

# Defending the Status Quo: Agricultural Interest Groups and the Challenges of Overproduction

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## RESÜMEE

Das *Comité des organisations professionnelles agricoles* (COPA) ist die älteste und größte Agrarlobby der heutigen Europäischen Union. Basierend auf Forschungen im Archiv von COPA und gestützt auf historisch-institutionalistische Theorien, untersucht dieser Artikel, ob und wie einige der meist kritisierten Ergebnisse der Gemeinsamen Agrarpolitik (GAP) wie die Förderung von Überproduktion auf den Einfluss nicht-staatlicher Akteure wie COPA zurückgingen. Der Aufsatz beginnt mit einer Darstellung der institutionellen Strukturen und Arbeitsweisen der COPA und beleuchtet das enge Verhältnis zwischen COPA und der europäischen Kommission. Anschließend untersucht der Artikel COPAs Bemühen, Reformvorschläge der Kommission im Milchsektor abzuwehren bzw. zu beeinflussen. Der Aufsatz zeigt, dass nicht-staatliche Akteure wie COPA eine der treibenden Kräfte hinter dem agrarpolitischen Status quo in den 1970er Jahren waren.

Agriculture is one of the economic sectors where the process of European integration has been carried furthest. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is not only the oldest common policy of the present-day European Union (EU) but also the most controversial.<sup>1</sup> The treaty of March 1957 creating the European Economic Community (EEC) set five explicit goals for the CAP: to increase productivity, to ensure a fair standard of living to farmers, to stabilize markets, to ensure the availability of supplies and to guarantee reasonable prices for consumers. In January 1962, the six EEC member states agreed that the CAP would be organized around the core principles of market unity, Community preference and financial solidarity so that its costs would be shared among the

1 Desmond Dinan, *Ever Closer Union. An Introduction to European Integration*, New York/London 2005, p. 325.

member states. Agricultural prices were linked to farm incomes and reviewed annually. The subsequent creation of the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) provided the financial basis for the CAP. The EAGGF's main task was to support agricultural prices in the EEC, with price levels generally above world market prices (guarantee section), and to support rural development and the improvement of agricultural structures (guidance section). In the first half of the 1960s, common prices for each product were adopted and common market organizations created. The common agricultural market became fully implemented in the summer of 1967.

Although the six member states of what became the European Communities (EC) after the institutional merger in 1967 agreed at the summit of The Hague in December 1969 to finalize the financial regulations for completing the CAP, demand for reforms of the policy grew stronger in view of its increasingly obvious side-effects. The high price levels for agricultural commodities adopted in the early 1960s had encouraged production to increase faster than demand. Structural surpluses emerged in several sectors like cereals and sugar, but they were particularly important in the sector of milk and dairy products, where the improved breeding of cattle with higher yields combined with technological progress resulted in spectacular growth.<sup>2</sup> The often disparaged 'butter mountains' and 'milk lakes' became a leitmotiv of the CAP critics and represented a strong incentive for reform.

Criticism of the CAP was not new but the economic crisis of the 1970s following the first oil shock of 1973, with its rampant inflation and rising unemployment, provided new arguments for reforming the policy. Moreover, in the 1970s, the policy was increasingly confronted with two main challenges, one external and one internal. On the one hand, monetary instability after the collapse of the international monetary system, the growing denunciation of the CAP's protectionism by Third World countries, and the opening of a new round of trade negotiations in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) provided additional incentives for revising the policy. On the other hand, overproduction and the resulting steep rise in the guarantee section of the EAGGF created an increasing burden for the EC and national budgets and threatened to develop into a budgetary crisis.<sup>3</sup>

Recent studies on the role of lobby groups in EU policy-making have used the concept of multi-level governance as an explanatory tool for analysing how non-state actors exert political influence on EU institutions.<sup>4</sup> Yet, as Svien Andersen and Kjeil Eliassen have stressed, only limited attempts have been made to address the role of interest representation and lobbying in the overall pattern of EU decision-making and in CAP decision-making in particular.<sup>5</sup> So far social scientists have tried to explain the 'status quo bias' of

2 Brian E Hill, *The Common Agricultural Policy: Past, Present and Future*, London 1984, p. 73.

3 Accounting for 40 % of the guarantee section of the FEOGA, the milk sector was the most important item.

4 See for instance Tanja A. Börzel/Karen Heard-Lauréote, *Networks in EU Multi-Level Governance. Concepts and Contributions*, in: *Journal of Public Policy* 29 (2009) 2, pp. 135-151.

5 Svien S. Andersen/Kjeil A. Eliassen, *EU-lobbying: the new research agenda*, in: *European Journal of Political Research*, 27 (1995) 4, pp. 427-441.

EU agricultural policy mainly by studying voting rules and the distribution of votes in the Council of Ministers.<sup>6</sup> As a result, these studies fail to take into account the impact of interest groups in their explanation of agricultural policy inertia. Conversely, historical research on the CAP has focused on inter-state negotiations during the creation and the initial phase of the policy.<sup>7</sup> An archive-based study of non-state agricultural actors in Europe and their influence on the CAP from the late 1960s onward has yet to be carried out.<sup>8</sup>

One of the oldest and largest of the EU's farm organizations is the *Comité des organisations professionnelles agricoles* (COPA, Committee of Professional Agricultural Organizations) created in 1958. However, most studies of COPA and its role in EU politics and policy-making either set out its institutional organization and working methods,<sup>9</sup> or focus on more recent developments such as the Mac Sharry reforms of 1992.<sup>10</sup> Based on research conducted in COPA's archives, which have become accessible for the first time to historians; this article seeks to address some of the shortcomings of the existing literature on EU lobbying and CAP reform by analyzing whether and if so, how some of the most criticized outcomes of the CAP, such as the enormous surpluses and high costs, were the (direct or indirect) result of opportunities for COPA to impose the interests of Community farmers by influencing EC decision-making. I assume that the emergence and consolidation of organized farming groups as a network of actors sharing a common aim created the conditions for what could be called the Europeanization of farming interests (as already predicted in essence by neo-functional scholar in the 1950s and 1960s) which ensured the preservation of the policy in its original form throughout the 1970s and beyond. I will draw upon assumptions of historical institutionalist theories

6 Jan Pokrivcak/Christophe Crombez/Johan F. M. Swinnen, The Status Quo Bias and Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. Impact of Voting Rules, the European Commission and External Changes, in: *European Review of Agricultural Economics* 33 (2006) 4, pp. 562-590.

7 See Ann-Christina Lauring Knudsen, *Farmers on Welfare. The Making of Europe's Common Agricultural Policy*, Ithaca 2009; Gilbert Noël, *Du pool vert à la politique agricole commune: les tentatives de Communauté agricole européenne entre 1945 et 1955*, Paris 1988; Kiran Klaus Patel (ed.), *Fertile Ground for Europe? The History of European Integration and the Common Agricultural Policy*, Baden-Baden 2009; Richard Griffiths/Brian Girvin (eds.), *The Green Pool and the Origins of the Common agricultural policy*, Bloomsbury 1995; Guido Thiemeyer, *Vom 'Pool Vert' zur Europäischen Wirtschaftsgemeinschaft*, Munich 1999; Kiran Klaus Patel, *Europäisierung wider Willen. Die Bundesrepublik Deutschland in der Agrarintegration der EWG, 1955-1973* Munich 2009.

8 For a historical study of agricultural networks, albeit limited to the creation phase of the CAP, see Ann-Christina L. Knudsen, *Politische Unternehmer in transnationalen Politiknetzwerken. Die Ursprünge der Gemeinsamen Agrarpolitik*, in: Michael Gehler/Wolfram Kaiser/Brigitte Leucht (eds), *Netzwerke im europäischen Mehrebenensystem. Von 1945 bis zur Gegenwart*, Vienna/Cologne/Weimar 2009, pp. 105-120.

