

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
THE CHAIR

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Antonio TAJANI
Chair of the Conference of Committee Chairs
PHS 08B043
Brussels

D 313251 08.10.2019

IPOL-COM-AGRI D(2019) 35817

Dear Chair,

On 1 October 2019, the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI), in accordance with Rule 125 of the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament, held a public hearing with Mr. Wojciechowski, Commissioner-designate, who, subject to the positive outcome of the nomination procedure, will be responsible for Agriculture.

Prior to the hearing, Parliament had sent the Commissioner-designate a set of seven written questions to which Mr. Wojciechowski replied on 26 September.

Furthermore, on 30 September, the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to Rule 125 of the Rules of Procedure and Article 2 of Annex VII thereto, had received the letter by the JURI Committee regarding the scrutiny of the declaration of financial interests of Mr. Wojciechowski.

After the hearing, AGRI coordinators met under my chairmanship to evaluate the Commissioner-designate. They did not reach a majority representing two-thirds of the committee membership to agree that Mr. Wojciechowski is qualified both to be a member of the College of Commissioners and to carry out the specific tasks assigned to him. Consequently, they requested additional information through further written questions.

In spite of the new elements provided by the Commissioner-designate, AGRI coordinators, at their evaluation meeting of 7 October, were still dissatisfied and looking forward to further detailed information. Consequently, a large majority of them requested a resumed hearing of 1.5 hour.

At the resumed hearing authorised by the Conference of Presidents on 8 October and held on the same day, the introductory statement of Mr. Wojciechowski was followed by a first round of seven questions from representatives of each political group and a second round of six questions by Members.

In his opening statement, the Commissioner-designate insisted particularly on the competitiveness of EU agriculture, its contribution to the protection of climate and environment, and the need for the CAP to remain a common policy.

During the course of the hearing, Members particularly appreciated Mr. Wojciechowski's commitment in favour of the CAP as a common policy. Questions were asked in particular on the CAP Reform; the European Green Deal; the eco-schemes and the protection of climate and environment. Organic farming, forest and forestry were also discussed, as well as the enhancement of the crisis reserve and internal and external convergence. Members also addressed issues related to international trade, notably US import taxes on EU agricultural products, and measures to support young farmers, smaller farms and rural development in a context of reduced budget.

Following the resumed hearing, AGRI coordinators meeting under my chairmanship considered that the Commissioner designate had appropriately answered the questions.

Subsequently, AGRI coordinators agreed unanimously that the Commissioner-designate for Agriculture is qualified both to be a member of the College of Commissioners and to carry out the specific tasks assigned to him.

I attach the opinion of the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee, which was associated with the hearing.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Norbert Lins".

Norbert Lins

Annex: Opinion of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

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Norbert Lins
Chair of the Committee for Agriculture
and Rural Development
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60, rue Wiertz
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Dear Chair,

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) was associated to the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI) for the resumed hearing of Janusz Wojciechowski, Commissioner-designate for Agriculture, which took place on Tuesday 8 October between 11:00 and 12:30.

During the resumed hearing, Mr Wojciechowski committed himself to standing up for a robust budget for agriculture and to promoting in the negotiations with trade partners EU standards on food safety and making sure they are complied with. He would also ensure that the participation of farmers in the European Green Deal is incentivised. He emphasised that eco-schemes should be defined at EU level. He also pledged his intent to promote eco-schemes and operations within the second pillar of the CAP and gave some examples of what he considered to be eco-schemes. He also expressed his support to organic farming and the drafting of an action plan for developing organic farming in the EU. On forestry, he committed himself to support sustainable forestry practices under the CAP. He also committed himself to working closely with stakeholders and the European Parliament, and expressed a strong position on land grabbing.

Members present at the hearing conveyed their impressions to ENVI coordinators. Coordinators met in camera after the hearing under my chairmanship and asked that the following three paragraphs be included in the evaluation letter of the Commissioner-designate to be addressed by AGRI to the Conference of Committee Chairs.

Overall, ENVI coordinators considered that the answers given by Commissioner-designate Wojciechowski were more precise and more concrete than the ones given during his previous hearing. However, on climate and environmental commitments he was generally weak. On eco-schemes, he gave no clear commitment on an ambitious percentage for the ring-fencing of CAP funding. He did not commit himself to fight against the reduction of the funding for the second pillar. Generally, he still lacked a clear commitment and an ambitious vision for the greening of the CAP and precise and concrete proposals to ensure that environmental and climate considerations were fully taken into account. He was also unconvincing on how the agricultural sector will deliver its fair share towards EU commitments under the Green Deal, and act in accordance with the central role of agriculture in climate change mitigation and adaptation, and biodiversity. Asked on a concrete case on the violation of EU environmental legislation in Poland, he gave no clear commitment to ensure the implementation of the legislation. In light

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of the concerns expressed above, should the Commissioner-designate be confirmed, the ENVI Committee will closely scrutinise the contribution of agricultural policies to delivering the European Green Deal.

The general assessment of the ENVI Committee of this resumed hearing is that overall the Commissioner-designate made a better impression of his aptitude to be a member of the College of Commissioners and to carry out the specific tasks assigned to him. However, on the ENVI Committee's specific policy areas, the ENVI Committee considered that the Commissioner-designate's answers were not ambitious enough, taking into account the general political environment of the European Green Deal and that his portfolio will be under the supervision of Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans.

In accordance with Rule 125 of the Rules of Procedure and Article 4 of Annex VII thereto, a majority of ENVI coordinators decided to give a general negative opinion that the Commissioner-designate Janusz Wojciechowski, is qualified both to be a member of the College of Commissioners and to carry out the specific tasks assigned to him, with regards to ENVI's areas of competence.

Yours sincerely,

Pascal Canfin