

Czech University of Life Sciences Prague

Faculty of Economics and Management

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Master Thesis

**Function of an agrarian diplomat in the national and
supranational political structures**

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CZECH UNIVERSITY OF LIFE SCIENCES PRAGUE

Faculty of Economics and Management

DIPLOMA THESIS ASSIGNMENT

Esther Desmoulieres

European Agrarian Diplomacy

Thesis title

Function of an agrarian diplomat in the national and supranational political structures

Objectives of thesis

Modern diplomacy requires sensitive reinventing of agrarian policy according to the new challenges for global agriculture, complex agriculture policies and demands from the society.

The aim of this thesis is to examine the contemporary identity and purpose of agrarian diplomats, as well as delineate the evolving role of agrarian diplomacy. In the current political landscape of the EU, there is a pressing need for a nuanced reinvention of agrarian policy, responding to the challenges posed by global agriculture, intricate agricultural policies, and societal demands. Notably, stakeholders in the agricultural sector (e.g. farmer organisations and food production alliances) have gained substantial influence in political processes. By bridging the gap in existing literature, this thesis explores the scarcity of diplomatic insights in the field, emphasising then the necessity to adopt a fresh perspective amid changing diplomatic dynamics.

The thesis problem developed contends that modern agrarian diplomacy must navigate diplomatic relations with all sector stakeholders, a dimension previously politically constrained. Utilising case studies as pivotal tools, the thesis seeks to unravel successful diplomatic strategies at the individual or national level, forming a substantive contribution to the intricate domain of modern agrarian diplomacy.

Methodology

Desk study, case study, qualitative research, structured interview

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Keywords

agrarian diplomacy, international affairs, interest advocacy, decision making process actors, European Union

Recommended information sources

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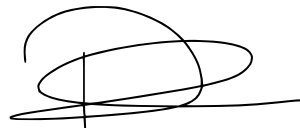
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In Prague on March 31, 2024,

Esther Desmoulieres

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Function of an agrarian diplomat in the national and supranational political structures

Abstract

Modern diplomacy requires sensitive reinventing of agrarian diplomacy according to the new challenges for global agriculture, complex agriculture policies and demands from the society. The aim of this thesis is to examine the contemporary identity and purpose of agrarian diplomats, as well as delineate the evolving role of agrarian diplomacy. In the current political landscape, there is a pressing need for a nuanced reinvention of agrarian policy, responding to the challenges posed by global agriculture, intricate agricultural policies, and societal demands. Notably, stakeholders in the agricultural sector, including farmer organizations and food production alliances, have gained substantial influence in political processes. By bridging the gap in existing literature, this thesis explores the scarcity of diplomatic insights in the field, emphasizing then the necessity to adopt a fresh perspective amid changing diplomatic dynamics. The thesis problem developed contends that modern agrarian diplomacy must navigate diplomatic relations with all sector stakeholders, a dimension previously politically constrained. Utilizing case studies as pivotal tools, the thesis seeks to unravel successful diplomatic strategies at the individual or national level, forming a substantive contribution to the intricate domain of modern agrarian diplomacy.

Keywords : agrarian diplomacy ; international affairs ; interest advocacy ; decision making process actors ; European Union.

Funkce agrárního diplomata v národních a nadnárodních politických strukturách

Abstrakt

Moderní diplomacie vyžaduje citlivé přetvoření agrární diplomacie podle nových výzev pro globální zemědělství, komplexních zemědělských politik a požadavků společnosti. Cílem této práce je prozkoumat současnou identitu a účel agrárních diplomatů a vymezit vyvíjející se roli agrární diplomacie. V současné politické situaci je naléhavě zapotřebí diferencovaně přetvářet agrární politiku a reagovat na výzvy, které přináší globální zemědělství, složité zemědělské politiky a požadavky společnosti. Je pozoruhodné, že zainteresované strany v zemědělském sektoru, včetně organizací zemědělců a aliancí výrobců potravin, získaly v politických procesech značný vliv. Překlenutím mezery v existující literatuře tato práce zkoumá nedostatek diplomatických poznatků v této oblasti a zdůrazňuje pak nutnost přijmout nový pohled v podmínkách měnící se diplomatické dynamiky. Rozpracovaný problém práce tvrdí, že moderní agrární diplomacie se musí orientovat v diplomatických vztazích se všemi aktéry sektoru, což je dimenze, která byla dříve politicky omezena. S využitím případových studií jako stěžejních nástrojů se práce snaží odhalit úspěšné diplomatické strategie na individuální či národní úrovni, čímž tvoří podstatný příspěvek ke složité oblasti moderní agrární diplomacie.

Klíčová slova : agrární diplomacie ; mezinárodní záležitosti ; prosazování zájmů ; aktéři rozhodovacího procesu ; Evropská unie.

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1 Introduction

In the intricate landscape of international relations, diplomacy serves as the cornerstone of interactions between nations, exerting influence over policies, forging alliances, and addressing global challenges. Amidst this complex network, the role of agrarian diplomacy emerges as a pivotal and crucial element, particularly within the context of the European Union (EU). Agrarian diplomacy, often regarded as a specialized branch of diplomatic practice, involves the negotiation, representation, and advocacy of agricultural concerns within national and supranational political structures. In essence, it encompasses the strategic engagement of diplomatic efforts to safeguard, promote, and navigate agricultural policies and interests on both domestic and international fronts.

At its core, the traditional approach to agrarian diplomacy within the EU context revolves around the representation of agricultural interests within the framework of the EU's decision-making processes. Throughout history, agrarian diplomats have served as intermediaries between national agricultural sectors and EU institutions, aiming to secure favorable outcomes for their respective constituencies. This conventional role often involved a blend of negotiation, lobbying, and coalition-building activities aimed at influencing policies related to agriculture, rural development, and trade agreements. Within the EU framework, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has been a focal point of agrarian diplomacy since its inception, with agrarian diplomats playing a key role in shaping the CAP, advocating for policies that address the needs of farmers, ensure food security, and promote sustainable agricultural practices. Moreover, agrarian diplomacy extends beyond the confines of EU institutions, encompassing engagements with non-EU stakeholders, such as international organizations, trading partners, and civil society groups, to address global agricultural challenges and navigate intricate trade dynamics.

Despite the significance and the crucial role of agrarian diplomacy within the EU, the existing literature and resources on this exact topic of the agrarian diplomats and their function remain limited. Scholarly works and resources often tend to focus on broader aspects of agricultural policy, European integration, or diplomatic studies, without delving deep into the nuanced functioning of agrarian diplomats and their evolving roles within contemporary political structures. This research gap emphasizes the necessity for a comprehensive exploration of agrarian diplomacy within the EU context, particularly in light

of recent developments and transformations in the agricultural landscape. Recent studies such as one by Germond and Geronymaki (2022) have provided insights into the challenges and opportunities facing agrarian diplomacy within the EU, highlighting the complexities of navigating diverse agricultural interests and evolving policy frameworks. However, there remains a paucity of literature specifically addressing the changing role of agrarian diplomats and the dynamics shaping their engagement within national and supranational political structures.

Against this backdrop, this thesis aims to address a fundamental research question : Has the classical role of agrarian diplomats within the EU undergone significant changes in recent times ? By considering this questioning, the study seeks to identify and analyze the evolving dynamics of agrarian diplomacy, shedding light on the factors propelling these changes and their implications for agricultural governance at both national and supranational levels. The primary objective of this research is to provide empirical evidence and theoretical insights to substantiate the hypothesis that the classical role of agrarian diplomats has indeed evolved within the EU context. Through a multifaceted analysis, the study intends to unravel the directions in which this role has transitioned and discern the underlying drivers reshaping the landscape of agrarian diplomacy.

The evolution of the classical role of agrarian diplomats within the EU can be attributed to several interrelated factors. One pivotal factor contributing to this evolution is the union's expansion : with successive enlargements incorporating diverse agricultural landscapes and interests, has necessitated a recalibration of diplomatic strategies and priorities. As the EU's agricultural policy framework encompasses an increasingly heterogeneous and diverse array of stakeholders, from small-scale farmers to agribusiness conglomerates, agrarian diplomats must adeptly navigate complex dynamics to accommodate varied and often divergent interests, as well as foster consensus. Additionally, the evolving nature of the EU's decision-making processes has instigated a more pluralistic and participatory approach to agrarian diplomacy. With a multitude of actors involved in agricultural policy formulation and implementation, ranging from national governments and EU bodies to regional authorities and civil society organizations, the conventional hierarchical model of diplomatic engagement has given way to a more decentralized and inclusive paradigm. Consequently, agrarian diplomats find themselves tasked with forging partnerships, building coalitions, and engaging in multi-stakeholder dialogues to influence policy outcomes effectively. Furthermore, the changing dynamics of the agricultural sector itself have prompted a

reevaluation of the role and functions of agrarian diplomats. Technological advancements, environmental imperatives, and shifting consumer preferences have reshaped the agricultural landscape, necessitating innovative policy responses and adaptive diplomatic strategies. In this context, agrarian diplomats are increasingly called upon to champion sustainable farming practices, mitigate the challenges posed by climate change, and bolster the competitiveness of European agriculture on global stage.

In conclusion, the exploration of agrarian diplomacy within the EU context marks a multifaceted investigation into the evolving dynamics of agricultural governance and diplomatic practice. By examining the importance of the agricultural sector for EU diplomacy encompassing the external influences and the expansion of affairs in agriculture, and the rise of new agrarian diplomats reinforced by the increase of non-institutional important actors and the need for new diplomatic approaches, this thesis aims to shed light on the evolving role of agrarian diplomats and the complex interplay of factors shaping agricultural policy within national and supranational political structures. Through theoretical background and empirical analysis of one of the biggest non-institutional actors as far as agriculture in EU is concerned, COPA-COGECA, the study endeavors to contribute to deepen our understanding of the transformative forces driving agricultural diplomacy in, the changing role of agrarian diplomats in national and supranational political structures in the EU, and the imperative of adaptive governance in addressing the challenges and seizing the opportunities that lie ahead for European agriculture.

2 Objectives and Methodology

2.1 Objectives

This thesis will explore the changing role of agrarian diplomats within both national and supranational political structures, with a particular focus on the European Union (EU). At the heart of this investigation lies a fundamental research question : how has the traditional function of agrarian diplomats evolved in recent years, and what are the specific contours and directions of this transformation ? This inquiry serves as the guiding thread throughout the thesis, driving the exploration of nuanced shifts and underlying drivers within agricultural diplomacy.

The imperative to understand and substantiate these transformations stems from the recognition of their profound implications for agricultural policy formulation, international trade negotiations, and broader geopolitical dynamics. By empirically validating the observed changes and elucidating their causal mechanisms, this research aims to provide policymakers, diplomats, and stakeholders with valuable insights into the evolving landscape of agrarian diplomacy. A noteworthy aspect of this transformation is the emergence of non-state actors, such as COPA-COGECA, as influential stakeholders in shaping agricultural policies and negotiations. Their growing prominence highlights the shifting power dynamics within the agricultural arena, necessitating a reevaluation of traditional diplomatic paradigms.