9 See Graham Avery, *Agropolitics in the European Community. Interest Groups and the Common Agricultural Policy*, London 1977; Barbara Burkhardt-Reich/Wolfgang Schumann, *Agrarverbände in der EG. Das agrarpolitische Entscheidungsgefüge in Brüssel und in den EG-Mitgliedstaaten unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Euro-Verbandes COPA und seiner nationalen Mitgliedsverbände*, Kehl am Rhein 1983.

10 See for instance Julian R. A. Clark/Alun Jones, *From Policy Insider to Policy Outcast? Comité des Organisations Professionnelles Agricoles, EU Policymaking, and the EU's 'Agri-Environment' Regulation*, in: *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* 17 (1999) 5, pp. 637-653; Alun Jones/Julian Clark, *The Modalities of European Union Governance*, Oxford 2001, pp. 79-99.

that utilise the concept of path-dependency as a way of explaining institutional persistence and stability across time, to clarify COPA's success in resisting policy change.<sup>11</sup>

The first section of the article focuses on COPA as a non-state actor. In this section, I briefly introduce its structure and working methods. I also scrutinise the historically close relationship between COPA and the Directorate General (DG) VI (Agriculture) of the European Commission and examine how this relationship shaped the modalities of COPA's interest representation in the EC as a lobby and pressure group. By looking at different Commission-initiated attempts at reform in the dairy sector in the second section, I explore COPA's efforts to influence and shape CAP reform proposals, and discuss to what extent COPA was able to prevent any significant policy reform during the 1970s. In conclusion, I argue that non-state actors such as COPA were one of the driving forces behind the agricultural policy status quo in the 1970s.

### **Agricultural actors at national and European level**

Agricultural integration represented both an opportunity and a challenge for European farmers. It enabled a rapid modernization of the agricultural sector and increased living standards. At the same time, farmers lost influence on agricultural policy-making since decisions were increasingly being taken in Brussels. European farmers have always been well organized at national level. As several case studies have shown,<sup>12</sup> the successful enforcement of their interests in Brussels relied to a great extent on the 'extraordinary organizational capacity of farmers' unions in the member states.<sup>13</sup> The formation of the EEC and the prospect of the CAP did, however, create strong incentives for increasing and formalizing transnational European-level ties. COPA was founded in the wake of the Stresa conference in September 1958 and comprised the main farm organizations of the six EEC member states. COPA worked closely with the *Comité général de la coopération agricole* (General Committee of Agricultural Cooperation, COGECA), the umbrella organization of agricultural cooperatives founded in 1959. In the early days of the EEC, the Commission was anxious to establish contacts with farmers. Sicco Mansholt, the first and long-time Agricultural Commissioner, was very interested in the formation of Community-wide agricultural interests groups and was eager to 'encourage the creation

11 For an introduction to historical institutionalist theories, see Paul Pierson, *The Path to European Integration. A Historical Institutional Analysis*, in: *Comparative Political Studies* 29 (1996) 2, pp. 123-163. For an analysis of the concept of path-dependency applied to the CAP, see Adrian Kay, *Path Dependency and the CAP*, in: *Journal of European Public Policy* 10 (2003) 3, pp. 405-420.

12 See for instance John T. S. Keeler, *The politics of Neo-Corporatism in France. Farmers, the State and Agricultural Policy-Making in the Fifth Republic*, New York 1987; Paul Ackermann, *Der deutsche Bauernverband im politischen Kräftespiel der Bundesrepublik. Die Einflussnahme des DBV auf die Entscheidung über den europäischen Getreidepreis*, Tübingen 1970; Gisela Hendriks, *Germany and the CAP: National Interests and the European Community*, in: *International Affairs* 65 (1988) 1, pp. 75-87; Gisela Hendriks, *Germany and European Integration. The Common Agricultural Policy: An Area of Conflict*, New York 1991.

13 John T. S. Keeler, *Agricultural Power in the European Community. Explaining the Fate of CAP and GATT Negotiations*, in: *Comparative Politics* 28 (1996) 2, pp. 127-149.

of umbrella organizations at the EEC level for various types of interest groups.<sup>14</sup> It was also in the Commission's interest to reinforce the power of COPA, because the Commission preferred to speak to an EEC-wide group that negotiated the differing views of its constituent members, thus presenting the Commission with a united European farmers' view. Created to provide a single voice for farmers in dealing with the Commission, COPA gradually established itself as a key player in the agricultural policy-making process.<sup>15</sup> As defined by its internal rules, COPA's objectives were, and still are, to represent and defend the interests of European farmers, to seek solutions of common interest, to establish contacts with the European authorities and other professional organizations, and finally, to coordinate the positions of its constituent federations with the aim of establishing a common position vis-à-vis the European institutions.<sup>16</sup> After the first enlargement in 1973, COPA represented a total of twenty-two organizations from the then nine EC member states.

COPA is a peak organization with a federal structure. In 1960, the Committee created an institutional structure including an assembly and an executive board, the Praesidium. They were assisted by a secretariat and specialized groups, each of which were devoted to specific commodities such as milk and dairy products, fruit and vegetables, or area of expertise such as social or veterinary issues, taxation, transport, etc.<sup>17</sup> A more stringent institutional organization was not simply necessary in order to buttress COPA's lobbying activities but also reflected the institutional set-up of some of the member associations, such as the Deutscher Bauernverband (DBV, the German Farmers' Union). It might also be seen as indicative of the greater influence of some member associations in the early days of COPA – and of the quasi-federal structure of the EC. Broadly in line with neo-functionalism assumptions, John W. Meyer and Brian Rowan explained such institutional isomorphism in terms of the fact 'that formal organizations become matched with their environment by technical and exchange interdependencies.'<sup>18</sup>

The assembly was COPA's legitimizing institution. It was composed of the representatives of the member federations, the members of the Praesidium and the presidents of the specialized groups. Its task was to define the guiding policy principles, examine and adopt the budget and mandate the Praesidium to implement the decisions adopted

14 Knudsen, *Farmers on Welfare* (note 7), p. 125.

15 As argued by Rosemary Fennell, *The Common Agricultural Policy of the European Community*, Oxford 1987, p. 57; Michael Keane/Denis Lucey, *The CAP and the Farmers*, in: Christopher Ritson/David R. Harvey, *The Common Agricultural Policy*, Wallingford 1997, pp. 227-239; Michael Gorges, *Euro-Corporatism? Interest Intermediation in the European Community*, New York 1996, p. 169.

16 Archives historiques de la Commission européenne [hereafter AHCE], BAC 71/1984-80, Règlement intérieur du COPA, Bruxelles, 11 mai 1973, A (73) 7; Archives COPA, Séminaire Milly-la-Forêt, 1977, Communication du Président sur la structure et le fonctionnement du COPA et de ses différents (sic) instances, Bruxelles, 5 janvier 1966.

17 AHCE, 71/1984-85, Organigramme du COPA.

18 John W. Meyer/Brian Rowan, *Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony*, in: *The American Journal of Sociology*, 83 (1977) 2, pp. 340-363, here p. 346. See also Arne Niemann/Philippe C. Schmitter, *Neo-functionalism*, in: Antje Wiener/Thomas Diez (eds.), *European Integration Theory*, Oxford 2009, pp. 45-66.

during the plenary sessions.<sup>19</sup> Composed of the leaders of each national federation, the Praesidium was its highest decision-making body. The presidency of COPA consisted of a president and two vice-presidents of different nationalities elected for a two-year period. Its tasks were to represent the Committee, to implement decisions taken by the assembly, to organize the Committee's works, including planning for farmers' demonstrations, and most importantly, to establish regular relations with the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament (EP). Decisions in the Praesidium were taken by unanimity. If consensus was impossible, decisions were adopted by a qualified majority of fifty-two votes.<sup>20</sup>

Contacts between the Praesidium and the Commission were very close. Not only did the Praesidium meet regularly (approximately once a month) with the agriculture commissioner, but officials from DG VI also frequently attended the Praesidium's meetings.<sup>21</sup> Reflecting the growing complexity and technicality of the CAP, the Praesidium decided in 1977 to extend the length of its discussions and to meet for a full day once a month rather than only half a day, while general expert groups were expected to have two-day reunions each month.<sup>22</sup> In addition, whenever the Commission prepared important proposals, the Praesidium met in order to discuss their implications for farmers.<sup>23</sup> These meetings, attended by representatives of all member associations, were meant to define COPA's position vis-à-vis the Commission's proposals.

