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European Organisation of Agricultural, Rural and Forestry Contractors

Confédération Européenne des Entrepreneurs de Travaux Techniques Agricoles, Ruraux et Forestiers

Europäischer Zentralverband der land- und forstwirtschaftlichen Lohnunternehmer und ländlichen Dienstleistungsunternehmer

CEETTAR Statement on high fertilizer prices:

“Stimulate the use of existing modern machinery by contractors and farmers to use fertilizers and slurry in an efficient manner”

Last week the European Commission presented a document entitled [Communication on ensuring availability and affordability of fertilizers](#). The document underlines the challenges European farmers are facing as result of war in Ukraine and high gas prizes. Measures are mentioned to stabilize the fertilizer market for mid- and long term. For the European Organisation of Agricultural, Rural and Forestry Contractors (CEETTAR) it is a disappointment there is much less attention given to a practical and short term approach. As industries and households are stimulated to be more efficient in the short-term with their gas consumption, there is no or less attention for increasing the efficiency of fertilizers and slurry use. CEETTAR wants the EU Commission to address the fact that the efficient use of fertilizers (inclusive of Recovered Nitrogen from Manure (RENURE)) has to be promoted.

Klaus Pentzlin, President of CEETTAR: “The machinery that uses precision technology is already on the market and is being used across Europe by agricultural contractors and farmers. With this existing technology we can reduce the use of fertilizers. We have to act so in the short-term we can also reach our goals, while achieving the longer term Green Deal and Farm to Fork Strategy, rather than providing the proposed subsidies to the fertilizer industry.”

In the EU Commission communication it mentions that the Union wants a structural solution. They also want to accelerate the transition to innovative technologies. The Commission, together with Member States, will examine the expediency of making use of the agricultural reserve worth €450 million for the financial year 2023 to support farmers affected by high input costs. There is also €140 million available for emergency intervention to address high energy prices. The central EU Commission message is: Member States should use all available measures to increase efficiency of fertilizers use.

Klaus Pentzlin reacts: “We have to target the way that fertilizers and slurry are structurally used in efficient way. We must not aim at the goal that millions are spent to compensate higher prices in the short term. Subsidies and measures have to contribute to an efficient use of fertilizers and slurry.”

He continues: “European agricultural contractors play a very important role in that efficient use. The Commission has to take into account the role that agricultural contractors now play in using the best technology in the fields. Contractors can deliver these new techniques and farmers don’t have to wait for it to become available. That equipment is already available, we just need to use the best machinery that is already on the market. Contractors can provide these machines so farmers can have immediate access to the new technology to give more efficient fertilizer use.”

“In this way the most efficient fertilizer usage is achieved rather than compensating for higher fertilizer costs. By using contractors as the technology provider, not only bigger farms but also smaller farms have access to the best technology on their farm fields. Using contractor machines is also good for the long term Carbon Footprint of European agriculture. It means use of this equipment on a large acreage, with a smaller footprint (of CO₂) and a better use by educated drivers,” added Klaus Pentzlin. “Independent research has confirmed that fertilizing as the plants and soils demand, using best machine practice, has the potential to reduce the use of fertilizer by 5-10 %. This is supported by additional scientific research which has shown that using GPS start-stop functions on equipment can reduce the treated area between 10% and 15%.”

CEETTAR believes that the European Commission and Member States should put more effort into the use of precision farming techniques in the Eco-Schemes in their existing CAP Strategic Plans. The Commission has the power to accelerate this uptake. CEETTAR also believes that the focus should not only be on the use of fertilizers but also on the use of slurry. It’s a great disappointment to CEETTAR that the Commission doesn’t also stimulate the use of Recovered Nitrogen from Manure (RENURE) materials.

About CEETTAR:

The European Confederation of Agricultural, Rural and Forestry Contractors, established in 1961, represents about 150,000 companies and nearly 600,000 workers. It aims to represent the interests of land-based contractors in Europe. In 2014, the European Network of Forestry Entrepreneurs decided to merge with CEETTAR, resulting in a stronger and more representative single organisation representing land-based contractors at EU level.

CEETTAR aims to be a proactive force to benefit the contractors and the rural economy at European level. Its objective is to:

- Represent the national federations and defend their professional interests in relation to the institutions of the EU. This way, CEETTAR is recognised as representative organisation for contractors towards the European Institutions,
- Represent the national federations and defend their professional interests towards other private organisations, which are active at European level and beyond. CEETTAR maintains constructive relations with COPA-COGECA (farmers), CEMA (agricultural machinery industry), EFFAT (workers)...
- Help organisations in the new Member States to fulfil their national objectives as rapidly as possible and under the best conditions through the expertise transfer developed by the CAP.