However, despite the critical importance of understanding these evolving dynamics, existing literature and resources on the topic are surprisingly limited. This underscores the novelty and significance of this research, which seeks to fill this gap by providing a rigorous and comprehensive analysis of the changing role of agrarian diplomats within contemporary political structures. Combining insights from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, including politics, international relations, and agricultural economics, this thesis aims to provide a nuanced understandings of the multifaceted challenges and opportunities confronting agrarian diplomacy in the 21st century.

Through meticulous examination of policy analyses, stakeholder perspectives, and pertinent case study, this thesis seeks to delineate and describe the specific directions in which agricultural representation has evolved, as well as the implications of these changes for national and supranational agricultural diplomacy. Similarly, and finally, by clarifying

the underlying drivers and implications of these transformations, this thesis aims to contribute to ongoing scholarly debates, inform policy discussions, and empower professionals with actionable insights to navigate the complexities of modern agricultural diplomacy.

2.2 Methodology

The methodology employed in this thesis encompasses a multifaceted approach designed to comprehensively analyze the function of agrarian diplomats within both national and supranational political structures. Central to this methodology is a combination of literature review, qualitative and quantitative research methods, each tailored to address specific aspects of the research question.

To begin with, this thesis will engage in a comprehensive review of existing literature and secondary data sources pertaining to agrarian diplomacy. This will involve an exhaustive examination of academic publications, policy reports, institutional documents, and media sources to contextualize empirical findings, identify theoretical frameworks, and assess the state of scholarship on the subject.

In addition, qualitative research methods such as in-depth interview of a senior policy advisor at COPA-COGECA in the secretary general's team, Ksenija Simovic, and document analysis will be utilized to gather rich, nuanced insights into the perceptions, experiences, and strategies of agrarian diplomats operating within national governments and supranational institutions. These qualitative approaches will enable the exploration of the complex interplay between diplomatic actors, institutional frameworks, and policy processes, shedding light on the evolving roles, challenges, and opportunities encountered by agrarian diplomats in their day-to-day practice.

In tandem with qualitative methods, some quantitative analysis will be employed partially to examine broader trends, patterns, and correlations pertaining to agrarian diplomacy. This will involve the compilation and analysis of statistical data from relevant sources, including international organizations, governmental agencies, and academic studies.

Moreover, the case study of COPA-COGECA as a prevailing non-institutional actor in the agrarian sector will be employed to provide in-depth, context-specific insights into the

function of agrarian diplomats within selected national and supranational contexts. Through detailed case narrative, supplemented by qualitative data analysis, this methodology will enable the exploration of specific diplomatic strategies, institutional arrangements, and policy outcomes, thereby enriching the broader analytical framework developed in this thesis.

3 Literature Review

3.1 Redefining the European agrarian diplomacy context

The objective of this first section is to delve into the intricate dynamics of EU diplomacy within the agricultural sector, exploring first its prevailing significance (3.1.1), and then the continual expansion of this crucial domain (3.1.2).

3.1.1 Agriculture : a prevailing sector for EU diplomacy

Agriculture holds great economic significance within the European Union (EU), not only as a vital sector for food production and employment but also as a historical cornerstone of the EU's broader economic strategy (Daugbjerg & Swinbank, 2012). The economic significance of agriculture within the EU is profound and multifaceted, weaving its threads through various sectors and domains, thereby shaping the contours of the EU's economic landscape. The EU's agricultural policies emerge as indispensable components of its overall strategy, meticulously crafted to ensure not only the imperatives of food security and rural development but also the imperatives of environmental sustainability (Germond & Geronymaki, 2022). This holistic approach underscores the EU's commitment to fostering agricultural practices that are not just economically viable but also ecologically sound, aligning itself with the global imperative of sustainable development.

Moreover, navigating the intricate corridors of the EU institutions, these policies are formulated and implemented through a complex decision-making process within these EU institutions, including the European Commission, the Council of the European Union, and the European Parliament (Kovacs, 2018). In there, a myriad stakeholders converge and diverge in a symphony of deliberations and negotiations. The European Commission, the Council of the European Union, and the European Parliament emerge as key players in this intricate dance, each wielding its influence in shaping the contours of agricultural policy (Graph 1).

However, the significance of agriculture transcends the realms of economics and policy, extending its tendrils into the domain of diplomacy. Here, agriculture emerges as a potent instrument of diplomatic engagements and plays a crucial role in shaping these last, both

within the EU's internal dynamics and in its interactions with the wider world. In other words, the EU's agricultural diplomacy is influenced not only by its internal policies but also by external factors such as international trade agreements and global economic dynamics (Borras et al., 2008). The EU's agricultural diplomacy is then a nuanced dance, choreographed by the interplay of internal imperatives and external exigencies. Internally, the EU's agricultural diplomacy finds expression in its efforts to harmonize disparate interests and aspirations within its diverse Member States, forging a common vision for agricultural development and sustainability. This internal diplomacy, often marked by delicate negotiations and compromises, serves as the base of the EU's collective agricultural endeavors. And externally, the EU's agricultural diplomacy assumes a global dimension, where it intersects with international trade agreements and global economic dynamics (Gstöhl, 2011). The EU's stance on agricultural issues in international forums such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) reflects not just its diplomatic priorities but also its strategic imperatives on the global stage (Nau, 1978)

Furthermore, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), as a central pillar of EU agriculture, is a linchpin of EU agriculture that transcends mere economic considerations to embody the EU's broader geopolitical aspirations. The CAP, serves as with its multifaceted objectives ranging from market stabilization to rural development, serves as a powerful tool for projecting the EU's influence on the global stage, shaping its relations with other countries and international organizations (Gstöhl, 2011). Indeed, the multifaceted nature of EU's agricultural diplomacy accentuate the intricate interplay and the interconnectedness between agricultural policies, economic interests, and diplomatic strategies, underscoring the EU's evolving role in global agricultural governance (Moreddu, 2016).

As the EU continues to navigate the complex terrain of global agriculture, its diplomatic engagements will remain crucial in shaping the contours of agricultural development and sustainability, both within and beyond its borders. In this tapestry of EU agricultural diplomacy, a multitude of actors and interests converge, each weaving its thread into the fabric of EU's agricultural landscape (Germond & Geronymaki, 2022). From farmers' organizations to environmental advocates, from multinational corporations to civil society groups, the landscape of EU agricultural diplomacy is marked by a diverse array of stakeholders, each vying to shape the trajectory of agricultural policy and practice.

Agriculture then emerges as a prevailing sector for EU diplomacy, embodying the convergence of economic imperatives, policy imperatives, and diplomatic imperatives within the intricate web of the EU's institutional framework. As the EU continues to navigate the shifting currents of global agriculture, its diplomatic engagements will play a pivotal role in shaping the contours of agricultural development and sustainability, both within and beyond its borders.

3.1.2 A constantly expanding sector

The agricultural sector within the European Union (EU) is undergoing a phase of significant expansion, driven by various factors and policy initiatives. Firstly, the EU's agricultural affairs are expanding due to the evolving demands of a growing global population and the increasing importance of food security and sustainability. As the world population continues to rise, estimated to reach over 9 billion by 2050, the pressure on agricultural systems intensifies, necessitating the EU to bolster its agricultural capabilities (Symes & Jansen, 1994). This expansion is not only about meeting the current demand for food but also about anticipating future needs, ensuring a resilient and sustainable food supply chain for generations to come. It is reflected in the EU's efforts to modernize and innovate its agricultural practices, emphasizing technological advancements, investing in research and development, promoting sustainable farming methods, and environmental stewardship (Moreddu, 2016). Initiatives such as the European Innovation Partnership "Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability" (EIP-AGRI) exemplify the EU's commitment to fostering innovation and sustainability in agriculture (Lamparte, 2016).

Additionally, the EU's agricultural agenda is increasingly focusing on addressing emerging challenges such as climate change adaptation, biodiversity conservation, and rural development (Henrikson, 2000). Secondly, as the agricultural sector expands, there is a growing need for specialized expertise and diplomatic engagement to navigate the complex dynamics of agricultural diplomacy at both national and supranational levels. In this regard, the EU plays a pivotal role in shaping agricultural policies and trade relations not only within its borders but also on the global stage (Kovacs, 2018). Agricultural diplomacy, therefore, becomes a critical component of the EU's foreign policy, influencing its interactions with

other nations and international organizations. This includes roles such as agricultural diplomats, or agrarian diplomats, who serve as intermediaries and can represent the interests of farmers, advocate for agricultural policies, and negotiate trade agreements and international partnerships (McGlade, 2009). As such, there is a growing demand for individuals with a deep understanding of agricultural economics, policy, and international relations to fulfill these roles effectively (Keukeleire, 2003). These diplomatic efforts are essential for promoting the EU's agricultural exports, ensuring market access, and resolving trade disputes in international forums such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) (Cardwell et al., 2003), even though the EU's agricultural diplomacy extends beyond trade negotiations to encompass broader issues such as environmental sustainability, rural development, and food security.

As such, the expansion of the EU's agricultural affairs necessitates a concerted effort to cultivate a cadre of skilled professionals capable of navigating the complex landscape of agrarian diplomacy and advancing the interests of the agricultural sector within national and supranational political structures. This requires not only expertise in agricultural economics, policy, and international relations but also a nuanced understanding of the socio-economic and environmental factors shaping the agricultural landscape (Henrikson, 2000). Moreover, given the interconnected nature of global agriculture, effective agricultural diplomacy demands collaboration and coordination among various stakeholders, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), research institutions, and industry representatives (Borras et al., 2008). Strengthening diplomatic ties and fostering partnerships both domestically and internationally is essential for promoting sustainable agricultural development, enhancing food security, and mitigating the impacts of climate change on agriculture (Brailard & Djalili, 2020).

It appears more clearly that the expansion of the agricultural sector within the EU reflects not only the evolving demands of a growing global population but also the imperative to address pressing challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and rural development. This expansion underscores the importance of agricultural diplomacy as a means of promoting the interests of the agricultural sector and advancing broader policy objectives related to food security, sustainability, and economic development. By investing in agricultural innovation, fostering diplomatic engagement, and building strategic partnerships, the EU can position itself as a global leader in sustainable agriculture and

contribute to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Brown, 2022). As such, the future of EU agriculture hinges on the ability to navigate the complex interplay of economic, social, and environmental factors while forging a path towards a more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable agricultural future.

3.2 The rise of new agrarian diplomats in EU

This section looks up the rise of new agrarian diplomats in EU by exploring the need for new diplomatic approaches (3.2.1), and highlighting the importance of these newly-considered diplomats (3.2.2).