The role of the experts was to assist the Praesidium, and in particular to 'prepare the debates of the Praesidium and, to this aim, to establish a philosophy of the CAP about the price policy, the structural, commercial and social policy.'<sup>24</sup> The group of general experts was made up of a representative of each member organization. Documents drafted by the experts had to be approved by all member organizations. Until 1977, the reunions of the experts took place shortly before those of the Praesidium, which limited their input into the Praesidium's discussions. The Praesidium subsequently decided that the meetings of the experts would take place fifteen days before their own in order to enhance the efficiency of the Praesidium.<sup>25</sup>

The EC enlargement of 1973 posed problems to COPA similar to those posed to the Community institutions. To begin with, it raised organizational problems, as the new

19 Archives COPA, Séminaire Milly-la-Forêt, 1977, Communication du Président sur la structure et le fonctionnement du COPA et de ses différents (sic) instances, Bruxelles, 5 janvier 1966.

20 Germany, France and Great-Britain had twelve votes each; Belgium, Denmark and the Netherlands six, Ireland four and Luxembourg two. AHCE, BAC 71/1984-80, Règlement intérieur du COPA, Bruxelles, 11 mai 1973, A (73) 7.

21 Averyt, *Agropolitics* (note 9), p. 75.

22 Archives COPA, Séminaire Milly-la-Forêt, 1977, Projet rapport succinct du séminaire de réflexion sur l'avenir de la Politique Agricole Commune des 8/9 décembre 1977, Bruxelles, 29 décembre 1977, Pr (77) 32.

23 There were four so-called conclave meetings during the 1970s: Itre (Belgique) 1971, Wye (United Kingdom) 1975, Milly-la-Forêt (France) 1977, Bonn (Germany) 1980.

24 Archives COPA, Séminaire Milly-la-Forêt, 1977, Communication du Président sur la structure et le fonctionnement du COPA et de ses différents (sic) instances, Bruxelles, 5 janvier 1966. [All quotes from original sources written in French were translated by the author, CG.]

25 Archives COPA, Séminaire Milly-la-Forêt, 1977, Programme de travail résultant des décisions prises par le Praesidium lors du séminaire de Milly-la-Forêt les 8 et 9 décembre 1977, Bruxelles, 19 décembre 1977, S (77) 96.

member states had to be included in COPA's administrative structures. The farm groups from Britain, the Republic of Ireland and Denmark were integrated relatively smoothly in 1973. In contrast, the prospect of the accession of the Mediterranean countries Greece, Spain and Portugal raised many concerns either because of the fragmented structure of national producer associations as in Spain or the lack of such associations as in Portugal.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, the increasing number of organizations from countries with dissimilar agricultural structures, traditions and policies made the search for common positions more difficult and undermined COPA's cohesion. The growing number of Community languages required costly and time-consuming translation of internal documents and assistance by interpreters during the meetings of the Praesidium and assembly became necessary more often.

At the same time, the EC enlargement also had certain advantages, most notably in budgetary terms. COPA's budget was funded from national contributions. The contribution of the bigger member states (France, Germany, Italy and Great Britain) amounted to 4/23 each, while the smaller member states (Belgium, Netherlands and Denmark) paid 2/23. Ireland paid 1/23 and Luxembourg a lump sum into COPA's budget.<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, the budgetary contributions did not depend on the number of national federations adhering to COPA. This created a heavier financial burden for the DBV, the sole German member association of COPA, than for the French or British national associations, who could split their contribution among three or four different organizations. In any case, as William Averyt has stressed, the inclusion of the farming organizations from Britain, Ireland and Denmark into COPA resulted in a substantial increase in the organization's financial resources.<sup>28</sup> This was mainly due to the inclusion of the British National Farmers' Union (NFU). Accustomed to a corporatist relationship with the British government, the NFU insisted that COPA work even more closely with the EC institutions and increase its staff in Brussels. Initially fearful of the consequences of British EC accession for British farmers, the NFU in fact decided to use and develop COPA's possibilities as a way to influence the agricultural policy process.

COPA's primary role was to establish a network of farming interests and to lobby the European institutions. Because the Commission had, and still has, an exclusive competence for initiating legislative proposals in supranational policy areas, it figured at the top of COPA's list of institutions for lobbying at an early stage in the policy-making process. Their supranational character also made the Commission and COPA congenial partners. However, formal contacts between the Commission and interests groups initially were not the norm and most important contacts did not occur in the formal, institutionalized channels.<sup>29</sup> Instead the Commission favoured personal contacts between COPA's

26 Wolfgang Schumann, *Agrarverbände in der EG. Das agrarpolitische Entscheidungsgefüge in Brüssel und in den EG-Mitgliedstaaten unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Euro-Verbandes COPA und seiner nationalen Mitgliedsverbände*, Kehl am Rhein 1983, p. 335.

27 AHCE, BAC 71/1984-80, Règlement intérieur du COPA, Bruxelles, 11 mai 1973, A (73) 7.

28 Averyt, *Agropolitics* (note 9), pp. 78-79.

29 Nielsen T. Tierken, *Aspects of the EEC influence on European Groups in the Decision-Making Process: The Com-*



experts and the DG for agriculture, and between members of COPA's Praesidium and the agriculture commissioner.

The informality of these relations was advantageous for the Commission. Mansholt's deal with the European agricultural interest organizations enabled the Commission to present a united front with COPA and to promote the realization of the CAP in the 1960s. COPA was a key ally for the commissioner in pushing his agenda. Hence, Mansholt patiently and skilfully negotiated with the farmers, although he also occasionally met with the leaders of the main national agricultural organizations.<sup>30</sup> Thus, by the mid-1970s, Averyt observed that 'a relationship approaching clientele has arisen between the Directorate-General and the interest groups.'<sup>31</sup> The Commission was interested in learning the farmers' viewpoints but also in benefiting from their expertise. While DG VI was open to input from COPA, it also desired to keep the initiative in the relationship.

Interestingly, the informal nature of contacts with the Commission was not satisfactory for COPA. If COPA was to a certain extent the creature of the Commission, which had pushed for its creation in 1958, it rapidly tried to reshape the rules decided by Mansholt for framing the relationship, and campaigned in favour of 'an institutional and preliminary consultation procedure between the Commission and COPA.'<sup>32</sup> Formalizing the consultation process was important because it would impose clear obligations on DG VI and increase COPA's input into EC policy-making. Accordingly, in the mid-1960s the COPA Praesidium decided to streamline relations with the Commission. The rationale was that while meetings had evolved into 'contacts of mutual information'<sup>33</sup> they should actually serve to help confront and negotiate viewpoints. To that end, COPA decided to establish contacts with the agriculture commissioner and his services at three different levels: first, informal contacts between the general experts and the service of DG VI responsible for preparing the discussion between the agriculture commissioner and the members of the COPA Praesidium; secondly, formal and regular meetings between the agriculture commissioner and the president of COPA in order to discuss current problems; and finally, information meetings between the Commission and the assembly of COPA. The Committee succeeded in obtaining more regular meetings with the representatives of DG VI, but it failed to institutionalize these contacts.

A particularly important demand was the establishment of an 'annual conference' during which COPA and the Community institutions would discuss the economic and social conditions of farmers as well as the evolution of costs, prices and income. One official from DG VI remarked that 'COPA has been demanding for a long time to be consulted

mon Agricultural Policy, in: *Government and Opposition* 6 (1971) 4, pp. 539-558, here p. 547.

30 Alan Butt Philip, *Pressure Group Power in the Europe Community*, in: *Intereconomics* 22 (1983), pp. 282-289, here p. 283.

