TO: Ministers of Finance, Ministers of European Affairs

CC: Ministers of Agriculture

RE: EU deliberations on Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)

Brussels, 19 September 2012

Dear Minister,

With negotiations on the EU’s next MFF high on the political agenda, and in advance of next week’s discussion at the General Affairs Council, we are writing to you on behalf of the Green 10, ten of the largest European environmental organizations, with a membership of over 20 million citizens, to urge you to ensure that no decision on the overall allocations to the CAP, under the MFF, is taken before a decision has been taken on what the CAP budget will deliver and to safeguard only those parts of the CAP budget that clearly demonstrate benefits to society and European taxpayers.

As environmental organizations we have long argued that the CAP has the potential to become an instrument that will reward farmers for the delivery of public goods, and for this reason we have supported a significant part of the EU budget to be spent on the CAP. Despite previous reforms resulting in, for example, the creation of ‘the second pillar’, a large amount of funding, especially in ‘the first pillar’, is still going to Europe’s environmentally most damaging farming practices. These farming practices not only harm our environments and the climate, they also profoundly compromise reaching Europe’s goals for better public health, equity and tackling poverty and social exclusion. For the CAP to fulfill its potential, and to regain its legitimacy, it would need profound change.

Over the last year we have been closely following the proposals being discussed in the Agriculture Council and in the European Parliament’s Agriculture Committee and we are observing that at the very best lip service is paid to such a profound change. Worse, both within the European Parliament and within the Council, agriculture negotiators are planning to wait for a decision to be taken on the MFF before providing any clarity on the fundamental question of how this new CAP budget will actually be used. Some MEPs have even gone on record arguing that any cut in the CAP budget would translate into cuts in the one part of the CAP budget that actually brings benefits to society. It is becoming ever clearer that the CAP is more likely to be green-washed, than “greened”.

We believe this is an unacceptable way of taking decisions on the EU’s MFF, especially at a time of economic crisis and severe budget constraints across Europe. We also believe that this fatally undermines the possibly last chance for the CAP to regain its legitimacy and to develop into a policy that will be both politically and environmentally sustainable, by providing European citizens with public goods such as clean water and air, and thriving wildlife.
We therefore call on you to help ensure the following key elements of sound decision making. First of all, that agricultural negotiators will actually provide clarity on the question of what the money will be spent on, and secondly, that only those parts of the CAP budget that are providing substantial and demonstrable benefits to society and European taxpayers are safeguarded within the final budget decisions.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Genon K. Jensen,
Executive Director, Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)
On behalf of the Green 10 EU Directors

Green 10 EU Directors:

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