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Agricultural Situation

Possible Second Step for Agricultural Reform in Germany

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Report Highlights:

The Luxembourg Reform of EU Common Agricultural Policy is irreversible, but we are by far not at the end of reform, said German AgMinister Kuenast. The mainstream of farmers has to follow the pioneers and achieve an ecologically oriented approach for conventional agriculture; if needed, restricting production regulations should be implemented. There is no general right for financial support programs for farmers; it is our task to make use of available funds in an intelligent and targeted manner.

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Minister Kuenast Raises a Possible Second Step for Agricultural Reform in Germany

Summary: In a recent speech at the annual meeting of the 'Association of Family Farmers' (Arbeitsgemeinschaft bauerliche Landwirtschaft – AbL), Germany's Minister of Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture (BMVEL), Renate Kuenast, presented her ideas for a second step in the European/German agricultural policy reform. With respect to financial support programs in general, Kuenast said that there is not a general right for financial support. She stated that in the future, German mainstream farming should be ecologically oriented. End summary.

At the recent AbL meeting in Dresden on Feb 11, 2005, Minister Kuenast announced her ideas on a 'Phase II' for German agricultural policy reform. Kuenast opined that the framework for a sustainable agricultural policy system has been set in place by the EU Luxembourg reform of June 2003, and Germany's subsequent methodology for enacting the Luxembourg reform. Kuenast said that the Luxembourg derived policy framework is irreversible, but 'we are by far not at the end of reform.' The mainstream of farmers has to follow the pioneers and achieve an ecologically oriented approach for conventional agriculture.

Particular targets are the 'active protection of natural resources with respect to the application of pesticides and fertilizers'. We should avoid creating financial burdens for future generations, as a result of today's excessive application of pesticides and fertilizers. Farmers are needed to provide clean water, soils and air.

This target should be achieved through financial support programs. However, society should not be satisfied by the progress normally provided by industry. Politics should push industry for further progress, and if needed, restricting regulations should be implemented.

"Innovations in agriculture should reflect the desires and demands of the customers, which exclude the incalculable techniques of agro-gene technology."

With respect to financial support programs, Kuenast said that there is not a general right for financial support. "It is our task to make use of available funds in an intelligent and targeted manner." Kuenast credited BMVEL's programs by commenting that German farmers, in comparison to farmers in France, receive higher environment related compensation payments, higher support for organic farming, and higher investment grants for small farmers.

Kuenast did not present any details of her 'Phase II' program. However, her generalizing statements indicate that the principles of organic agriculture should set the orientation for mainstream agriculture.

The AbL, where Kuenast made her remarks, is a farmers' organization with about 1300 members. The prime goals of AbL are the conservation of a family based farming system, high standards for animal welfare and ecological farming practices. AbL strongly opposes industrialization trends in farming and farm product processing. AbL promotes what often is called 'museum farming'.

Despite of its relatively small number of members compared to the total number of about 370,000 farms Germany-wide, AbL receives a high level of media interest. Minister Kuenast often refers to the AbL in her public presentations. Kuenast is also a frequent keynote speaker at the AbL annual meetings.