

New CER pamphlet

THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN AGRICULTURE

By Julie Wolf

The need to reform European farm policies has never been clearer. Although the Brussels European Council in October put a ceiling on farm spending, the Commission's 'mid-term review' of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) will continue, and there is a real chance to change the policy's priorities over the next few years.

In a new CER pamphlet, Julie Wolf argues that the CAP is failing Europe's citizens and many of its farmers. It also blocks off markets for developing countries and risks undermining enlargement. For change to succeed, the EU and its member-states must pursue a more comprehensive approach to agriculture than in the past. A thorough revamp of the CAP should be accompanied by other policies designed to deliver the kind of food and countryside sought by Europeans.

CAP reform should break the link between subsidies and production, once and for all. Policy-makers at EU and national levels should focus more on improving food safety and the quality of the environment, and less on managing markets. Rural areas need investment in telecoms, education and transport as much as farm subsidies.

Julie Wolf makes the case for building a wide constituency for change. This is the way to counter vested interests that are defending a system in which the bulk of subsidies go to a minority of farmers. It will also help prevent the kind of back-room deals that can lead to botched reforms.

The pamphlet also recommends that:

- ★ The EU should revamp and scale back direct payments to farmers. They should no longer be tied to past price supports.
- ★ Remaining subsidies should be better targeted at rural development and helping poorer farmers.
- ★ Changes to the CAP should be designed to help integrate the applicant countries into the EU.
- ★ The EU should reduce protection of its own market to provide greater trading opportunities for developing countries.

Notes for editors:

1. 'The future of European agriculture' is published on 6 November 2002, and will be launched at a CER-FPC seminar with speakers including the Rt Hon Margaret Beckett MP and Lord Haskins.

2. Julie Wolf is a writer on international trade and economics. She was formerly a journalist with the Wall Street Journal Europe and the Guardian. For further information, please contact heather@cer.org.uk. For a copy of the pamphlet, please contact kate@cer.org.uk.