31 William Averyt, *Eurogroups, Clientela, and the European Community*, in: *International Organization* 29 (1975) 4, pp. 949-972, here p. 960.

32 Archives COPA, Séminaire Milly-la-Forêt, 1977, *Projet document de travail n°2 en vue du séminaire de réflexion sur l'avenir de la Politique Agricole Commune*, Bruxelles, 14 novembre 1977, S (77) 86.

33 Archives COPA, Séminaire Milly-la-Forêt, 1977, *Communication du Président sur la structure et le fonctionnement du COPA et de ses différents (sic) instances*, Bruxelles, 5 janvier 1966.



by the Commission on an institutional basis before it presents proposals to the Council, be these proposals on the annual definition of prices or other measures of the common agricultural policy. So far this demand has been unsuccessful. There are regular informal meetings with Mansholt but there is no genuine discussion on the basis of objective data before the Commission presents its propositions.<sup>34</sup> Another special request of COPA was to be allowed to participate in the elaboration of the Commission's annual report. Here again, the Commission was not prepared to collaborate with COPA on its terms. Yet, this form of 'pre-emptive lobbying'<sup>35</sup> was crucial for COPA and required the careful cultivation of contacts with DG VI, especially during the preliminary phase of the policy formulation rather than at later stages.<sup>36</sup> As a collaborator of Mansholt remarked, COPA 'hopes to strengthen its negotiation power with the Commission and to force his member organizations, often inclined to turn to their national government, to act at the European level.'<sup>37</sup>

Personal and direct contacts with the services of DG VI were not the only way used by COPA to influence CAP policy decisions. Professional farming groups were also represented in the advisory committees that were set up for each major commodity and met regularly with the Commission to discuss various aspects of the policy. Advisory committees were thus another channel of influence for COPA and integrated it further into CAP decision-making.

COPA was also at its most efficient when it was not merely a coordinating body and a place of exchange of information but when it acted as a clearing house of national positions, that is, when it aggregated and articulated national positions into a united stance. To a large extent, COPA's lobbying efficiency depended on how successful it was in getting its member organizations to commit to policies agreed at the Community level, and in obtaining 'the engagement of [its member] organizations to defend [decisions] in relation to the national and Community decision-making body.'<sup>38</sup>

The attempts by COPA to institutionalise its relationship with the Commission are at odds with the explanatory model of the policy network approach. This would suggest that informal privileged access guarantees the greatest influence. As a result, it might seem surprising that COPA demanded more than the informal regular and routine consultations with the Commission. However, the increasing competition among agricultural interest groups at the EC level in the 1970s helps explain this mismatch between the theoretical assumptions and the practice of agricultural interest representation. While COPA enjoyed a near monopoly position in the 1960s, this was increasingly challenged in the

34 AHCE, BAC 7/1974-3, Propositions du COPA en ce qui concerne la consultation du COPA relative au rapport annuel sur la situation de l'agriculture et des agriculteurs, COPA, Bruxelles, 10 septembre 1970.

35 Jones/Clark, *The Modalities of European Union Governance* (note 10), p. 85.

36 Clark/Jones, *From Policy Insider to Policy Outcast* (note 10), p. 642.

37 AHCE, BAC 6/1974-38, Note à l'attention de M. le vice-président S.L. Mansholt, division des relations avec les organisations non gouvernementales, Bruxelles (no date).

38 Archives COPA, Séminaire Milly-la-Forêt, 1977, Mémoire rédigé au titre des délibérations et considérations recueillies à l'occasion du conclave organisé à l'ère, les 28 et 29 juin 1971, août 1971.

1970s with the creation of new farm interest groups such as the *Comité européen pour le progrès agricole* (COMEPR, European Committee for Agricultural Progress). COPA had to make sure that its position as the sole representative of farmers' interests was not eroded by the direct contacts between the Commission and national federations or other organized groups from outside COPA. Institutionalizing contacts with the Commission was considered a means by which COPA could buttress its position as the Commission's privileged interlocutor, and consequently enhance COPA's political influence on agricultural policy-making. The same approach is also reflected in the contacts COPA had with other agricultural stakeholders such as the *Confédération européenne de l'agriculture* (CEA, European Confederation of Agriculture) and the *Fédération internationale des producteurs agricoles* (FIPA, International Federation of Agricultural Producers). In July 1972, the three organizations decided to streamline the coordination of their work and signed an agreement that recognized COPA as the sole legitimate interlocutor in relation to the Community authorities and other socio-professional associations.<sup>39</sup> This agreement granted COPA a privileged position in the defence of agricultural interests and in its relationship with the Commission.

Most European interest organizations have rarely adopted a high public profile, traditionally seeking to influence policy-making in the EC by means of direct representations to officials and commissioners. In contrast, COPA did not shy away from using traditional means of expressing farmers' discontent and from sponsoring noisy street demonstrations.<sup>40</sup> From 1968 to 1971, for example, COPA supported a series of demonstrations against the first attempt by the Commission to reform the policy, the Mansholt Plan, to be elaborated upon in the next section. These demonstrations culminated in a huge rally and riots in Brussels in March 1971.

In backing demonstrations by farmers, COPA had a twofold objective. First, the massive and sometimes violent demonstrations underlined COPA's ability to mobilize its members. This provided publicly visible evidence of its representativeness. Secondly, these demonstrations served to channel the dissatisfaction of national federations and consequently, to secure the position of COPA as the sole institution speaking for farmers' interests, a position which could be undermined by national federations acting alone or coordinating actions outside of the COPA forum.<sup>41</sup> The overarching aim was to bolster COPA's standing and strengthen its role in relation to the DG VI.

### **COPA and agricultural policy reform**

During the 1970s the Commission made several attempts to re-establish the balance of markets in which structural surpluses had emerged. Overproduction was especially critical in the dairy sector. Surpluses of milk and butter were not a new problem and

39 AHCE, BA 71/1984-80, Coordination CEA-COPA-COGECA-FIPA, Bruxelles, 10 juillet 1972.

40 Some of COPA's flyers calling for demonstrations are available in Archives COPA, Plan Mansholt, 1968–1979.

41 Archives COPA, Aménagement de la PAC, 1973, Note (no date).

had started building up in the second half of the 1960s. However, in the early 1970s a substantial further increase in production caused a five-fold increase in butter surpluses and a steep rise in the guarantee section of the EAGGF. In order to tackle this problem and achieve a reform of the CAP, Commissioner Mansholt published a provocative memorandum in December 1968, the *Programme Agriculture 1980*, soon dubbed the Mansholt Plan, which proposed policy principles to greatly accelerate structural change in agriculture.<sup>42</sup> Mansholt suggested stopping the use of the price instrument as the sole determining factor of farm income, and thus ‘taking farmers off welfare.’<sup>43</sup> His proposals included structural policy elements such as incentives to encourage about half of the farming population to leave the sector during the 1970s, to increase the size of farms in order to make them more efficient, and direct payments such as slaughter premiums. The Commission argued that these policy interventions would help solve the problem of commodity surpluses, allow institutional prices to develop more in line with costs and demand, support farmers on non-viable farms to change jobs and to ensure for the remaining farmers an income comparable to that available in other sectors.<sup>44</sup> The Mansholt Plan thus combined structural policy proposals with measures to re-establish the market balance in key agricultural sub-sectors.

The propositions of the Mansholt plan met with passionate protests from farmers and COPA critics. While COPA welcomed the Commission’s offer to consult with farm organizations, it did not agree with the proposed disconnection between prices and farm income and the use of the price instrument to reduce surpluses.<sup>45</sup> In particular, COPA fiercely opposed anything that would negatively impact on farm incomes and maintained that any attempt to limit production through a pressure on prices and a modification of the structures was both ‘inacceptable and impossible.’<sup>46</sup> COPA was aware of the likely social consequences of Mansholt’s proposal, especially for the milk sector. The latter was characterized by small and relatively inefficient farms with ten or fewer cows and in which the farmer was the sole income earner of the household. This structural situation made relatively high milk prices necessary in order to ensure a minimum income to dairy farmers. Any Commission reforms proposals that attempted to lower the price of milk or dairy products or to favour bigger farms in order to reduce the production incentive were thus perceived as amounting to an economic death sentence for a large number of milk farmers.

