The webinar "How to achieve carbon neutrality in agriculture and forestry? – The first national climate road maps from Finland"

On Friday, November 20, MTK organized a webinar on climate road maps, which present concrete actions that will lead to climate neutrality for agriculture and forestry. The event attracted around 50 participants.

Hanna Leiponen-Syyrakki, director of MTK's Brussels office, acted as moderator. Leiponen-Syyrakki opened the webinar by telling, that the Finnish climate road maps are the first its kind in Europe. The agriculture map was created by the Finnish farmers and forest owners' organisations MTK and SLC in collaboration with Natural Resources Institute Finland LUKE. She also told that the forestry road map work was led by the Finnish Forest Industries Federation.

In **MEP Elsi Katainen**'s (Renew Europe and i.a. Vice-Chair of AGRI committee), opening words she said that we need to keep food production in the heart of CAP and therefore flexibility in CAP is needed. Katainen pointed out that "the carrot is better than the stick". Voluntary schemes encourage farmers to act and we will not achieve enough by forcing them. She also highlighted that the agricultural and forestry sectors are the only two sectors that contribute to carbon dioxide. Finally, Katainen stated that Finland, which plans to achieve carbon neutrality by 2035, has the most ambitious climate targets in Europe and that it is possible to achieve these targets with these agricultural and forestry roadmaps.

Liisa Pietola, head of environmental affairs at MTK, told about the road map to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the Finnish agriculture. Pietola noted that the road map shows that MTK and SLC are committed to the Paris Agreement and the governmental goals. She emphasized that Natural Resources Institute Finland LUKE ensures that the road map is scientifically sound and reliable. Pietola stated that climate issues are solved where their impact is the highest, which in the agriculture sector in Finland is soils, which covers 75 percent of emissions. The potential of especially peat soil is high due to the current knowledge that approx. half of agricultural emissions come from peat soil. Pietola noted that emissions from agriculture can be reduced by minus 42 percent by 2035 and by minus 77 percent by 2050 without downscaling of production. More data on emission factors affected by cultivation method are needed. Finally, Pietola stated that the next step is to calculate carbon-cycles on a farm.

Heikki Lehtonen, research professor at Natural Resources Institute Finland LUKE (operating under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry), told about the scientific basis of the road map. Lehtonen pointed out that we cannot avoid emissions altogether. 11 percent of Finland's land is peat land, but it still emits about half of the emissions. Even if peatlands were to be abandoned, emissions would continue. Peatlands are needed in livestock farming in areas with high peatland percentage. However, there is a chance to change the use of peatlands that are not absolutely needed. Nevertheless, the current CAP does not encourage this. If peatlands may not be used, the farmers must be compensated for this. Lehtonen also reminded that food diets will not change land use if they are not specifically aimed for this.

Karoliina Niemi, forest director at Finnish Forest Industries, told about the forest sector as a solution to the EU Green Deal targets. Niemi began by saying that 20 percent of value of goods export come from forest sector in Finland, thereby emphasizing the importance of the forest sector for the Finnish economy. She said that the road map focuses, in addition to emissions reduction, on products made from wood and how to increase the growth of forests. In her presentation, Niemi therefore emphasized

both that wood based products are an essential part of the transition to green economy and that it is essential to maintain the health and growth of the forests with active forest management by turning the forests from carbon sinks to carbon storage.

Christian Holzleitner, Head of Unit for Land Use and Finance for Innovation, Directorate-General for Climate Action, European Commission, and **Lennart Nilsson**, LRF board member and farmer himself, told about the role of agriculture and forestry in the climate work.

Holzleitner stated that we still need carbon dioxide in the industrial and energy sectors, which is why we must increase the capacity of forests to act as a storage of carbon dioxide. He also said that agricultural emissions come mostly from livestock, which is why we need more intake of carbon dioxide in land to balance it out. Holzleitner stated that they are considering extending the EU Emissions Trading System and moving from the Effort sharing scheme to a more EU-level sectoral approach. Holzleitner highlighted the need for short-term incentives to break the trend where the sink is currently decreasing. He also stated that there is a need for better incentives for farmers how they can better use their peatlands in the future.

Nilsson (who is from Sweden) said that Sweden strives to become climate neutral by 2045. Nilsson pointed out that the road maps show possibilities, but also what we need from society, for example incentives for investments. Nilsson said that as a farmer he is eager to try new technology, but that his daily decisions are always based on the three pillars: economic, social and environmental. Regarding carbon farming, Nilsson also pointed out that it is good if farmers are paid to store carbon, but one must also take into account what happens if the stored carbon is lost due to fire, flood or so on. Finally, Nilsson stated that EU policy must recognize the role of the Member States in the process towards a climate-neutral EU.

Last, but not least, **Juha Marttila**, president of MTK, concluded that in agriculture and forestry we need to concentrate on long-term policy measures and analysis. He justified this by, among other things, telling that it takes approx. 100 years from when to plant a tree to when you can use the raw material for wood construction. Regarding the forest sector, the key conclusion is that active forest management is required, since only growing forest will tie more carbon. Marttila pointed out that the cheapest way to climate neutrality is to invest in forest growth and productivity, while the most expensive way is to cut forest harvest and the use of wood. Marttila called for more market-oriented solutions and mechanisms as well as research and development, especially regarding soil productivity in climate smart agriculture. In trade policy he emphasized the importance of the EU leadership in non-trade policy concerns in order to maintain our competitiveness and productivity in agriculture.

The summary is written by Elin Sundblad, trainee at MTK's Brussels office.