

Ladies and gentlemen, as European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, it's my pleasure to contribute to this webinar. As you know, agricultural production and agri-food markets in the European Union are governed by the Common Agricultural Policy. What is perhaps less known is how far the CAP has traveled in the direction of competitiveness and market orientation in recent years.

I am a firm believer in markets, and their central role in creating exports, jobs and profits for our European farmers, and our European agri-businesses.

We have taken strong steps in recent years to provide better support to our market-oriented producers and companies. Indeed, we have expanded the number of agricultural observatories, to sectors such as maize, crops and sugar.

This helps to give our operators clearer market signals to plan for the future. In the Omnibus Regulation, we took a big step forward by introducing a sector- [00:01:00] specific income stabilization tool, and simple rules for accessing credit and other financial instruments.

Going forward, we are planning to set up a permanent EU-level platform and risk management, aiming to exchange experiences and best practices from different interested parties, such as farmers, public authorities, and stakeholders.

There are already a number of solutions available. But they're not always well known. And they're often limited to specific member states. So setting up a platform at EU level will raise awareness of the tools available, and hopefully improve their take-up.

Access to finance is also crucial for strengthening competitiveness and sustainability in the medium and long term.

The development of financial instruments under the CAP and rural development programs has already made huge strides forward. A number of large-scale financial instruments have become operational in several member states, including loan and guarantee funds.

These draw down large budgets from rural development funds, [00:02:00] with an expected doubling leverage effect. This shows us that we are on the right path. In total there are 19 rural development program areas, in seven member states, where financial instruments are under preparation, our funding agreements are under discussion with fund managers.

I will continue working closely with the European Investment Bank, with a view to developing innovative financial instruments and other solutions that are appropriate to the agri-food sector.

Looking ahead, we have been working hard to develop the future risk management toolkit of the CAP. Our proposal for the future CAP will firmly integrate market planning and volatility mitigation into the policy.

We are moving from a compliance and rules-based approach to one that is focused on performance and results, including in the area of competitiveness and market resilience.

The key innovation in of, in our proposal is a new delivery model, in which each member state must provide a detailed national CAP strategic plan, in order to explain [00:03:00] their specific needs, to spell out the targets they want to achieve, and develop adequate, tailor-made support schemes, chosen from a menu of measures. And, indeed, manage the progress in view of reaching the targets, based on common indicators that are defined at EU level.

One of the nine mandatory key objectives is to increase competitiveness. Each member state must therefore design a business plan with a clear overall strategy for achieving this goal, including the rollout of financial instruments, and improving the interplay between public and private sectors.

Every intervention has to be clearly explained, and its economic rationale elaborated. I believe that this can be a game-changer for our EU agri-food sector. You, the business leaders and market experts of the EU agri-food sector, will have a crucial, important role to play in the coming months and years, and I look forward to working with you. And I wish you the best of luck for this webinar. Thank you.