3.2.1 The need for new diplomatic approaches

In exploring the function of agrarian diplomats in national and supranational political structures, it becomes increasingly apparent that traditional political diplomacy frameworks are evolving to accommodate and incorporate a broader array of sectors beyond politics alone. This shift is driven by the recognition that the agricultural sector is influenced not solely by political dynamics but also by economic, environmental, and societal factors (Plundrich, 2024). Consequently, there is a growing need and a pressing demand for new diplomatic approaches, new diplomatic strategies that encompass these multifaceted influences and capable of addressing them. Firstly, there has been an observed transition in focus from traditional political diplomacy towards a more holistic approach to include various sectors such as economics, environment, and society (Murray et al., 2011). This shift acknowledges that agricultural affairs are intrinsically connected with various aspects of society, including trade relations, environmental sustainability, and social welfare policies. As agriculture serves as a foundation for numerous aspects of society, it has become imperative for diplomatic initiatives to embrace this interconnectedness. Secondly, it is crucial to recognize the significant influence of non-political actors in the realm of agrarian diplomacy. Non-state actors, ranging from civil society organizations (CSO) to multinational corporation and advocacy groups, play significant roles in shaping agricultural policies and practices (Saner, 2006). For instance, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) collaborates with civil society organizations to advocate for policies supporting sustainable

agriculture, natural resource conservation, and fair-trade practices. As a multinational corporation Bayer AG can be quoted : it is a leading multinational corporation in agriculture, that develops and markets products and solutions for farmers, impacting agricultural practices globally. In a different vein, Greenpeace as an advocacy group advocates for sustainable agricultural practices, campaigns against deforestation and genetically modified organisms (GMOs), and influences policy decisions regarding agriculture and the environment. Their involvement highlights the complexity of agrarian diplomacy and stressed the need for diplomatic engagement with diverse stakeholders beyond traditional governmental channels. Recognizing and involving these non-state actors is crucial for crafting effective and inclusive agricultural policies that reflect the diverse interests and perspectives within society.

Furthermore, the emergence of new agrarian diplomats within the European Union (EU) reflects a broader recognition of the interconnected nature of agricultural issues with diverse societal concerns, as well as the recognition of the importance of engaging with a wide range of actors to address them effectively. The EU, as a supranational entity, plays a pivotal role in agricultural diplomacy, both internally among its Member States and externally in global forums. The EU's agricultural policies not only shape its internal agricultural landscape but also influence its international relations, trade agreements, and global agricultural governance (Delcorde, 2021).

In this context, the function of agrarian diplomats extends beyond traditional diplomatic roles to encompass a diverse set of responsibilities. These diplomats are tasked with navigating complex interdependencies between agriculture and other sectors, forging alliances with diverse stakeholders, and advocating for policies that balance economic prosperity, environmental sustainability, and societal well-being. Moreover, they play a crucial role in representing the interests of agricultural stakeholders, including farmers, rural communities, and agribusinesses, in both domestic and international arenas. The changing landscape of agrarian diplomacy also underscores the need for enhanced cooperation and coordination between national and supranational diplomatic structures. As agricultural issues transcend national borders and require collective action, effective diplomatic strategies must be collaborative and inclusive, involving coordination between governments, international organizations, non-state actors, and other relevant stakeholders.

The evolving function of agrarian diplomats reflects then a larger understanding of the intricate interplay between agriculture and various societal, economic, and environmental dynamics. As agricultural diplomacy adapts to these changing realities, diplomats must adopt innovative approaches that foster collaboration, inclusivity, and sustainability. By engaging with a diverse array of actors and addressing the multifaceted challenges facing the agricultural sector, agrarian diplomats can contribute to building a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable agricultural future.

3.2.2 Importance of new diplomats

The agricultural landscape of the European Union (EU) has undergone profound transformations, mainly marked by a notable surge in the participation and involvement of non-institutional actors. These entities ranging from international organizations to non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and prominent bodies such as COPA-COGECA, have significantly reshaped the dynamics of agricultural diplomacy within the EU. This burgeoning participation reflects a paradigm shift in the dynamics of agricultural diplomacy within the EU, amplifying the role and the influence of diverse stakeholders in shaping policies and tackling emergent challenges. The nascent engagement of non-institutional actors in EU agricultural diplomacy has garnered scholarly attention, and their work highlight the pivotal importance of these new diplomats in navigating the intricate web of agricultural governance (Daugbjerg & Swinbank, 2012). These non-institutional actors bring unique perspectives, specialized expertise, and substantial resources to the table, enriching the dialogue on agricultural policies and strategies. Their involvement fosters a more inclusive and participatory decision-making process, amplifying the representation of diverse interests within the agricultural sector (Borras, Edelman & Kay, 2008). Moreover, the engagement of international organizations bolsters the EU's capacity to address transnational agricultural challenges, spanning from ensuring food security to promoting sustainable farming practices (Germond & Geronymaki, 2022). By leveraging the expertise and networks of these organizations, the EU can develop comprehensive strategies to tackle multifaceted challenges that transcend national boundaries.

Among the key players in this agrarian landscape is COPA-COGECA, a prominent representative of European farmers and agricultural cooperatives. As a staunch advocate of the agricultural community, COPA-COGECA plays a pivotal role in advocating for the interests of the agricultural community. Its active engagement in diplomatic endeavors amplifies the voice of farmers, articulate the concerns and priorities of farmers, ensuring that their interests are adequately addressed and considered in policy formulations (Borras et al., 2008). Through its active engagement in diplomatic initiatives, COPA-COGECA amplifies the voice of farmers on regional and global platforms, advocating for policies that uphold their livelihoods and promote sustainable agricultural practices as well. This collaborative approach, characterized by the synergistic interaction between institutional and non-institutional actors, holds immense potential for driving innovation, enhancing resilience, and advancing sustainability in European agriculture (Daugbjerg & Swinbank, 2012). By forging synergies between diverse stakeholders, the EU can harness collective wisdom and resources to address the complex challenges confronting the agricultural sector.

In conclusion, the evolving landscape of EU agricultural diplomacy accentuates the imperative of embracing diverse perspectives and fostering inclusive dialogue. The active participation of non-institutional actors injects vitality into policy discussions, fortifying the EU's capacity to navigate the intricate terrain of agricultural governance. Moving forward, concerted efforts to leverage the expertise and engagement of diverse stakeholders will be essential in shaping a resilient, equitable, and sustainable agricultural future for the European Union.

4 Practical Part

4.1 COPA-COGECA, a non-institutional but important actor in agrarian sector

In the second chapter of this thesis, the multifaceted realm of COPA-COGECA, chosen as a case study, will be analyzed. First, by unravelling its essence and pivotal role (4.1.1), and then by scrutinizing its intricate engagement with policymakers for agricultural policies (4.1.2).

4.1.1 What is COPA-COGECA and its role

COPA-COGECA is a prominent agricultural lobbying organization in the European Union (EU), representing the interests of farmers and agricultural cooperatives. It is the result of the merger between COPA (Committee of Professional Agricultural Organizations) which is essentially made up of the majority trade unions in each country (FNSEA for France or DBV for Germany for example), and COGECA (General Confederation of Agricultural Cooperatives) in the 1960s. COPA is composed of organizations from the 27 Member States of the EU as well as other partner organizations from non-EU countries like Norway, Switzerland, Iceland or Turkey. Inside of COPA, there are 52 working parties that are all specialized in either topics related to production like cereals or beef meat, or either general considerations as environment or rural development. On the other hand, COGECA includes 35 full members from the EU Member States which represents various agricultural organizations across Europe. Overall, COPA-COGECA, the Committee of Professional Agricultural Organizations and General Confederation of Agricultural Cooperatives, is a prominent voice in the European Union's agricultural landscape (Image 1). Founded in 1959, COPA-COGECA serves as a unifying platform for over 22 million farmers and their families, with their respective agri-cooperatives across the EU Member States and beyond. Its formation stemmed from the recognition of the need for a unified agricultural voice to navigate the complex political and economic terrain affecting European farming communities. Over the years, COPA-COGECA has evolved from its initial role as a mere lobbying entity to a multifaceted organization actively engaged in shaping agricultural policies at both national and supranational levels.

COPA-COGECA plays a vital role in advocating for EU agricultural policies that support the interests and concerns of farmers and agricultural cooperatives. It engages in policy discussions, provides expertise and input to policymakers, and represents the agricultural sector in various forums, including the European Commission and the European Parliament. It represents a wide range of stakeholders within the agricultural sector, including small-scale farmers, large agricultural enterprises, and agricultural cooperatives across the EU Member States. It primarily operates within the agricultural sector, addressing issues related to farming practices, rural development, trade, environmental sustainability, and food security.

COPA-COGECA's evolution over the years offers insights into the changing role of agrarian diplomats in the context of the EU's agricultural policies. By examining how COPA-COGECA has adapted its strategies, priorities, and advocacy efforts in response to evolving political, economic, and social dynamics, researchers can analyze the transformation of the traditional function of agrarian diplomats. This case study can shed light on the specific contours and directions of this transformation, including changes in lobbying tactics, the emergence of new stakeholders and their impact in shaping agricultural diplomacy. We can say that COPA-COGECA serves as a significant actor in EU agricultural policymaking and offers a valuable case study to explore the evolving role of agrarian diplomats within the recent years.

> *Core missions*

The core mission of COPA-COGECA revolves around safeguarding the interests of European farmers and agricultural cooperatives, advocating for policies that ensure the sustainability, competitiveness, and viability of the agricultural sector. This entails addressing a myriad of issues ranging from market access and trade negotiations to environmental sustainability, rural development, and food security. COPA-COGECA operates within the broader framework of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) of the European Union, actively participating in policy discussions, consultations, and negotiations with EU institutions such as the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the Council of the European Union. COPA-COGECA's core missions and objectives are deeply rooted in its commitment to representing and advancing the interests of European farmers and agricultural cooperatives. At the heart of its endeavors lies the overarching goal of

ensuring the sustainability, competitiveness, and viability of the agricultural sector within the European Union (EU) (COPA-COGECA, n.d.).

First, one of COPA-COGECA's primary missions is to safeguard the interests of European farmers against various challenges and threats. This includes advocating for fair and equitable policies that protect farmers' incomes, ensure market access, and promote a level playing field within the EU agricultural market. COPA-COGECA strives to address issues such as price volatility, input costs, and market distortions that can adversely affect farmers' livelihoods (Savage & Win, 2023).

Then, COPA-COGECA places a strong emphasis on promoting sustainable agricultural practices that balance economic, environmental, and social considerations. The organization actively engages in discussions and initiatives aimed at enhancing environmental stewardship, resource efficiency, and biodiversity conservation within the agricultural sector. By advocating for sustainable farming methods and agroecological approaches, COPA-COGECA seeks to ensure the long-term viability of European agriculture while mitigating its environmental footprint (Cheesley, 2018).

