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EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
THE CHAIR

RESTRICTED ACCESS

CONFIDENTIAL

Mr Jerzy BUZEK
President
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Dear Mr Buzek,

In accordance with Rule 106 of the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament, the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development held a public hearing on Friday, 15 January 2010 with Commissioner-designate Mr Dacian Cioloş, who, subject to a positive outcome to the nomination procedure, will be responsible for agriculture and rural development.

Prior to the hearing, Parliament sent a series of written questions to the Commissioner-designate. The committee noted that Mr Cioloş answered these questions and dealt with the priorities outlined (CAP post-2013, ways of funding the CAP, the Lisbon Treaty and Parliament's legislative role) satisfactorily.

The hearing started with a statement by Mr Cioloş in which he referred to the following:

- the goals of the CAP, which he said should first and foremost ensure food security and provide farmers with a decent income, while adapting to the EU's internal challenges and diversity and to international developments;
- the principal priority of his mandate, namely CAP reform post-2013 with a budget commensurate with the EU's objectives and ambitions, in particular: maintaining direct payments to ensure that farmers' income remains stable, but also reviewing the criteria for such payments; new regulatory mechanisms to correct market failings; and a rural development policy that works to modernise farms and help agriculture adapt to the new climate challenges.

Members then asked questions on the following subjects in particular:

- CAP reform post-2013, including the budget: Mr Cioloş said he would argue strongly within the College and the Council for the CAP to be 'well-funded' so that he could build a CAP capable of tackling future challenges;
- the place of rural development: Mr Cioloş said that, although closer cooperation with the cohesion policy was needed, he was in favour of this policy remaining within the CAP;
- criteria for distribution of aid: Mr Cioloş considers that the traditional criteria are out of date and wants to see the balance between the regions and between small and large farms redressed;

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PE 432.449/CPG

- the volatility of the agricultural markets, the recent milk crisis and the problems farmers face in obtaining a decent price for their products: Mr Cioloş is very much in favour of milk quotas being replaced by mechanisms better suited to tackling the problem of fluctuating demand. He also said he was ready to negotiate with DG Competition to obtain exceptions to the current rules for agriculture;
- WTO negotiations: Mr Cioloş felt that the EU had already made significant concessions (notably as regards opening up markets where the EU had gone, in his opinion, as far as it could) and must now wait for its partners' proposals;
- the health, environment and animal welfare standards confronting European farmers: Mr Cioloş said he would get involved in international negotiations to see these standards recognised. For him, quality is a peculiarly European strength that should be preserved;
- moving the CAP towards more sustainable agriculture: Mr Cioloş feels that better use should be made of the rural development instruments to encourage innovation and, through this, sustainable agriculture;
- the specificity of certain farming situations (mountain farms, farms in outermost regions): here, Mr Cioloş would use options under the second pillar to enable these farms to develop their potential locally and improve their competitiveness;
- implementation of the Lisbon Treaty and application of Article 43(3) in particular: Mr Cioloş intends to interpret this article narrowly to prevent its use rendering the codecision principle – of which he declares himself a firm supporter – meaningless.

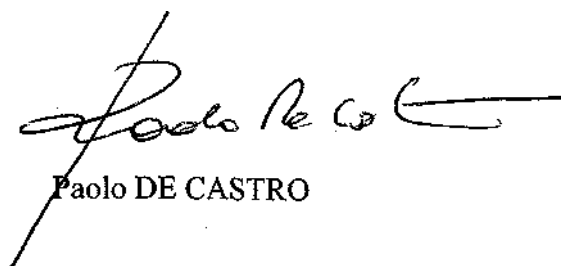
On the basis of the responses from the Members present at the hearing and the comments made by the committee's coordinators, who met with me after the hearing, I would like to give the following assessment:

- Mr Cioloş has the professional qualifications required to become a Commissioner. His many years of experience in agriculture and his responsibilities in the offices he held previously in the Romanian Government and in other public services in this field mean that he is particularly well qualified for the post of Commissioner for Agriculture.
- Mr Cioloş has demonstrated his commitment to Europe and has undertaken to respect the principles of impartiality and a quest for the common good required of a Commissioner.
- Mr Cioloş has committed himself to permanent dialogue, transparency and direct communication with the members of the AGRI Committee and other parliamentary committees.

The general outcome of this hearing is that the Commissioner-designate has given a very convincing impression of his aptitude to be a member of the College of Commissioners and to carry out the specific tasks assigned to him.

This was the opinion of all the Groups in the AGRI Committee after the hearing.

Yours sincerely,



Paolo DE CASTRO