As a result COPA defended a general price rise although it recognized that this rise should be applied differently depending on the products in order ‘to realize a better scale

42 European Commission, Memorandum sur la réforme de l’agriculture dans la Communauté Economique Européenne, in: Bulletin of the European Communities 2 (1969) Supplement 1.

43 Cf. for this argument: Katja Seidel, Taking Farmers off Welfare. The EEC Commission’s Memorandum “Agriculture 1980” of 1968, in: Journal of European Integration History 32 (forthcoming 2010) 2.

44 David R. Stead, Europe’s Mansholt Plan Forty Year On, in: Eurochoices, 6 (2007) 3, pp. 40-45, here p. 41.

45 Archives COPA, Plan Mansholt, 1968–1969, Note d’observations du COPA sur le mémorandum « Agriculture 1980 », Bruxelles, 26 septembre 1969, A (69) 6.

46 Archives COPA, Plan Mansholt, 1968–1969, Note sur la fixation des prix pour la campagne 1971–1972, Bruxelles, 23 mai 1969, A (69) 2.

of prices and better orientate production.<sup>47</sup> COPA responded to the Mansholt Plan by advancing three categories of measures, which were intended to stabilize the milk sector. These included measures to absorb the existing surpluses (largely by selling dairy products at reduced prices); measures to avoid the further growth of surpluses (for instance by trying to increase the consumption of dairy products through advertising campaigns, by subsidizing exports of milk and the use of dairy products as part of the World Food Programme); and finally, measures to align supply and demand, for example with the help of premiums for the slaughter of milk cows or to encourage beef production. Most importantly, 'according to the Praesidium, these measures ought to exclude any price cuts in the milk price.'<sup>48</sup> COPA thus demanded that the CAP should continue to have a social, regional and structural policy dimension.<sup>49</sup>

The opposition of COPA and of national farm organizations weakened member state support of the proposals in the Council. As a result, the Commission had to limit its ambitions. After much debate, and many protests and delays, the initial legislative proposals issued in April 1970 were severely diluted, in order to address many of the concerns raised by COPA,<sup>50</sup> eventually being passed in May 1971. The three directives adopted about a year later were even further reduced in scope.<sup>51</sup> The stark downgrading of Mansholt's ambitions had clearly shown the narrow limits of a 'big bang' policy reform approach and demonstrated the impact of COPA on agricultural policy-making.

The failure of Mansholt's ambitious reform and the resulting directives demonstrated that, although the policy mechanisms adopted in the 1960s may have been inefficient at achieving a higher standard of living for those employed in agriculture or at preventing unintended consequences such as over-production and surpluses, reforming the system was perceived to be too costly politically. As assumed by historical institutionalist scholars, the longer a policy like the CAP is in place the more difficult it becomes to dismantle or fundamentally change its mechanisms. Historical path-dependency and institutionally well-positioned defenders of the CAP like COPA hindered far-reaching policy change. Due to its early formation and establishment of channels providing regular access to EC institutions, COPA had contributed greatly to shaping the original policy path protective of the farmers' interest. It thus opposed any measures perceived as harming these interests.

In October 1973, the Commission presented a new *Memorandum on the Adjustment of the CAP*, which was aimed at, first, improving the balance between supply and demand in the internal market; secondly, reducing the cost of support in particular in the milk

47 Archives COPA, Plan Mansholt, 1968–1969, Position du COPA sur les propositions de la Commission concernant la fixation des prix pour les produits agricoles, Bruxelles, 23 juillet 1969, A (69) 4.

48 Archives COPA, Plan Mansholt, 1968–1969, Propositions du COPA en vue de rétablir l'équilibre sur le marché laitier dans la Communauté, Bruxelles, 19 juillet 1969, Pr (69) 26.

49 Archives COPA, Plan Mansholt, 1968–1969, Note d'observations générales sur les propositions de la Commission concernant la « réforme de l'agriculture », Bruxelles, 10 septembre 1970, Pr (70) 22.

50 AHCE, BAC 71/1974-6, Note d'observations générales sur les directives modifiées de la Commission au conseil, Bruxelles, 29 octobre 1971, Pr (71) 28 rév.

51 Official Journal of the European Communities, Legislation, 15 (23 April 1972) n° L96.

sector, for instance by introducing a temporary levy on surpluses of not more than two per cent of the indicative price to be paid by producers; and thirdly, simplifying some of the market mechanisms.<sup>52</sup> Considering the ever-worsening problem of overproduction, DG VI feared that the CAP itself was in danger. COPA's reactions to the Commission's new memorandum were largely negative since the proposed market and price adjustments would have reduced the guarantees given to the Community farmers, in particular in terms of income progression.<sup>53</sup> COPA thus reaffirmed 'its strongly held conviction that the fundamental principles and essential mechanisms of the CAP must be maintained. The Committee believed that some of the Commission's proposals, notably those dealing with the adaptation of price support mechanisms and their more flexible use could in fact result not only in a challenge to the Community principles but also in a reduction of price stability for consumers and of income guarantees for producers.'<sup>54</sup> In particular, COPA opposed the Commission's suggestion to lower the intervention price of milk, which, according to DG VI, was not only the easiest measure to apply but presented the further advantage that it would 'lead to a participation of milk producers to the reduction of surpluses.'<sup>55</sup> COPA, in contrast, argued in favour of an increase in milk prices. To by-pass the likely opposition of DG VI to such an increase, COPA's milk and dairy products section proposed a rather technical ploy: the rise of the indicative price of milk would be achieved by an increase of the indicative price of skimmed milk powder, which was equal to or below the intervention price, without any modification of the price of butter.<sup>56</sup> It was assumed that this price modification would be a zero-sum operation for the Community finances. However, neither COPA nor the Commission anticipated the undesirable consequences.

Another issue raised by the Commission memorandum on CAP reform was the co-responsibility of producers. The rationale behind this new policy instrument was to make producers liable for the surpluses and to limit the Community financial responsibility while not touching the milk prices, which would otherwise have to be frozen or cut.<sup>57</sup> The co-responsibility levy was an extremely problematic issue for COPA as its member organizations held highly divergent opinions on it. While COPA's specialized section of milk and dairy products categorically rejected a levy that would only penalize farm income without solving the EC's surplus problem, some member federations did request

52 Aménagement de la politique agricole commune, Bulletin of the European Communities 6 (1973) Supplément 17.

53 Archives COPA, aménagement de la PAC, 1973, Premières observations du COPA sur le mémorandum de la Commission concernant l'aménagement de la PAC, Bruxelles, S (73)44; Communiqué de presse, Bruxelles, 9 novembre 1973.

54 Archives COPA, Aménagement de la PAC, 1973, COPA comments on the Commission's memorandum on changing the CAP, Brussels, 14 December 1973, Pr (73) 28.

55 Archives COPA, PAC-CEE, 1968–1975, Note a/s politique commune dans le secteur du lait, VI/4611/73-G

56 Archives COPA, PAC-CEE, 1968–1975, Projet mesures susceptibles de rétablir l'équilibre sur le marché de la matière grasse et d'améliorer la situation de marché du secteur laitier, Bruxelles, 1<sup>er</sup> mars 1973, LPL (73) 4.

57 Archives COPA, Aménagement de la PAC, Réponses données par M. Lardinois et ses services aux questions que soulève le mémorandum dans le domaine laitier (cf. LPL (73) 13), Bruxelles, 29 novembre 1973, LPL (73) 16.

major amendments, but were prepared to consider such a measure.<sup>58</sup> The eventually agreed position was to reject the principle of a co-responsibility levy.<sup>59</sup> However, the divergence of opinion among the national federations on this issue had clearly reinforced the need for close contacts among the producer organizations through COPA.

