



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF CO-OPERATIVE BANKS

Press Release

CDP(12)4312:1

In wake of Rio talks, Copa-Cogeca and EACB highlight the importance of the “Green growth” at the heart of sustainable development

In the last round of negotiations at the 3rd Preparatory Committee Meeting of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Copa-Cogeca (European farmers and European agri-cooperatives) and EACB (the European Association of Cooperative Banks), highlight crucial elements for the Rio+20 Conference.

Supporting the Rio+20 Summit in June 2012, Copa-Cogeca believes green growth is central to improved sustainable development. Copa-Cogeca Secretary-General Pekka Pesonen said “In the EU-27, nearly 28 million people are employed on farms, with over 40 million working in the EU agri-food chain as a whole. Besides generating jobs in rural areas and green jobs, European agriculture and forest management ensures an attractive countryside and a diverse landscape for rural inhabitants, visitors and tourists”.

The General Manager of the European Association of Cooperative Banks, Mr Hervé Guider, declared: “With more than 4,000 operating locally banks and 65,000 outlets in Europe, co-operative banks are traditional partners of farmers and agri-cooperatives. Deeply rooted in local communities, co-operative banks are key financial players of the real economy. Moreover as socially responsible banks, they support a more sustainable and green growth and the protection of the environment”.

“In the wake of growing world food demand and limited resources, our organisations consequently believe that the only way forward is green growth: It is of vital importance to ensure adequate investments in sustainable agriculture. The objective of green growth is to develop food productive capacity, while at the same time also improving resource efficiency and without raising farmers costs” highlighted both responsible. They went on to emphasise that agri-co-operatives and co-operative banks, share the same long term growth objectives to promote sustainable investments in agriculture. The call for green growth to be the driving force behind sustainable and multifunctional European agriculture and forestry is mutually shared. “We believe that green growth is also the way for countries around the world to achieve greater food security, alleviate poverty and improve the urban/rural balance”, they stated. “I do not believe that the Commission proposals on greening of the CAP will achieve these aims”, Mr Pesonen added.

Mr Pesonen and Mr Guider continued “*The importance of agri-co-operatives in the context of the Rio +20 Conference in this UN International Year of Co-operatives by the UN needs to be highlighted* We consider them one of the key tools for boosting sustainable and integrated development, through common projects for green growth in the environmental, economic and social spheres, with particular focus on rural communities.”

Copa-Cogeca and EACB believe that the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Brazil in June 2012 is a milestone towards a global sustainable society as it will boost green growth.

EACB Contact:

General Manager: Herve GUIDER (Tel : +32 2 286 98 40),

h.guider@eurocoopbanks.coop

Head of Communications & Research: Elisa BEVILACQUA (Tel +32 2 286 98 42),

e.bevilacqua@eurocoopbanks.coop

About the EACB:

The European Association of Co-operative Banks (EACB) has been the voice of co-operative banks since 1970. It represents, promotes and defends the common interests of its 28 member institutions and of co-operative banks in general. Co-operative banks form decentralized networks which are subject to banking as well as co-operative legislation. With 4,000 locally operating banks and 65,000 outlets, co-operative banks play a major role in the financial and economic system. They serve more than 181 million customers, mainly consumers, SMEs and communities. Europe's cooperative banks represent 50 million members and 777,500 employees and have an average market share of about 20%. Their resilience during the crisis make co-operative banks a key driving force in the economic recovery. www.eacb.eu

Copa-Cogeca contact:

Press Officer: Amanda Cheesley (Tel. +32474840836), Amanda.Cheesley@Copa-Cogeca.eu

Senior Policy Advisor: Antonia Andugar (Tel.+32 2 287 2739); Antonia.andugar@copa-cogeca.eu

About Copa-Cogeca is the united voice of farmers and agri-cooperatives in the EU. Together, they ensure that EU agriculture is sustainable, innovative and competitive, guaranteeing food security to half a billion people throughout Europe. Copa represents over 13 million farmers and their families whilst Cogeca represents the interests of 38,000 agricultural cooperatives. They have 72 member organisations from the EU member states. www.copa-cogeca.eu