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## Press Release

**Large carnivores are no longer threatened, but pastoralism is. The Commission needs to update its perception of the situation.**



**The increased presence of protected species of large carnivores has led to significant economic damage to livestock farmers and is putting traditional pastoralism, the local economy and biodiversity at risk. Member States are already spending millions of euros from the agricultural fund on compensating damage and inefficient protection measures. Against this backdrop, national experts, agricultural Ministers and MEPs met yesterday evening in the European Parliament where they clearly called upon the Commission to rethink its approach on the protection of large carnivores.**

The event entitled “Manage vs. Damage” was co-hosted by MEPs Mariana Petir (EPP), Elsi Katainen (ALDE), Eric Andrieu (S&D) and Maria Gabriela Zoana (S&D) with the support of the Romanian Presidency and Copa and Cogeca. It brought together experts, farmers and national authorities in order to provide a broad overview of the situation and propose pragmatic solutions to this ever-growing concern.

From the South to the North, the same accounts were reported from across Europe: with their numbers increasing rapidly, large carnivores are becoming bolder, coming closer to homes and herds and posing a major threat to the farming sector and rural communities. Wolves, brown bears and lynx are now thriving in Europe, putting pressure on ecosystems and on traditional pastoralism, which marks a dramatic reversal of their previous status. The same applies to Great Cormorants in aquaculture regions. Experts from Spain, Italy, France, Romania and Finland

presented shocking cases highlighting the extent to which local production had stopped, pasture lands had been abandoned and rural exodus had been magnified.

Reacting to this state of play, MEP Eric Andrieu (S&D) considered that the issue of large carnivores had brought the EU to a crossroads, forcing its institutions to answer questions on the vision and ambition for rural areas for the decades to come. To maintain vibrant pastoralism, new proposals are needed together with a balanced and pragmatic approach.

For MEP Marijana Petir (EPP) and Jari Lappe, the Finnish Minister of Agriculture, an initial answer lies in greater flexibility for Member States to adapt the management of protected species in accordance with their specificities and their habits. MEPs Clara Aguilera (S&D) and Elsi Katainen (ALDE) echoed Mr Petre Daea's, the Romanian Minister of Agriculture, call to open up a discussion on the annexes of the Nature Directives to allow for a more efficient and straightforward management of large carnivores and Great Cormorants, given that those species are no longer endangered.

Pekka Pesonen, Copa-Cogeca Secretary General, concluded the event by saying that, *"No one can deny the fact that large carnivore populations and related damage have increased significantly over the years. Expensive protection measures, which are no longer sufficient, together with the damage caused have a negative impact on the sustainability of our farming activities. On top of economic hardships, farmers are now the endangered species in pastoral lands! We agree that the annexes of the Nature Directives need to be updated in order to reflect the situation on the ground and to allow for a more active management of the populations. We also need to listen to and restore the position of farmers in this debate as well as in the management of large carnivores."*

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