By modifying the price relation between milk and milk powder as COPA had suggested, the Commission opened a Pandora's Box: milk powder mountains replaced the butter mountains of 1973. Measures to solve this new problem were subsequently addressed in the *Stocktaking of the Common Agricultural Policy* submitted by Agriculture Commissioner Petrus Lardinois in March 1975.<sup>60</sup> These proposals went beyond those of the 1973 Commission memorandum to solve the price policy conundrum, that is, to guarantee a 'fair' income to farmers while at the same time re-establishing market equilibrium, a challenge made even more difficult by rising inflation and low growth.

One of the main adjustments proposed by the Commission was not only to limit the expansion of the guarantee section of the EAGFF but also to drastically reduce the support cost by the end of a five year period. Some governments, including the German government, supported the proposal to control or even reduce the amount they paid into the fund in order to use the savings for domestic expenditure. These governments used the existence of structural surpluses in some sectors (in particular the milk and dairy sector) to justify a restriction of the EAGFF expenditure and to demand a (financial) co-responsibility of producers in these sectors.<sup>61</sup>

From COPA's viewpoint, the introduction of this levy would inevitably have resulted in limiting the EC guarantees to agricultural producers. A freezing, or even reduction, of farm incomes, as a result of either price pressure or of making producers partly responsible for the disposal of surpluses, appeared unacceptable in principle and even less so in the difficult economic circumstances of the second half of the 1970s. Farmers' disposable income as producers and consumers had already been doubly hit by inflation and the high costs of energy, fertilizers and animal feed. COPA concluded: 'The Commission has failed so far to reassure producers that within the ambit of their proposals it would still be possible for the incomes of European producers to develop in accordance with the trend of incomes in other sectors and indeed to achieve a narrowing of the wide gap that still exists between farm and other income.'<sup>62</sup>

58 Archives COPA, Aménagement de la PAC, 1973, Projet conclusions de la section spécialisée « lait et produits laitiers » sur les aménagements proposés dans le mémorandum de la CEE en ce qui concerne l'organisation commune des marchés dans le secteur du lait et des produits laitiers, Bruxelles, 23 novembre 1973, LPL (73) 15.

59 Archives COPA, Aménagement de la PAC, 1973, Observations du COPA et du COGECA relatives aux mesures concernant différents marchés agricoles du mémorandum de la CEE sur l'aménagement de la PAC, Bruxelles, 18 février 1974, Pr (74) 12, CD (74) 4.

60 Mémorandum « Bilan de la politique agricole commune », Bulletin of the European Communities 8 (1975) Supplement 2.

61 Archives COPA, Bilan de la PAC, 1975 (classeur nr. 3), Draft Working Document on the Problems with regards to the Financing of the Common Agricultural Policy, Brussels, 31 July 1975, EG (75) 20.

62 Archives COPA, Séminaire Milly-la-Forêt, 1977, COPA comments on the Commission's memorandum on changing the CAP, Brussels, 14 December 1973, Pr (73) 28.

COPA also strictly opposed setting a ceiling on the EAGGF's spending on two grounds. First, this would not have solved the EC's surplus problem but instead challenged one of the declared principles of the CAP. COPA invoked the principle of financial solidarity: 'It is out of the question to accept setting such a ceiling on EAGGF expenditures. If such restrictions are implemented at the level of the EAGGF, the principle of financial solidarity itself will be challenged whereas it constitutes one of the very cornerstones of the common agricultural policy.'<sup>63</sup> For COPA, financial solidarity meant first and foremost 'a Community financial responsibility as complete as possible.'<sup>64</sup> As a result, COPA rejected the suggestion that producers be made partly responsible for structural surpluses, especially in the milk sector.<sup>65</sup> The economic and international context provided COPA with good arguments for opposing the principle of financial co-responsibility. Farm income support appeared more legitimate in the light of the increase in production costs and the creeping inflation. In addition, the world food crisis of the mid-1970s, which seemed to prove right the claims of the Club of Rome regarding 'limits to growth', made the surplus problem appear less acute, as some of the surpluses could be subsidized and exported or used as development aid.<sup>66</sup> Secondly, COPA feared that limiting the EAGGF expenditure would lead to a 'renationalization' of the CAP as governments, especially in countries in which farmers were well organised and could exert sufficient political pressure, might be encouraged to work towards greater national aid in order to compensate for the impact of any limitation on EAGGF expenditure.<sup>67</sup> This in turn would have undermined COPA's position in EC policy-making because the national associations would then have had the upper hand over the EC-level organization.

Given COPA's opposition to the new Commission proposal, Agriculture Commissioner Lardinois attempted to gain its support for some kind of CAP reform to tackle increasing costs and overproduction. On 3 October 1975, Lardinois met with the COPA Praesidium. COPA had made clear that it could accept co-responsibility only on certain conditions: 'firstly the principle that common farm prices have in future to be adjusted solely by reference to the application of objective criteria, secondly that the principle of Community preference is effectively administered,<sup>68</sup> and thirdly that producers must participate more fully in the management of the market.'<sup>69</sup> The latter condition was crucial because it would place COPA in a better position to influence the price-fixing of

63 Archives COPA, Bilan de la PAC, 1975 (classeur nr. 3), Projet aide mémoire à l'attention du président du COPA en vue de la rencontre avec M. Lardinois sur le bilan de la PAC, Bruxelles, 3 octobre 1975.

64 Archives COPA, Bilan de la PAC, 1975 classeur nr. 3), Projet document de travail concernant les problèmes liés au financement de la Politique Agricole Commune, Bruxelles, 2 septembre 1975, EG (75) 20 rev.

65 Archives COPA, Bilan de la PAC, 1975 (classeur nr. 2), Aide Memoire for the Attention of the President of COPA and the President of COGECA for the Press Conference on 13 June 1975, Brussels, 12 June 1975.

66 Dennis Meadows, et al, *The Limits to Growth*, New York 1972.

67 Archives COPA, Bilan de la PAC, 1975 (classeur nr. 3), Projet document de travail concernant les problèmes liés au financement de la Politique Agricole Commune, Bruxelles, 2 septembre 1975, EG (75) 20 rev.

68 This, in particular, targeted the butter imports from New Zealand that Great Britain had successfully negotiated during the adhesion negotiations.

69 Archives COPA, Bilan de la PAC, 1975 (classeur nr. 3), Draft working document on the problems with regards to the financing of the common agricultural policy, Brussels, 31 July 1975, EG (75) 20.



levies and restitutions, the methods of stocking and destocking, as well as the price-fixing of certain premiums for changing products like cereals or skimmed milk powder into other products used in animal feed, the loss involved being financed by the EAGGF.<sup>70</sup> This would ensure that COPA would have a greater say in CAP decision-making.

In COPA's view, surpluses also resulted from the ineffective management of markets by Community authorities, which did not sufficiently observe the Community preference or ensure that farmers received the price to which they were entitled for their production.<sup>71</sup> Hence, participating in the management of market organizations was another means of securing a 'fair' income for farmers. In addition, by being involved in the market management, COPA would also forego being made accountable for the surpluses and would associate farmers with the stabilization of markets to which they were called to contribute.<sup>72</sup> Defending the Community preference was, furthermore, a tactical move at a time when Third World countries were pressuring the Commission to weaken this preference because it barred them from accessing the EC market – an argument they also used in the ongoing GATT negotiations. Moreover, certain national delegations in COPA supported the view that the problem of surpluses would be partly resolved by a more aggressive export policy, given the difficulty of reducing production amid the economic crisis.

