

**European Ideas Network - Summer University
18 - 20 September 2008**

**EIN POLICY ROUNDTABLE ON
SUSTAINABLE FARMING AND FOOD SECURITY**

TIM BEYER HELM, RAPPORTEUR

Conclusions

- Food shortages and price increases highlight the need for the EU to develop an agricultural policy capable of meeting the new challenges facing Europe.

- For the last 25 years, the EU focussed on intensifying the liberalisation of agriculture and on producing less in order to reduce the surpluses of the past. But recent events show the production of food is not elastic and that Europe can once again face food shortages. Both demographic and climate change will have a growing impact on food security, with the world's population set to increase by almost fifty per cent over the next forty years.

- Market volatility and increased demand must not be met by protectionist moves. The EU needs to support multilateral trade agreements and free trade, whilst paying attention to food safety standards and the security of supply. Since recent food price rises are in part due to the increased costs of inputs such as fuel, many farmers and rural communities are facing reduced incomes.

- Europe's agricultural sector can meet the twin challenges of a changing environment and growing population by using technology and innovation to increase production. More research and development should include a proper examination of the benefits genetic modification (GM) could offer, particularly the growing of GM crops to use in second generation biofuels. The debate about GMOs should be based on a full exchange of views and communication strategy between producers and consumers.

- Europe's need for energy security can partly be met by agriculture, but the primary purpose of farming must be the production of food. The EU should examine how using biomass and second generation biofuels can reduce European member state reliance on imported fuels, and also enable the EU to meet CO2 reduction targets.

- The working group noted that the EPP-ED Group has consistently recognised the importance of rural and farming communities in the cohesion of European society. By developing a countryside compact, the Group would continue to promote a strong, diversified

rural economy - with problems like water shortages best solved by EU-wide action.

- Europe has a moral duty to alleviate hunger and famine in the world's poorest nations. But EU food aid and emergency relief should be matched by helping developing nations to improve their agricultural production methods through technological advances. EU development policies must not distort local markets and production, but instead encourage further self sufficiency.

- The working group concluded by noting that the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Health Check should not be the end but the start of a complete structural and strategic review of the CAP. Global challenges, such as the volatility of demand and prices, require European responses and solutions if we are to meet future food requirements.