Another key objective of COPA-COGECA is to foster innovation and enhance the competitiveness of European agriculture in the global market. The organization supports research and development efforts aimed at driving technological advancements, improving productivity, and fostering value-added opportunities within the agricultural value chain. By promoting innovation and knowledge transfer, COPA-COGECA seeks to empower farmers to adopt cutting-edge practices and technologies that enhance their efficiency and resilience in a rapidly evolving agricultural landscape.

Moreover, COPA-COGECA is dedicated to ensuring food security and quality standards within the European Union. The organization advocates for policies that support a robust and sustainable food supply chain, including measures to enhance food safety, traceability, and authenticity. COPA-COGECA also works to uphold high standards of animal welfare, food hygiene, and product integrity, contributing to consumer confidence and trust in European agricultural products (PROJECTS, n.d.).

Finally, COPA-COGECA recognizes the integral role of rural areas in the socio-economic fabric of Europe. As such, the organization actively supports initiatives aimed at promoting rural development, diversification, and inclusive growth. By advocating for targeted investments, infrastructure development, and access to essential services in rural

communities, COPA-COGECA seeks to improve the quality of life and livelihood opportunities for rural residents (Cheesley, 2018).

In summary, COPA-COGECA's core missions and objectives revolve around safeguarding farmer interests, promoting sustainability, enhancing innovation and competitiveness, ensuring food security and quality, and advancing rural development within the European Union. Through its advocacy efforts, collaborative initiatives, and engagement with stakeholders, COPA-COGECA strives to shape policies and initiatives that foster a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable agricultural sector in Europe.

> *Evolution of COPA-COGECA*

COPA-COGECA's evolution from a traditional lobbying entity to a multifaceted organization reflects the dynamic nature of the agricultural sector and the broader geopolitical context within which it operates. Initially established in 1959 to represent the interests of European farmers and agricultural cooperatives, COPA-COGECA has continuously adapted its strategies and priorities to address emerging challenges and opportunities. The organization's evolution is characterized by its responsiveness to shifting agricultural landscapes, technological advancements, and evolving consumer preferences. Throughout its history, COPA-COGECA has demonstrated a proactive approach to policy advocacy, engaging with policymakers at both national and supranational levels to shape agricultural policies that align with the needs and aspirations of its constituents. This evolution is exemplified by COPA-COGECA's emphasis on sustainability issues, including environmental conservation, resource management, and climate resilience. By championing sustainable agricultural practices, COPA-COGECA has positioned itself as a key stakeholder in discussions surrounding the future of European agriculture. Moreover, COPA-COGECA's evolution underscores its commitment to inclusivity and collaboration. The organization has increasingly sought to engage a broader range of stakeholders, including environmental NGOs, consumer groups, and research institutions, recognizing the interconnectedness of agricultural issues with broader societal concerns. By fostering dialogue and consensus-building, COPA-COGECA aims to ensure that agricultural policies reflect the diverse perspectives and interests of all stakeholders involved.

Moreover, COPA-COGECA has increasingly embraced a more inclusive approach to policymaking, engaging stakeholders beyond traditional agricultural circles, including environmental NGOs, consumer groups, and research institutions. This shift towards broader

coalition-building reflects a recognition of the interconnectedness of agricultural issues with wider societal concerns such as biodiversity conservation, rural development, and social justice.

4.1.2 Its engagement with policymakers for agricultural policies

> Engagement with policymakers

COPA-COGECA, as the united voice of European farmers and agricultural cooperatives, engages with policymakers at various levels to advocate for agricultural interests within the EU. At the supranational level, COPA-COGECA actively participates in the legislative processes of the European institutions, including the European Parliament, Council, and Commission. Through engagement with these bodies, COPA-COGECA ensures that the concerns and priorities of European farmers are considered in the development of new regulations and policies that may impact the agricultural sector. Additionally, COPA-COGECA collaborates with other relevant international institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), recognizing the global implications of agricultural policies. While operating primarily at the European level, COPA-COGECA also works in coordination with the permanent representations of Member States to influence decision-making processes within the Council (Graph 2). This multilevel engagement accentuates COPA-COGECA's commitment to representing the diverse agricultural interests across the EU and ensuring that farmers' voices are heard in policy discussions « *The way we engage with the policy makers and the decision makers is really on various levels* » Ksenija Simovic said (Appendix A, p. 73), the senior policy advisor at COPA-COGECA in the secretary general's team interviewed for the purpose of this thesis (full interview transcripts are presented in Appendix A).

Specific strategies employed by COPA-COGECA to communicate with policymakers include proactive engagement with the European Commission prior to the publication of proposals. This involves participating in official consultations and contributing to the development of new legislation. Internally, COPA-COGECA utilizes a democratic process involving 52 working parties comprised of experts from member organizations to formulate

positions on various topics. These positions are further refined and adopted by the presidents of member organizations, ensuring representation from all 27 EU Member States, and fostering compromise-building among stakeholders. COPA-COGECA's engagement extends beyond the initial stages of policy development to include ongoing analysis and advocacy throughout the legislative process. This comprehensive approach enables COPA-COGECA to effectively communicate farmers' perspectives to policymakers and influence the direction of agricultural policies at the European level « *Our main focus is the policy and decision making at the European level, because as we know, agriculture is an exclusive competence of the European Union. So basically, most of it is decided at the Brussels level* » (Appendix A, p. 74).

Furthermore, COPA-COGECA employs a variety of communication channels to ensure that the voices of farmers and agricultural cooperatives are heard and considered in policymaking processes. This includes publishing press releases, organizing meetings with decision-makers, and inviting policymakers to participate in working party meetings « *it is very important for the Commission to understand where we stand on certain issues* » Ksenija said (Appendix A, p. 74). By actively engaging policymakers at both the European and national levels, COPA-COGECA facilitates dialogue and fosters collaboration between stakeholders. Additionally, COPA-COGECA emphasizes the importance of representativeness at the member level, encouraging active participation from all member organizations in policy discussions. Through these efforts, COPA-COGECA strives to amplify the voices of farmers and agricultural cooperatives and ensure that their interests are reflected in policy outcomes.

Notable examples of COPA-COGECA's diplomatic efforts leading to significant advancements or political changes include its role in advocating for the Unfair Trading Practices (UTP) Directive, also called EU Directive 2019/633. This directive aims to balance power within the EU food supply chain and provide fair remuneration to farmers. Adopted in 2019, it targets large operators creating imbalances against trading partners (Foote, 2021). COPA-COGECA, representing European farmers and agri-cooperatives, advocated for measures to combat UTPs, such as late payments for perishable goods (Michalopoulos, 2018). While the success of this directive is still being evaluated, and that specific data on COPA-COGECA's advocacy efforts may not be available, their involvement in discussions and support for legislation targeting UTPs is evident from various sources. COPA-

COGECA's collaborative approach and partnership-building efforts demonstrate its effectiveness in driving policy change « *in the agriculture area, there is a lot of different stakeholders, it's not just ours. So, what we tend to do on very important issue is to build consensus and to build partnerships* » (Appendix A, p.75) By working closely with other stakeholders and building consensus on important issues, COPA-COGECA has played a pivotal role in shaping agricultural policies that benefit European farmers and agricultural cooperatives. Overall, COPA-COGECA's engagement with policymakers reflects the evolving function of agrarian diplomats in recent years, highlighting the organization's commitment to representing and advocating for the interests of European farmers in the policymaking process.

> *Inclusive approach to policymaking*

An inclusive approach to policymaking is essential for ensuring that diverse voices and perspectives are considered in the decision-making process, leading to more effective, equitable, and sustainable policies. This approach involves actively engaging stakeholders from various backgrounds, including marginalized communities, civil society organizations, and experts, throughout the policy development lifecycle (Brown, 2022).

At the core of an inclusive approach is meaningful stakeholder engagement. Policymakers must proactively seek input from a wide range of stakeholders, including those who may be affected by the proposed policies. This involves conducting consultations, workshops, and public hearings to gather diverse perspectives, insights, and feedback. By involving stakeholders in the decision-making process, policymakers can ensure that policies reflect the needs, priorities, and aspirations of the communities they serve (Nzioka, 2023). An inclusive approach emphasizes the importance of representation and diversity in policymaking bodies. Policymakers should strive to create inclusive environments where individuals from different backgrounds feel empowered to participate and contribute. This may involve promoting diversity within government agencies, advisory boards, and decision-making panels to ensure that a wide range of perspectives are considered.

Accessibility is key to fostering inclusivity in policymaking. Policymakers must ensure that information, resources, and opportunities for engagement are accessible to all stakeholders, including those with disabilities, language barriers, or limited access to technology. This may involve providing translated materials, hosting accessible meetings, and offering alternative formats for participation to accommodate diverse needs (Staff, 2020). An

inclusive approach to policymaking also emphasizes transparency and accountability. Policymakers should be transparent about the decision-making process, including how input from stakeholders is incorporated into policy decisions. Moreover, mechanisms for accountability should be established to ensure that policies are implemented effectively and that the outcomes are monitored and evaluated for their impact on different communities.

Lastly, an inclusive approach involves building the capacity of stakeholders to participate effectively in the policy-making process. This may include providing training, resources, and support to empower individuals and communities to engage meaningfully in decision-making. By strengthening the capacity of stakeholders, policymakers can ensure that diverse voices are heard and that policy outcomes reflect the collective interests of society (Brown, 2022).

In conclusion, an inclusive approach to policymaking is essential for promoting democracy, equity, and social justice. By actively engaging stakeholders, promoting diversity, ensuring accessibility, fostering transparency and accountability, and building capacity, policymakers can develop policies that address the needs and concerns of all members of society, leading to more inclusive and sustainable outcomes.

> Influence of COPA-COGECA within supranational political structures

In navigating this evolving landscape, COPA-COGECA has become adept at leveraging its influence across national and supranational political structures. Through strategic alliances, targeted advocacy campaigns, and diplomatic negotiations, the organization has effectively shaped agricultural policies that reflect the diverse interests of its constituents while also aligning with broader EU policy objectives.

COPA-COGECA's influence within supranational political structures, such as the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the Council of the European Union, underscores its significance as a key player in shaping agricultural policies at the European level. Through strategic engagement and active participation in policy discussions, COPA-COGECA effectively advocates for policies that reflect the interests and priorities of European farmers and agricultural cooperatives. As a representative body for European farmers and agricultural cooperatives, COPA-COGECA plays a vital role in shaping agricultural policies that impact millions of individuals across the EU Member States. Through its active participation in policy discussions, consultations, and negotiations, COPA-COGECA ensures that the voices of farmers are heard, and their interests are

represented in decision-making processes (Henrikson, 2000). For instance, an example of their influence is seen in their engagement with EU institutions to shape agricultural policies. COPA-COGECA actively participates in discussions and negotiations concerning the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), advocating for policies that promote the best interests of the agricultural sector in Europe. Through their representation and lobbying efforts, COPA-COGECA influences the decision-making processes within the European Union, ensuring that the concerns and priorities of European farmers are considered at the supranational level (Graph 3).