In July 1976 the Commission submitted to the Council the *Action Programme 1977–1980 for the Gradual Establishment of Balance in the Milk Sector*. One of its key proposals was once again the introduction of a levy. The co-responsibility principle, that is, a tax of 1.5 per cent of the indicative milk price, was finally adopted in May 1977. COPA eventually agreed to the co-responsibility principle because it could bring about a reduction of the level of the co-responsibility levy (originally set at 2.5 per cent) and a rise of the indicative price of milk.<sup>73</sup> These two elements made the co-responsibility levy almost irrelevant. It was set at such a low level that it did not represent an incentive to curb production, and the price augmentation would compensate financial losses for farmers.<sup>74</sup> In fact, the impact of the co-responsibility levy was so negligible that the Commission had to recommend the suspension of price support for skimmed milk powder in 1978 and

70 Archives COPA, Bilan de la PAC, 1975 (classeur nr. 3), Rapport des premières discussions du groupe des « experts généraux » relatives aux problèmes liés à la participation du COPA et du COGECA à la gestion des marchés, Bruxelles, 2 septembre 1975, EG (75) 17 rev ; Document de travail relatif aux problèmes liés à la participation du COPA et du COGECA à la gestion des marchés, Bruxelles, 20 mai 1975.

71 Archives COPA, Bilan de la PAC, 1975 (classeur nr. 3), Draft Working Document on the Problems with regards to the Financing of the Common Agricultural Policy, Brussels, 31 July 1975, EG (75) 20.

72 Archives COPA, Bilan de la PAC, 1975 (classeur nr. 3), Note du président Deleau sur les problèmes liés au financement de la Politique Agricole Commune, Bruxelles, 29 septembre 1975, NI (75) 25.

73 AHCE, BAC 71/1984-4, Réunion M. Gundelach/Praesidium COPA, 4 février 1977.

74 As Wyn Grant stressed, the co-responsibility levy was never a very efficient policy instrument since it was never more than 3 per cent of the target price and was offset by increases in support prices and the manipulation of the green currency system. Wyn Grant, Policy Instruments in the Common Agricultural Policy, in: *West European Politics* 33 (2010) 1, pp. 22-38, here p. 31.

a substantial increase in the co-responsibility levy in 1979 (combined with a freezing of prices) in order to solve the persistent overproduction in the milk sector.<sup>75</sup>

Moreover, COPA successfully negotiated with the Commission the conditions of the consultation procedure and of their participation in the decisions regarding the co-responsibility levy,<sup>76</sup> thus establishing some sort of co-governance. Additionally, the farmers' participation in the co-responsibility group was conditional on the maintaining of price support in the milk sector and, hence, on guaranteeing the income of milk producers.<sup>77</sup> As Dominique Souchon, a close adviser to COPA's secretary general André Herliskta, observed, 'in exchange for agreeing to the financial co-responsibility of milk producers, we were able to obtain a closer association of farmers with the management of the milk market.'<sup>78</sup> Thus, the co-responsibility levy demonstrated the success of COPA in defending the status quo and thwarting any reform of the CAP.

Given the increasing budgetary pressures that threatened the CAP as a whole, COPA had to endorse a very limited financial co-responsibility of producers for the stockpiling and disposal of surpluses.<sup>79</sup> By agreeing to a small reform, that is, a partial and limited responsibility for the costs of overproduction, the farmers avoided a freezing or cutting of prices and the resulting lowering of farm income, as well as a more radical reform with the introduction of quotas. The new COPA president Gérard de Caffarelli explained to Commission President Roy Jenkins 'that COPA would not resist change and simply demand the maintenance of the status quo: it was interested in the development of the CAP, provided that the basic principles were respected.'<sup>80</sup> Yet, in de Caffarelli's mind, the respect of the basic principles meant no reform at all, since any change to the policy would disrupt the compromises agreed in the 1960s. Indeed, COPA only accepted the co-responsibility levy because it did not challenge the status quo of the CAP.<sup>81</sup>

75 AHCE, BAC 71/1984-4, Note d'information a/s réunion du praesidium COPA avec M. Gundelach le 22 mars 1978; BAC 71/1984-85, Lettre de Finn Gundelach à Gérard de Caffarelli, Bruxelles, 2 mars 1979 ; BAC 74/1984-8, Premières réactions du COPA aux propositions de la Commission concernant la fixation des prix pour certains produits agricoles et certaines mesures connexes pour la campagne 1978/79 (COM (79) 10 final), Bruxelles, 9 février 1979, PR (79) 3.

76 AHCE, BAC 71/184-4, Lettre de Finn Gundelach au président du COPA, M. de Caffarelli, Bruxelles, 27 août 1977.

77 AHCE, BAC 71/1884-4, Note à l'attention de M. le Vice-Président Gundelach, Bruxelles, 20 mars 1978; Note to Mr. Williamson, Deputy Director General of Agriculture in the Commission of EC and Co-Chairman of the Co-responsibility Group, Brussels, 9 March 1978.

78 Archives COPA, Séminaire Milly-la-Forêt, 1977, Projet document de travail n°2 en vue du séminaire de réflexion sur l'avenir de la Politique Agricole Commune, Bruxelles, 14 novembre 1977, S (77) 86.

79 With a view to the looming budgetary crisis, COPA also signaled towards the end of 1979 its willingness to discuss a (limited) increase of the co-responsibility levy as to avoid the setting of a ceiling to the guarantee section of the EAGGF. AHCE, BAC 71/1984-9, Note à l'attention de M. Gundelach a/s réunion avec le Praesidium du COPA à Strasbourg, le 15 novembre 1979, Bruxelles (sans date); Observations du COPA et du COGECA sur la situation et les mesures à prendre dans le secteur laitier, Bruxelles, 9 novembre 1979, Pr (79) 21, CD (79) 9.

80 AHCE, BAC 71/1984-3, Meeting between the President [Roy Jenkins] and Mr. de Caffarelli, 12 July 1977.

81 Archives COPA, Séminaire Milly-la-Forêt, 1977, Projet rapport succinct du séminaire de réflexion sur l'avenir de la Politique Agricole Commune des 8/9 décembre 1977, Bruxelles, 29 décembre 1977, Pr (77) 32.

## Conclusion

While intergovernmental negotiations played a major role in the creation of the CAP in the early 1960s, farmers were increasingly organized at a transnational level by the end of the decade and used the combined influence of their national and supranational organizations to defend their interests in EC policy-making. In line with neo-functional theory, farming interest groups increasingly shifted their attention from the national to the European level during the 1970s.<sup>82</sup> It is thus impossible to fully understand the inertia in agricultural policy – involving only very minor reforms – during this decade by simply studying the role of EC member states or institutions. The formal and informal linkages between COPA and DG VI help explain the status of the European farmers' organization as an institutionalized lobby group that had channels of influence at its disposal from which other agricultural and non-agricultural interest organizations were effectively excluded. Even if COPA did not succeed in shaping the formal consultation method used by the Commission, it nonetheless had a major impact in agricultural policy-making in the 1970s. This tends to refute the assumption of political scientists who assume that networks only started to play a significant role in EU policy-making from the mid-1980s.<sup>83</sup>

The second conclusion that can be drawn from the analysis above is that the Commission's repeated reform, especially its efforts to control and reduce overproduction by using the price policy instrument, represented an incentive for farmers to Europeanize their interests in order to be in a better position to secure the status quo of the CAP. This is consistent with historical institutionalist theories, which argue that 'initial policy moves can create rents that encourage groups to mobilize for the maintenance of the programme or its expansion.'<sup>84</sup> It is likely, although this requires further in-depth research, that the cooperation of national representatives in COPA also facilitated the emergence and transfer of policy ideas with socialization effects that contributed to an increased awareness of the opportunities of EC policy-making among formerly very nationally oriented policy-makers in agriculture. COPA was a forum where the representatives of national organizations negotiated among themselves for years and which required that they explored and struck compromises whenever possible. COPA was also an arena where national farming associations could gain information that influenced their domestic political behaviour and the kind of pressure they exerted on national ministers of agriculture.<sup>85</sup> COPA thus acted as a transnational mediator between the national and the supranational levels.

82 Anil Awesti, *The Myth of Eurosclerosis. European Integration in the 1970s*, in: *L'Europe en formation* 352-354 (2009), pp. 39-53, here p. 45.

