

## Main messages:

Climate change is a **fundamental issue** for farmers. Indeed, in November CEJA will co-host a **Climakers alliance regional workshop** to prepare key messages from the farming sector on climate change for COP25.

As young farmers our activities depend on healthy ecosystems and predictable weather patterns. Farmers will often be the first people to state the importance of efficient water management and vibrant biodiversity to ensure sustainable agricultural activities.



We are not passive in this process and have an **instrumental role** to play in climate action. We can make changes as individuals, as well as at the national or global level.

The agricultural sector is unique in that it both emits and captures carbon. Indeed, as the theme of this conference shows, soil carbon capture is a key measure that should be better explored.

That said, farmers face challenges on many fronts. If a farmer is to invest in their soils, they must have **access to land** in the long-term. Easily available tools related to insurance, flood protection and water management must be established to mitigate risk.

The low profitability of agriculture can also slow down climate-change-related investments in the sector. New **incentives** should be put in place to ensure that food is produced in the most sustainable way.

Bridging **knowledge gaps** is key to combatting climate change. Ensuring farmers, governments, academics and other stakeholders **work together** and share results and best practices will streamline climate action and multi-level, cross-sectorial mitigation.

A **scaled-up policy effort** is needed if international climate targets are to be achieved.

An enabling framework should encourage innovation, private investments and ensure social cohesion. Concretely, farmers can, and already are, making efforts to mitigate climate change. **Research** has allowed livestock farmers, for example, to map methane emissions and ultimately lower them. Farmers also have an increasingly important role to



play in **carbon sequestration**. This is achieved through “no till” farming and good forest management if they own trees. Farmers must **adapt to a climate that is already changing**. They can do this through more efficient water management, for example, as well as the development of technological and bio-technological innovations.

This said, it is also important to take the **differences between Europe’s regions** into consideration and develop environmental policies to reflect and protect these. Success will depend on management practices, land use history and other factors. Rural areas will also need to maintain a **sufficiently skilled workforce** to meet changing demands in the agriculture and forestry sectors.

While young farmers are keen to safeguard the environment through farming practices, **measures must be practical to implement** on the ground. This, along with civil society’s recognition of the **public goods** farmers provide to communities, **investment support** and **coherence** between measures, are fundamental incentives for engagement in climate action.

### **Conclusion:**

Farmers are **key stakeholders** in mitigating climate change and particularly in soil carbon capture. I speak for myself and Europe’s young farmers when I say that we are willing to take up this challenge.



However, we need **additional support** to be empowered to do so. We understand how important it is to farm in harmony with nature rather than against it because we are on the front line when a harvest is destroyed.

We must also bear in mind that while agriculture offers solutions, it is only one piece in the puzzle. If we are to truly combat climate change, production and consumption must **evolve**, and action needs to be taken at the **global level** and across all sectors.

Thank you.