The organization's influence extends beyond traditional lobbying efforts, encompassing a wide range of activities aimed at advancing the interests of European agriculture. COPA-COGECA leverages its expertise, networks, and resources to advocate for policies that promote the sustainability, competitiveness, and resilience of the agricultural sector. One example is their advocacy for the CAP, where they provided inputs based on their members' expertise and collaborate with policymakers to ensure that the CAP reflects farmers' needs and contributes to sustainable agricultural practices. COPA-COGECA also engages in dialogues with stakeholders, including policymakers, NGOs, and international organizations, to promote their objectives. Through these efforts, they influence policy decisions, shape agricultural legislation, and secure support for measures enhancing the sector's sustainability, competitiveness, and resilience. COPA-COGECA's role extends beyond policy advocacy : they provide support and resources to farmers, facilitate knowledge exchange, and promote innovation in agricultural practices, contributing to the sector's long-term viability and adaptability to challenges. By engaging with policymakers, stakeholders, and the public, COPA-COGECA seeks to build consensus around key agricultural issues and drive meaningful change at the supranational level.

Furthermore, COPA-COGECA's influence within supranational political structures is bolstered by its strategic alliances and partnerships with other relevant stakeholders. By collaborating with like-minded organizations, coalitions, and advocacy groups, COPA-COGECA amplifies its voice and enhances its capacity to effect change. This collaborative approach enables COPA-COGECA to navigate complex political dynamics, overcome barriers to policy adoption, and achieve tangible outcomes that benefit European farmers and agricultural cooperatives. Moreover, COPA-COGECA engages in strategic advocacy efforts aimed at raising awareness of agricultural issues among EU policymakers and

stakeholders. Through targeted campaigns, position papers, and advocacy events, COPA-COGECA amplifies the voices of European farmers, ensuring that their concerns are heard and taken into account in the policy-making process (Lundgren et al., 2023).

COPA-COGECA also plays a crucial role in facilitating dialogue and consensus-building among diverse stakeholders within the EU institutions. COPA-COGECA's influence within supranational political structures is strengthened by its ability to mobilize support from its extensive network of national member organizations and affiliated partners. By coordinating efforts across different EU Member States and regions, COPA-COGECA amplifies its advocacy impact and enhances its bargaining power in negotiations with EU institutions. This collective action ensures that COPA-COGECA speaks with a unified voice on behalf of European farmers, maximizing its influence on EU agricultural policies (Lundgren et al., 2023). Consequently, COPA-COGECA's influence within supranational political structures is multifaceted and dynamic, driven by strategic engagement, advocacy efforts, dialogue facilitation, and collective action. As a trusted representative of European farmers and agricultural cooperatives, COPA-COGECA plays a crucial role in shaping the future of EU agriculture, ensuring that policies are responsive to the needs and realities of agricultural stakeholders across the European Union.

4.2 A new way of advocating for agricultural interests ?

A transformative approach for agricultural interests will be consider in this section, by overlooking COPA-COGECA's collaboration with stakeholders (4.2.1) and by shedding light on the emergence of new skills and qualities essential for agrarian diplomats in the contemporary landscape (4.2.2).

4.2.1 Its collaboration with stakeholders in agrarian sector

COPA-COGECA, as the apex representative body of European farmers and agricultural cooperatives, operates within both national and supranational political structures, navigating a complex landscape of divergent interests and potential conflicts of interest. The traditional function of agrarian diplomats, embodied by COPA-COGECA, has

evolved significantly in recent years, marked by an emphasis on engagement, consensus-building, and strategic partnerships to shape agricultural policies in the European Union (EU) (Copa Cogeca, n.d.). The organization acknowledges the challenges posed by divergent interests, particularly evident in debates surrounding initiatives like the Green Deal, which have led to polarization within the agricultural sector (Savage & Win, 2023). Despite these challenges, COPA-COGECA remains committed to its core principles of engagement and consensus-building, prioritizing internal consultation and compromise among its diverse membership of 27 Member States and 66 organizations.

COPA-COGECA engages with stakeholders within the agricultural sector and beyond, representing the interests of farmers and cooperatives in EU policymaking processes. As a registered representative organization with a transparent status, COPA-COGECA interacts with decision-makers at various levels, leveraging its democratic structure to ensure representativeness and legitimacy. Through elected representatives and working party chairs, COPA-COGECA fosters dialogue and collaboration with policymakers, drawing on its long-standing tradition dating back to the 1960s. The organization's strategic alliances, such as the European Livestock Boys, Agri-Food Chain Coalition, and European Bioeconomy Alliance, facilitate the advancement of its objectives by promoting communication and cooperation on key agricultural issues. Furthermore, ongoing diplomatic initiatives like the ETP Plants for the Future project demonstrate COPA-COGECA's commitment to collaboration and innovation within the agricultural industry.

From a diplomatic standpoint, cultivating robust partnerships and collaborative networks within the agricultural industry offers several advantages for COPA-COGECA. By building consensus among diverse stakeholders, including farmers, cooperatives, and other organizations, COPA-COGECA reinforces its position and enhances the likelihood of achieving positive outcomes in policymaking processes. The organization's engagement in proactive topics and legislative initiatives indicate the importance of alliances in amplifying voices and increasing relevance in Brussels. As an example, the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (EIP-AGRI) provides insight into collaborative efforts within the agricultural sector, aligning with COPA-COGECA's engagement strategy.

As mentioned before, COPA-COGECA, as the united voice of European farmers and cooperatives, collaborates with stakeholders to ensure sustainable and innovative

agriculture. The EIP-AGRI fosters innovation in agriculture by connecting research with practical farming needs. It facilitates collaboration between farmers, researchers, agribusinesses, and other stakeholders to address challenges and promote sustainable practices. It encourages competitive and sustainable farming through collaboration, which resonate with COPA-COGECA's goal of representing farmers in combined efforts with relevant stakeholders (Lamparte, 2016). COPA-COGECA engages in the EIP-AGRI by participating in workshops, seminars, and other events focused on innovation and investment in agriculture. They contribute their expertise and represent the interests of European farmers and agri-cooperatives in discussions regarding research priorities, funding opportunities, and the implementation of innovative solutions (Viik, 2016). This synergy suggests that COPA-COGECA's engagement involves leveraging platforms like the EIP-AGRI to advance shared objectives and shape agricultural policies in the EU. By actively engaging in the EIP-AGRI, COPA-COGECA plays a crucial role in shaping agricultural policies and practices to ensure sustainability, competitiveness, and resilience in European agriculture. Thus, the reference underscores the importance of collaborative networks like EIP-AGRI in COPA-COGECA's engagement with stakeholders to promote sustainable and innovative agriculture. Overall, COPA-COGECA's collaborative approach reflects the evolving function of agrarian diplomats in navigating complex political structures and shaping agricultural policies to meet the diverse needs of European farmers and cooperatives.

> Engagement with other stakeholders to represent interests and shape policymaking at the EU level

In recent years, the traditional function of agrarian diplomats, exemplified by organizations like COPA-COGECA, has evolved significantly in response to the dynamic landscape of agricultural policymaking within the European Union (EU). Through strategic engagement and collaboration with diverse stakeholders, both within the agrarian sector and beyond, COPA-COGECA plays a pivotal role in representing the interests of European farmers and agri-cooperatives and shaping policymaking at the EU level.

COPA-COGECA navigates the complexities of diverse divergent interests and potential conflicts of interest by prioritizing engagement and consensus-building among its extensive membership base of 27 Member States and 66 organizations. As highlighted in the interview with Ksenija Simovic, a senior policy advisor of COPA-COGECA, the organization's approach emphasizes internal consensus-building as the foundation for external engagement

«*First thing is we try to engage. Always. (...) and try to build consensus among our members.*» (Appendix A, p. 77). This internal cohesion enables COPA-COGECA to engage with stakeholders in various capacities, leveraging its status as a registered representative organization in the EU and its transparent decision-making processes governed by elected representatives.

Furthermore, COPA-COGECA's longstanding presence and institutional legacy in Brussels provide a platform for effective liaison with decision-makers, exemplified by its regular engagement with the council presidency before the AgriFish Council meetings for over 50 years. By maintaining a democratic and representative organizational structure, COPA-COGECA ensures that its engagements reflect the diverse interests and perspectives within the agricultural sector, contributing to the legitimacy and relevance of its advocacy efforts.

Strategic partnerships and alliances play a crucial role in advancing COPA-COGECA's objectives and goals in the EU. Examples such as the European Livestock Boys, Agri-Food Chain Coalition, and the European Bioeconomy Alliance demonstrate COPA-COGECA's commitment to collaborative initiatives aimed at addressing key challenges facing the agricultural sector, from livestock management to bioeconomic innovation. Additionally, ongoing diplomatic initiatives and projects, such as the ETP Plants for the Future, highlight COPA-COGECA's proactive engagement in shaping the future of agriculture through technological innovation and sustainable practices.

From a diplomatic standpoint, cultivating robust partnerships and collaborative networks within the agricultural industry offers several advantages for COPA-COGECA. These partnerships enhance the organization's leverage and influence by amplifying the collective voice of stakeholders in policy-making processes. By fostering consensus and building alliances, COPA-COGECA strengthens its position as a trusted and credible interlocutor, capable of driving positive outcomes for European farmers and agri-cooperatives at the EU level. In conclusion, the evolving function of agrarian diplomats, as exemplified by COPA-COGECA, reflects a proactive and adaptive approach to navigating the complexities of EU agricultural policymaking. Through strategic engagement, internal consensus-building, and collaborative partnerships, COPA-COGECA remains at the forefront of advocating for the interests of European farmers and shaping the future of agriculture in the EU.

> *Dealing with divergent interests within the agrarian sector*

COPA-COGECA, as the prominent representative organization of European farmers and cooperatives, navigates the complexities of the agricultural sector by engaging with a diverse array of stakeholders while managing divergent interests and potential conflicts effectively. Through strategic engagement and consensus-building efforts, COPA-COGECA aims to foster collaboration and shape agricultural policies at both national and supranational levels. The organization's approach to managing divergent interests is multifaceted.