83 See for instance Justin Greenwood, *Representing Interests in the European Union*, London 1997.

84 Paul Pierson, *When Effect becomes Cause. Policy Feedback and Political Change*, in: *World Politics* 45 (1993) 4, pp. 595-628, here p. 599.

85 Michel Petit et al., *Agricultural Policy Formation in the European Community: The Birth of the Milk Quota*, London 1987, p. 114.

The 1970s also reveal another trend. Increasingly, the power of the agricultural lobby and especially that of COPA was challenged by the Commission who was alarmed at the continued scale of over-production and the long-term costs of financing the CAP. From the mid-1970s onwards, the relationship between COPA and DG VI deteriorated: ‘The commonality between the two organizations was placed under pressure for the first time with the build-up of surpluses in CAP commodities. The situation worsened as these surpluses became chronic, exposing substantial, conflicting interests between DG VI and the national farming unions represented by COPA over the need for CAP reform.’<sup>86</sup> While the period from the creation of the CAP to the mid-1970s marked the heyday of COPA’s influence, the increasing divergence of interests between COPA and DG VI over the problem of over-production progressively undermined the former alliance. Nevertheless, COPA could still exert influence and successfully thwart radical reform attempts in the second half of the 1970s because it remained a cohesive network.

In fact, the member organizations of COPA shared the same social and welfare motives for opposing the Commission’s reform attempts. They regarded reforms using the price policy instrument as impacting negatively on farm income and hence as detrimental to the principle of social equity between the agricultural and industrial sectors, a core policy objective of the CAP. As a result, farmers consistently and firmly opposed the severing of the connection between prices and incomes and wanted the support of prices at high levels to remain the main plank of the CAP.<sup>87</sup> All Commission attempts to break this link were likely to raise hostile reactions from farming lobbies. In addition, larger socio-cultural reasons influenced the farmers’ opposition to CAP reform. Continental European farmers had been used to a very high degree of (national) protectionism since the late nineteenth century. The creation of the CAP had Europeanized the existing patterns of national protectionism, but not changed them in any fundamental way. Thus, defending the CAP merely continued the long tradition of farmers’ support for highly protectionist policies shielding them from world market forces, and thus represented another incentive for them to use their leverage to prevent major policy reform.

COPA’s efforts to block far-reaching reforms of the CAP during the 1970s were also aided by the strength of political support for the status quo at member state level.<sup>88</sup> In the absence of sustained external pressure in the GATT, which only built up in the 1980s, the economic context of the 1970s provided few incentives for national government to support the Commission’s reform proposals. They seemed likely to increase the burden on national budgets as the projected reduction in agricultural employment could no longer be matched by the creation of new jobs in other sectors, creating a variety of social and regional policy challenges. National governments were unwilling to endorse

86 Clark/ Jones, *From Policy Insider to Policy Outcast* (note 10), p. 643.

87 Hill, *The Common Agricultural Policy* (note 2), p. 40.

88 This was for instance obvious when the member states did not endorse the Mansholt Plan of 1968 or rejected the price freeze and the considerable increase of the co-responsibility levy in June 1979 proposed by the Commission.

more drastic policy measures at a time when the agricultural vote was still important for many political parties across the EC. As a result, support for the status quo remained strong at the national level, despite the ever-growing budgetary burden of the CAP. Arguably, the unwillingness of the member states to commit to CAP reform at least in part demonstrated the power of COPA. Its national member associations, who had privileged access to national governments, were able to insert arguments into the debate in the Council and to persuade a national government to block progress on an issue or to veto a proposal.<sup>89</sup>

Moreover, COPA's success in preventing major reforms of the CAP during the 1970s was facilitated by the fact that the domestic and international reform pressures were still relatively weak – despite the fact that the creation of the co-responsibility levy was the result of the stronger budgetary pressures arising from the ever-increasing costs of price support from the guarantee section of the EAGGF that were threatening to exceed the limits of budgetary resources. Despite this, the combination of international (enlargement to the Mediterranean countries and trade negotiation in the Uruguay Round of the GATT) and domestic pressures (budgetary crisis) eventually rendered a reform in the milk sector unavoidable, when the EC introduced quotas in 1984. However, if we follow Peter Hall's classification of policy reform, the 1984 reform was a moderate one because the policy paradigm remained untouched; only the policy objectives and instruments were altered.<sup>90</sup> Accordingly, the true path-breaking reform occurred with the Mac Sharry reforms of 1992.<sup>91</sup> Nevertheless, the introduction of quotas, which COPA had opposed consistently during the 1970s, highlighted the erosion of its power and represented an attempt, albeit a limited one, to break the path-dependency of the policy.

This has been a limited study of one agricultural non-state actor, albeit the most prominent and influential one. Researching the influence of agricultural non-state actors on CAP reform (or lack thereof) would require including other farm interest groups in order to generalize the findings. In addition, cross-fertilization with social science research would theoretically underpin archive-based research and, by providing analytical tools, help to further conceptualize the European multi-level polity as 'an incipient transnational political society of intense networking and informal political coordination and governance.'<sup>92</sup>

89 Werner J. Feld, Implementation of the European Community's Common Agricultural Policy: Expectations, Fears, Failures, in: *International Organization* 33 (1979) 3, pp. 335-363, here pp. 349-350.

90 Peter Hall, Policy Paradigms, Social Learning, and the State, The Case of Economic Policymaking in Britain, in: *Comparative Politics*, 25 (1993) 3, pp. 275-296, here pp. 278-279. See also Carstens Daugbjerg, Reforming the CAP: Policy Networks and Broader Institutional Structures, in: *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 37 (1999) 3, pp. 407-428, here p. 412.

91 Adrian Kay, Path Dependency and the CAP, in: *Journal of European Public Policy*, 10 (2003) 3, pp. 405-420, here p. 408, 414-417.

92 Wolfram Kaiser/Brigitte Leucht/Morten Rasmussen (eds.), *The History of the European Union: Origins of a Trans- and Supranational Polity 1950-1972*, Abingdon 2009, p. 1.

The network policy approach, which was originally developed to analyze national policy-making but has been increasingly used at EU level,<sup>93</sup> could help explain how groups who benefit from a policy succeed in resisting pressure for radical reform. This appears to be a particularly well-suited approach for highly cohesive policy networks like COPA and other EU level agricultural interest groups, whose members shared a consensus on the policy paradigm and policy principles. Policy network analysis on the linkages between non-state actors and state actors including the EC institutions could also help elucidate the lack of fundamental reform of the CAP and the influence of COPA on the stark downgrading of reform attempts by the Commission. As argued by Carsten Daugbjerg, policy network members may defend the status quo but, in order to have reform demands removed from the agenda and hence to moderate reforms, may agree to minor concessions like the co-responsibility levy.<sup>94</sup> Furthermore, theories on social learning and socialization could inform a more sophisticated archive-based account of the role that ideas play in the policy-making process and in shaping the policy network – also helping to explain ‘enduring alterations in behaviour that results from experience’, something that could also contribute to a better understanding of the policy sector and policy change over the long-run, and up to the present-day.<sup>95</sup>

93 See for instance John Peterson, *Decision-Making in the European Union: Towards a Framework for Analysis*, in: *Journal of European Public Policy* 2 (1995) 1, pp. 69-93; Carsten Daugbjerg/David Marsh, *Explaining Policy Outcomes: Integrating the Policy Network Approach with Macro-Level and Micro-Level Analysis*, in: David Marsh (ed.), *Comparing Policy Networks*, Buckingham 1998, pp. 52-71.

94 Carsten Daugbjerg, *Reforming the CAP* (note 91), p. 414.

95 Hugh Hecló, *Modern Social Politics in Britain and Sweden*, New Haven 1974, p. 306. See also Peter Knoepfel/Ingrid Kissling-Näf, *Social Learning in Policy Networks*, in: *Policy and Politics* 26 (1998) 3, pp. 343-367.