Firstly, COPA-COGECA prioritizes engagement, striving to build consensus among its diverse membership base of 27 Member States and 66 organizations. Despite challenges, such as divergences exacerbated by initiatives like the Green Deal, COPA-COGECA remains committed to finding compromises internally, thus addressing potential conflicts of interest at the outset. COPA-COGECA's engagement strategy is characterized by transparency and democratic decision-making processes, « *we have a very democratic system as to how the decisions are taken (...) our representatives are elected people* » Ksenija said (Appendix A, p. 77), (Graph 3). With a status as a registered representative organization in the EU, COPA-COGECA ensures that decisions are made through elected representatives, including presidents and vice presidents, who are elected by their peers from different countries. Additionally, chairs of working parties are elected among experts, ensuring a democratic system that represents the diverse interests within the organization. This democratic structure facilitates the management of divergent interests by providing legitimacy to COPA-COGECA's engagements and decision-making processes « *So we have a very democratic system which gives us certain representativeness in terms of who we represent and why we do what we do* » (Appendix A, p. 77).

Moreover, COPA-COGECA's long-standing presence and legacy in Brussels contribute to its effectiveness in managing divergent interests « *We are one of the oldest interest groups in Brussels* » (Appendix A, p. 77). With over 60 years of experience, COPA-COGECA has established itself as one of the oldest and most representative interest groups in Brussels, maintaining enduring relationships and traditions, such as meeting with the council presidency before the AgriFish Council meetings. This legacy underscores the organization's credibility and capacity to navigate conflicting interests within the agricultural sector.

Strategic partnerships and alliances further facilitate COPA-COGECA's objectives while managing divergent interests. Collaborative efforts with organizations like the European

Livestock Boys, Agri-Food Chain Coalition, and European Bioeconomy Alliance enable COPA-COGECA to address common challenges and advance shared goals, demonstrating its proactive approach to collaboration. In clear, COPA-COGECA's management of divergent interests and conflicts of interest in collaborative efforts with stakeholders in the agricultural sector reflects its commitment to transparency, democratic governance, and strategic engagement. By prioritizing consensus-building, leveraging its democratic structure, drawing on its longstanding presence in Brussels, and fostering strategic partnerships, COPA-COGECA navigates the evolving landscape of agricultural diplomacy effectively, contributing to the sustainable and innovative development of European agriculture.

> *Advantages of robust partnerships and collaborative networks within the agricultural industry*

The evolution of COPA-COGECA's role exemplifies the changing landscape of agrarian diplomacy. Traditionally, agrarian diplomats focused on representing farmers' interests in policymaking. However, recent years have witnessed a shift towards more collaborative approaches to address diverse interests and navigate conflicts. In the interview with Ksenija Simovic, a senior policy advisor of COPA-COGECA, it was revealed that the organization prioritizes engagement and consensus-building among its diverse membership, comprising 27 Member States and 66 organizations « *For us the first step is finding a compromise in our membership because we have very diverse membership (...) but there is a full agreement on it. That's our first and biggest work* » (Appendix A, p. 77). COPA-COGECA's democratic decision-making process, dating back to the 1960s, gives emphasis to its commitment to representing farmers effectively. Furthermore, strategic partnerships and alliances with organizations like the European Livestock Boys, Agri-Food Chain Coalition, and the European Bioeconomy Alliance have facilitated the advancement of COPA-COGECA's objectives in the EU. These collaborations extend beyond legislative matters to encompass communication and innovation initiatives, highlighting COPA-COGECA's proactive engagement with stakeholders across various sectors. Ongoing diplomatic initiatives, such as the ETP Plants for the Future project, underline COPA-COGECA's commitment to fostering collaborative networks within the agricultural industry. The European Technology Platform (ETP) "Plants for the Future" aims to facilitate the flow of innovation from fundamental plant-related research to practical applications in various

sectors, including agriculture, food, and environmental sustainability. COPA-COGECA, as a prominent agricultural organization, actively engages with ETP Plants for the Future « *that's also something we're active in as a project* » (Appendix A, p. 78). They contribute by expertise, insights, and priorities from the perspective of European farmers and agri-cooperatives. COPA-COGECA's involvement ensures that the platform's initiatives align with the needs and challenges faced by agricultural stakeholders. Through collaboration with ETP Plants for the Future, COPA-COGECA helps shape research agendas, innovation strategies, and policy recommendations that promote sustainable and competitive agriculture in Europe (COPA-COGECA & FoodForLife, 2021).

From a diplomatic standpoint, cultivating robust partnerships offers COPA-COGECA several advantages. Firstly, it strengthens their position by amplifying their voice through diverse stakeholders, enhancing the likelihood of favorable outcomes in policymaking « *when you have consensus between different partners and stakeholders on certain file, let's say, or a piece of legislation, it always reinforces your position and the possibility of getting a positive outcome for yourself* » (Appendix A, p. 78). Secondly, collaborative networks enable COPA-COGECA to address complex challenges more effectively, leveraging expertise and resources from across the agricultural sector. Ultimately, by embracing collaborative diplomacy, COPA-COGECA reinforces its relevance and effectiveness in shaping agricultural policies at both national and supranational levels, reflecting the evolving function of agrarian diplomats in contemporary political structures « *(...) building partnerships has always been very important in Brussels. It's not just us doing it. Everyone does this because it gives you relevance.* » (Appendix A, p. 78).

4.2.2 New skills and qualities for agrarian diplomats

> Skills and qualities essentials for agrarian diplomats

Agrarian diplomacy demands a unique set of skills and qualities essential for effectively representing agricultural interests in diplomatic settings. Drawing from the insights provided by Ksenija Simovic, several key attributes emerge as critical for agrarian diplomats. Firstly, cultural sensitivity and diplomacy are paramount, facilitating consensus-building and compromise in the complex landscape of European agriculture. Understanding the diverse cultural backgrounds and priorities of different countries is foundational for

navigating diplomatic negotiations successfully « *I think this is very key* » Ksenija said (Appendix A, p. 78). Additionally, a comprehensive understanding of decision-making processes at the European level and familiarity with key actors are indispensable for influencing policy outcomes. Moreover, proficiency in multiple languages, particularly in the context of agriculture, enhances communication and fosters effective engagement across diverse stakeholders « *because we work in seven languages* » (Appendix A, p. 75).

COPA-COGECA recognizes the importance of nurturing these skills among its staff and members. Through an informal mentorship program, senior staff guide and support junior members, ensuring continuous learning and professional development « *Nobody is really left alone* » (Appendix A, p. 79). Moreover, COPA-COGECA's hiring process prioritizes individuals with experience in the agricultural sector, supplemented by internships or national experience, and proficiency in multiple languages. Furthermore, the organization organizes internal training programs focusing on various skills such as public speaking, social media management, and other evolving areas relevant to contemporary diplomacy. This proactive approach ensures that staff members are equipped with the necessary competencies to navigate the dynamic landscape of agricultural diplomacy effectively, and according to the competencies of each member « *it's not always the same, not always necessarily senior to junior, sometimes it's also more junior to senior in different aspects* » (Appendix A, p. 79).

A personal anecdote from the senior policy advisor at COPA-COGECA underscores the importance of humility, confidence, and continuous learning in the role of agrarian diplomats. The recognition of the vastness and complexity of agriculture necessitates a humble approach, coupled with confidence in one's abilities and a willingness to learn from colleagues. Moreover, the evolving nature of agriculture and the dynamic global context emphasize the importance of adaptability and openness to new ideas and perspectives.

The emergence of a new breed of agrarian diplomats, characterized by an environmental focus among younger generations, highlights shifting priorities in agricultural diplomacy « *I observe that more the younger generations come with an environmental profile* » (Appendix A, p. 80). However, concerns arise regarding the potential lack of agro-economic and technical expertise among individuals with environmental backgrounds, emphasizing the importance of a balanced skill set.

Traditionally, agrarian diplomats distinguish themselves from traditional diplomats through their deep technical knowledge of agriculture, complemented by diplomatic acumen. COPA-

COGECA emphasizes the significance of this technical expertise in navigating the complexities of agricultural policymaking and negotiations « *The knowledge, the technical knowledge of agriculture is really important* » (Appendix A, p. 80). However, the evolving landscape of agriculture and the changing composition of agricultural policymakers necessitate continuous adaptation and learning.

Looking ahead, the role of agrarian diplomats is poised to become increasingly crucial in addressing global challenges such as climate change and shifting political dynamics. COPA-COGECA highlighting the importance of technical agricultural knowledge in shaping effective policies and responses to these challenges. As the agricultural landscape continues to evolve, the demand for skilled agrarian diplomats capable of navigating complex policy environments and fostering international cooperation is likely to grow « *We had a DG with a lot of technical knowledge, like older generations, really agrarians, agro-economists, et cetera, and now this is not really a case as much.* » (Appendix A, p. 80). To summarize, the skills and qualities essential for agrarian diplomats encompass a blend of cultural sensitivity, diplomatic acumen, technical expertise in agriculture, and a commitment to continuous learning and adaptation. COPA-COGECA's approach to nurturing these competencies among its staff and members reflects the organization's recognition of the evolving demands of agricultural diplomacy in the contemporary landscape.

> *A form of a new agrarian diplomats' definition*

The evolution of agrarian diplomats' roles necessitates a comprehensive understanding of the skills and qualities essential for effective representation in diplomatic settings. As emphasized by Ksenija Simovic, cultural sensitivity plays a pivotal role in navigating the intricacies of diverse cultural landscapes within the European Union (EU) and beyond « *it's really important being open to learning (...) especially in agriculture, it's such a huge field. There is so much variety, there's so much technical knowledge* » (Appendix A, p. 79). Diplomatic acumen, coupled with a deep grasp of decision-making processes at the European level, are fundamental attributes that enable agrarian diplomats to navigate complex negotiations and consensus-building efforts within supranational political structures. Moreover, proficiency in multiple languages, particularly within the agricultural context, serves as a catalyst for fostering meaningful communication and collaboration across a spectrum of stakeholders, ranging from farmers and cooperatives to policymakers

and regulatory bodies « *Of course, knowing languages, especially when you're working in agriculture, is a plus* » (Appendix A, p. 79).

COPA-COGECA, recognizing the significance of these skills, implements various strategies to cultivate them among its staff and members. Through informal mentorship programs, seasoned professionals provide guidance and support to junior colleagues, ensuring a seamless transfer of knowledge and expertise. Tailored hiring processes prioritize individuals with diverse backgrounds, including experience in agriculture, internships within relevant institutions, and a strong linguistic aptitude. Additionally, internal training sessions are conducted periodically to address evolving challenges and equip members with the necessary tools to navigate diplomatic engagements effectively.

However, a discernible shift in the profile of agrarian diplomats is evident, characterized by a growing emphasis on environmental expertise among younger generations. While this trend marks a commendable commitment to addressing pressing environmental concerns, it also raises concerns about the potential dilution of agro-economic and technical knowledge within diplomatic circles. Striking a balance between environmental sustainability and agricultural viability is imperative to ensure holistic policymaking and effective representation of agricultural interests on the global stage.

As far as a redefinition of agrarian diplomats is concerned, an accent is put on their technical knowledge and their ability to handle the proposals, to share their specialized expertise and to advise with some practical advice « *I would say that they are practical diplomats, because if you have this technical knowledge, then you can look at all the proposals, et cetera, through this more practical lenses, and advocate for practical solutions* » (Appendix A, p. 80). Modern agrarian diplomats embody a pragmatic approach, synthesizing technical proficiency with diplomatic finesse to advocate for pragmatic solutions amidst evolving global challenges, including climate change. This redefined role is catalyzed by changing political dynamics and an increasing urgency to address environmental issues, prompting a paradigm shift towards a more integrated and holistic approach to agrarian diplomacy. As agrarian diplomats continue to adapt to dynamic agricultural and environmental landscapes, their significance in shaping policy outcomes and navigating complex geopolitical dynamics remains paramount « *because there's so much consensus building, so many compromises that need to be made, so you really need to be good at that* » (Appendix A, p. 80). Therefore, ongoing training and strategic foresight are essential to equip agrarian diplomats with the

tools and insights needed to address emerging challenges effectively, ensuring the sustainability and resilience of agricultural systems in the face of evolving global pressures.

> *Difference between traditional diplomats and agrarian diplomats nowadays*

The evolution of agrarian diplomacy necessitates a nuanced understanding of the skills and qualities essential for agrarian diplomats, particularly in the context of COPA-COGECA's role as a representative organization in the agricultural sector. According to the insights shared by Ksenija Simovic, a senior policy advisor of COPA-COGECA, agrarian diplomats must possess a combination of diplomatic acuity, cultural sensitivity, and technical knowledge of agriculture. Firstly, diplomatic skills such as consensus-building and negotiation are paramount for navigating the complex political landscape at both national and supranational levels. Secondly, a deep understanding of the cultural sensitivities and priorities of different countries regarding agriculture is crucial for effective representation and collaboration. Moreover, familiarity with decision-making processes at the European level and proficiency in languages further enhance an agrarian diplomat's effectiveness.

COPA-COGECA plays a pivotal role in nurturing these skills among its staff and members through various initiatives. Internally, the organization fosters an informal mentorship program where senior staff guide and support junior colleagues, ensuring continuous learning and development. In essence, COPA-COGECA prioritizes the recruitment of individuals with diverse backgrounds, including experience in the agricultural sector, internships in relevant institutions, and proficiency in multiple languages. This strategic hiring approach enriches the organization's talent pool and enhances its diplomatic capabilities. Furthermore, COPA-COGECA organizes internal training programs focused on areas such as public speaking, social media management, and other evolving skills necessary for effective advocacy in the modern diplomatic landscape.

One distinguishing factor between agrarian diplomats and traditional diplomats lies in their specialized knowledge of agriculture. Agrarian diplomats possess technical expertise in agricultural practices, economics, and policies, enabling them to advocate for practical solutions tailored to the agricultural sector's needs. This distinction is critical in addressing complex agricultural challenges, especially in the face of shifting political dynamics and global issues such as climate change. As highlighted by the interviewee, the emergence of a new generation of agrarian diplomats with environmental expertise underscores the evolving nature of the field. However, the interviewee also raises concerns about the diminishing

presence of agro-trained professionals in diplomacy, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a balance between environmental and agricultural knowledge « (...) *agrarian diplomats are extremely important and there is a lack of such especially people with technical agriculture knowledge that want to be diplomats* » Ksenija said (Appendix A, p. 81).

In the context of COPA-COGECA's work, the organization's advocacy efforts are strengthened by its cadre of agrarian diplomats who possess both diplomatic finesse and technical proficiency in agriculture. By leveraging their specialized knowledge and diplomatic skills, COPA-COGECA effectively represents the interests of European farmers and cooperatives in policymaking processes at the national and supranational levels. Furthermore, the organization's commitment to continuous learning and development ensures that its members remain adept at navigating the evolving diplomatic landscape and addressing emerging challenges facing the agricultural sector. Overall, the symbiotic relationship between agrarian diplomacy and the work of COPA-COGECA emphasizes the critical role of specialized expertise in advancing agricultural interests in diplomatic settings and shaping the future of agrarian diplomacy amidst global transformations.

5 Results and Discussion

5.1 The importance of COPA-COGECA as a non-institutional actor

In this part, it will be interesting to delve into the pivotal role of COPA-COGECA in European agriculture, exploring its significance as a non-institutional actor through two distinct lenses : first examines its contribution to the representativeness of European agricultural interests (5.1.1), and then trying to redefine agrarian diplomats in light of the elements previously found and explained (5.1.2).

5.1.1 A key element in the representativeness of European agricultural interests

In recent years, the traditional function of agrarian diplomats has undergone significant evolution, particularly within the European Union (EU). As the EU's agricultural sector continues to play a crucial role in both national and supranational political structures, organizations like COPA-COGECA have emerged as pivotal actors in shaping agricultural policies and representing the interests of European farmers and agri-cooperatives. COPA-COGECA, although non-institutional, holds substantial influence in the agrarian sector, acting as a unified voice for farmers across the EU. Through its engagement with policymakers, COPA-COGECA contributes to the formulation and implementation of agricultural policies, ensuring that the concerns and priorities of its members are effectively addressed. As seen before, one of the key roles of COPA-COGECA is to advocate for European agricultural interests, making it a crucial element in the representativeness of these interests on both national and supranational levels. By collaborating with stakeholders within the agrarian sector, such as farmers, cooperatives, and other industry players, COPA-COGECA fosters consensus-building and strives to find common ground on agricultural issues. Additionally, COPA-COGECA's longstanding presence and extensive network allow it to engage with decision-makers at various levels of governance, amplifying the voice of European farmers and ensuring their concerns are heard and considered.

Moreover, COPA-COGECA's role extends beyond advocacy to include the development of new skills and qualities for agrarian diplomats. As agriculture faces evolving challenges such as climate change and technological advancements, the need for diplomats with a deep understanding of both agricultural practices and diplomatic processes becomes increasingly

apparent. COPA-COGECA recognizes the importance of nurturing these skills among its members, providing training programs and fostering mentorship opportunities to ensure that its diplomats remain adept at navigating the complex political landscape and effectively representing European agricultural interests. Consequently, COPA-COGECA's significance in agriculture as a non-institutional actor cannot be overstated. Its role in advocating for European agricultural interests and shaping agricultural policies underscores its importance in the representativeness of these interests within national and supranational political structures. Furthermore, COPA-COGECA's commitment to developing new skills and qualities for agrarian diplomats reflects its proactive approach to addressing the evolving challenges facing the agricultural sector. As agriculture continues to evolve, organizations like COPA-COGECA will remain essential in ensuring the sustainability and prosperity of European agriculture.

> *Importance of COPA-COGECA in representing European agricultural interests :*

COPA-COGECA stands as a cornerstone in the representation of European agricultural interests within the expansive landscape of the European Union (EU). With its role as the united voice of farmers and agri-cooperatives in the EU, COPA-COGECA wields significant influence in advocating for policies that safeguard the sustainability, innovation, and competitiveness of EU agriculture. At the heart of its importance lies the fact that COPA-COGECA serves as a collective platform through which the diverse voices and concerns of European farmers are unified and amplified on the larger stage of EU policymaking. By consolidating the interests of farmers and cooperatives from across the EU Member States, COPA-COGECA ensures that agricultural policies reflect the nuanced needs and priorities of European agriculture as a whole.

Moreover, COPA-COGECA's omnipresence in agricultural policies and agrarian interests accentuates its pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of EU agriculture. The organization is deeply embedded in the policymaking processes of the EU, engaging with decision-makers at various levels and across multiple policy areas. Whether it be advocating for the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) or influencing trade negotiations, COPA-COGECA's presence is felt in key agricultural discussions and decisions. This widespread influence positions COPA-COGECA as a linchpin in the formulation and implementation of policies that directly impact European farmers and the agricultural sector as a whole (Savage & Win, 2023).

> *COPA-COGECA as a new kind of agrarian diplomat :*

COPA-COGECA's multifaceted role and extensive engagement in agricultural diplomacy place it at the forefront of a new breed of agrarian diplomats within the EU. As traditional diplomatic structures evolve to accommodate the complexities of modern agriculture, organizations like COPA-COGECA emerge as vital actors bridging the gap between farmers and policymakers. By actively participating in diplomatic initiatives and representing agricultural interests in supranational forums, COPA-COGECA operates as a conduit through which agricultural diplomacy is conducted and agricultural interests are advanced. This evolution underscores the need for agrarian diplomats who possess not only a deep understanding of agricultural issues but also the diplomatic acumen to navigate the intricate dynamics of EU policymaking and diplomacy (Win, 2023).

In essence, COPA-COGECA's significance extends beyond mere representation; it embodies a new paradigm of agrarian diplomacy characterized by proactive engagement, strategic advocacy, and effective representation of European agricultural interests on the global stage. As the agricultural landscape continues to evolve, COPA-COGECA's role as a pioneering agrarian diplomat remains indispensable in safeguarding the interests and promoting the sustainability of European agriculture.

5.1.2 A breakthrough redefinition of agrarian diplomats

The findings from the practical part of the thesis shed light on the pivotal role of COPA-COGECA as a non-institutional actor in European agrarian diplomacy, fundamentally reshaping the traditional definition of agrarian diplomats. COPA-COGECA, serving as the unified voice of farmers and agri-cooperatives in the EU, has emerged as a significant force in advocating for agricultural interests on both national and supranational levels. Through its engagement with policymakers, COPA-COGECA has effectively influenced agricultural policies, ensuring that they align with the needs and priorities of European farmers. Furthermore, COPA-COGECA's actions and lobbying efforts have contributed to a paradigm shift in the role of agrarian diplomats. Traditionally, agrarian diplomats were seen as representatives of national interests in agricultural matters. However, COPA-COGECA's multifaceted approach to advocacy has transcended national boundaries,

championing European agricultural interests on the global stage. By collaborating with stakeholders and demonstrating the importance of a unified voice, COPA-COGECA has redefined agrarian diplomacy, emphasizing the collective representation of European farmers and cooperatives.

In essence, COPA-COGECA's influence extends beyond mere representation; it symbolizes a new era of agrarian diplomacy characterized by collaborative advocacy, strategic engagement, and a holistic approach to addressing agricultural challenges. As such, COPA-COGECA's role as a non-institutional actor in agriculture draw attention to the evolving landscape of agrarian diplomacy, highlighting the need for adaptive and inclusive approaches to representing agricultural interests in the contemporary political arena.

The distinction between European traditional diplomats and the evolving role of European agrarian diplomats lies in their scope of representation and advocacy. Most traditional diplomats primarily focus on representing national interests in international relations, often engaging in formal diplomacy between states. In contrast, the new definition of agrarian diplomats, exemplified by organizations like COPA-COGECA, encompasses a broader mandate that transcends national boundaries and emphasizes collective representation of agricultural interests on a supranational scale.

Agrarian diplomats, as exemplified by members of COPA-COGECA, advocate for the interests of farmers and agri-cooperatives across the European Union, navigating complex policy landscapes and engaging with diverse stakeholders. Unlike traditional diplomats, who operate within established diplomatic frameworks, agrarian diplomats employ innovative approaches to address contemporary agricultural challenges, leveraging strategic alliances and collaborative advocacy to influence policymaking. Moreover, the new definition of agrarian diplomats emphasizes inclusivity and grassroots representation, empowering farmers and cooperatives to participate directly in shaping agricultural policies and practices.

This departure from traditional diplomatic models reflects a paradigm shift towards more dynamic, stakeholder-driven approaches to diplomacy, highlighting the importance of specialized advocacy in addressing the unique needs of agrarian communities in today's globalized world. The evolving role of agrarian diplomats, exemplified by organizations like COPA-COGECA, signifies a departure from traditional diplomatic models towards more inclusive and participatory approaches to advocacy. One key aspect of this shift is the emphasis on inclusivity and grassroots representation, which empowers farmers and

cooperatives to directly engage in shaping agricultural policies and practices. For instance, COPA-COGECA serves as a platform for agricultural stakeholders across the European Union to voice their concerns and priorities, fostering a sense of ownership and agency among grassroots communities. By facilitating dialogue and collaboration between diverse actors, including farmers, cooperatives, policymakers, and other stakeholders, COPA-COGECA ensures that agricultural policies reflect the nuanced realities and needs of agrarian communities.

Moreover, the rise of agrarian diplomats heralds a paradigm shift towards more dynamic and stakeholder-driven diplomacy. Unlike traditional diplomatic models characterized by top-down decision-making and hierarchical structures, agrarian diplomats leverage networks and alliances to advocate for collective interests on a supranational scale. For instance, COPA-COGECA actively engages with European institutions and policymakers to influence agricultural policies and regulations, drawing on its extensive network and expertise to shape legislative agendas. By adopting a proactive and collaborative approach to diplomacy, agrarian diplomats navigate complex policy landscapes and bridge the gap between grassroots concerns and institutional frameworks. Furthermore, the importance of specialized advocacy in addressing the unique needs of agrarian communities cannot be overstated. Agrarian diplomats, such as COPA-COGECA, possess the expertise and insight needed to navigate the multifaceted challenges facing the agricultural sector, from environmental sustainability to market access and trade regulations. For example, COPA-COGECA's advocacy efforts have been instrumental in shaping the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) of the European Union, ensuring that it reflects the diverse interests and priorities of farmers and cooperatives (COPA-COGECA, 2023). By championing evidence-based policy solutions and representing the collective voice of agrarian stakeholders, agrarian diplomats contribute to the resilience and sustainability of agricultural systems in today's globalized world.

In conclusion, the emergence of agrarian diplomats represents a transformative shift towards more inclusive, participatory, and stakeholder-driven approaches to diplomacy. Organizations like COPA-COGECA exemplify this new kind of diplomats, which prioritize grassroots representation, collaborative advocacy, and specialized expertise in addressing the complex challenges facing agrarian communities. By empowering farmers and

cooperatives to actively participate in policy dialogue and decision-making processes, agrarian diplomats play a crucial role in shaping the future of agriculture and ensuring the sustainability and resilience of rural livelihoods.

5.2 Discussion : a privileged access for COPA-COGECA ?

In this last section, the real impact of COPA-COGECA on agricultural policies (5.2.1) and the legitimacy of its influence (5.2.2) will be examined and discussed.

5.2.1 An impassive influence on agricultural policies

COPA-COGECA's influence within the agrarian sector is multifaceted and subject to nuanced discussion. At its core, and as developed and explained earlier, the organization serves as the unified voice of farmers and agri-cooperatives in the European Union (EU), advocating for sustainable, innovative agriculture. However, this influence has faced scrutiny due to accusations of prioritizing profit-driven agendas over environmental and social sustainability (Savage & Win, 2023). Such concerns highlight the complexities surrounding the organization's role in shaping agricultural policies. One aspect that requires attention is COPA-COGECA's resistance to change within the agrarian sector, particularly concerning more sustainable farming practices. While advocating for innovation, the organization's stance on certain policies may hinder progress towards environmentally friendly and socially responsible agriculture (Herman, 2023). This resistance reflects the tension between traditional farming methods and the need for adaptation to address pressing global challenges such as climate change and biodiversity loss.

COPA-COGECA, as the unified voice of farmers and agri-cooperatives in the EU, applies considerable influence within the agrarian sector, shaping agricultural policies and agendas. However, this influence is not without its complexities and criticisms. The organization has faced accusations of prioritizing profit-driven agendas over environmental and social sustainability, raising concerns about its true objectives and impact on agricultural policies (DeSmog, 2023). One concrete example of COPA-COGECA's influence can be seen in its close relationship with DG Agriculture, as highlighted in a case study comparing

the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to the Farm to Fork (F2F) strategy and the ongoing conflict between these two parts within the European Union. It highlights how the current model of agriculture, supported by CAP, is criticized for directing EU taxpayers' money toward activities that contribute to climate change and biodiversity loss. The F2F strategy, part of the European Green Deal, aims to reform food systems to be fair, healthy, and environmentally friendly. However, there is tension between CAP's focus on maintaining the status quo and F2F's ambition for systemic change. It is argued that without substantial reforms to CAP, achieving the goals of the F2F strategy will be challenging. In other words, this underscores the need for Common Agricultural Policy reform to align with the objectives of the F2F strategy and address pressing environmental challenges. Additionally, some concerns are raised about the influence of agricultural lobbies like COPA-COGECA, which may prioritize profit-driven agendas over environmental sustainability. Both - the previously mentioned conflict between the CAP and the F2F, and COPA-COGECA - are linked, and this link lies in their shared involvement in agricultural policy and advocacy within the European Union. We already saw and prove that COPA-COGECA plays a significant role in shaping EU agricultural policies. However, in recent years, some issues related to agricultural policies are more and more discussed, which directly impact COPA-COGECA's interests and activities. It may address topics such as the Common Agricultural Policy, environmental regulations, or trade agreements, all of which are areas where COPA-COGECA is actively engaged. Understanding the perspectives and actions of organizations like COPA-COGECA is crucial for comprehending the dynamics of agricultural policymaking in the EU and its implications for various stakeholders, including farmers and consumers. This privileged access on EU legislation allows COPA-COGECA to have significant input into policy decisions, potentially leading to policies that align with its interests (Corporate Europe Observatory, 2020). However, critics argue that such close ties may result in policies that prioritize short-term economic gains for large agricultural entities, rather than considering the long-term environmental and social impacts of farming practices. Furthermore, COPA-COGECA's involvement in climate action discussions stresses the tension between profit motives and sustainability goals. While the organization acknowledges the impact of climate change on agriculture, its stance on certain climate-related policies may reflect its primary concern for economic viability. This dichotomy exemplifies the nuanced discussion surrounding COPA-COGECA's influence and its implications for agricultural policies.

To address these concerns, stakeholders must engage in transparent dialogue and hold COPA-COGECA accountable for its actions. By advocating for policies that prioritize both economic prosperity and environmental stewardship, COPA-COGECA can better serve the interests of farmers and contribute to a more sustainable future for European agriculture. Consequently, the influence of COPA-COGECA within the agrarian sector is significant but requires careful examination and consideration of its potential impacts on agricultural policies. By acknowledging and addressing concerns about profit-driven agendas and promoting transparency and sustainability, stakeholders can work towards policies that balance economic interests with environmental and social responsibility, ultimately benefitting both farmers and society as a whole.

Its involvement in shaping the Common Agricultural Policy, the EU's primary instrument for agricultural support, illustrates its significant role in policy formulation (Germond, 2013). However, this influence has drawn criticism for prioritizing profit-driven agendas over environmental and social sustainability. For instance, COPA-COGECA's promotion of certain agricultural techniques, such as new genomic techniques, may prioritize short-term economic gains over long-term environmental sustainability. Moreover, COPA-COGECA's resistance to change, particularly concerning more sustainable farming practices, has been evident. Despite the EU's push for sustainability through initiatives like the Farm to Fork strategy, COPA-COGECA has expressed concerns about potential decreases in agricultural production and increased pricing (Sikkema, 2021). This resistance highlights a tension between economic interests and sustainability goals. Concrete examples include lobbying efforts against stricter environmental regulations and advocating for policies that maintain current farming practices. While COPA-COGECA plays a crucial role in agricultural policymaking, its influence and resistance to change mark the complexities inherent in balancing economic interests with sustainability imperatives in the agrarian sector.

Despite these criticisms, COPA-COGECA's omnipresence in the agrarian sector cannot be overlooked. Its extensive network and engagement with policymakers give it significant leverage in influencing agricultural policies at both the European Union and national levels (Corporate Europe Observatory, 2021). This influence, however, must be carefully balanced to ensure alignment with broader societal and environmental objectives. In discussing COPA-COGECA's influence on agricultural policies, it is essential to

acknowledge the organization's role as a key stakeholder in shaping the future of EU agriculture. By engaging in constructive dialogue and addressing concerns regarding sustainability and adaptability, COPA-COGECA can contribute to the development of policies that promote the long-term viability of farming practices while safeguarding the interests of farmers and agri-cooperatives (Win, 2023). Finally, these influence and omnipresence of COPA-COGECA within the agrarian sector warrant thorough examination and discussion : while the organization plays a crucial role in advocating for farmers' interests, concerns regarding its prioritization of profit-driven agendas and resistance to change must be addressed. By fostering dialogue and promoting collaboration, COPA-COGECA can contribute to the development of agricultural policies that strike a balance between economic viability, environmental sustainability, and social responsibility.

5.2.2 A questionable legitimacy

> *All farmers really represented ?*

The influence and omnipresence of COPA-COGECA within the agrarian sector are significant and multifaceted, impacting agricultural policies in the European Union (EU). However, concerns have arisen regarding the lack of transparency in COPA-COGECA's operations, potentially leading to the favoritism of larger agricultural entities over smaller farmers (Corporate Europe Observatory, 2020a). This lack of transparency can manifest in various ways, including unequal access to decision-making processes and resources. Privileged access to policymakers may give larger agricultural entities disproportionate influence in shaping agricultural policies, leaving smaller farmers marginalized. For example, there is an unrivalled tradition in Europe at the council of agriculture ministers where COPA-COGECA has a say and is even invited to present its vision first, only then do the Ministers of Agriculture take the floor (ARTE, 2024). Additionally, COPA-COGECA's stance on certain policies, such as the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), may reflect the interests of larger players in the industry, potentially disadvantaging smaller farmers. This dynamic underscores the complexities of representation within the agrarian sector and raises questions about equity and fairness in policy formulation. As policymakers strive to balance diverse interests within the agricultural community, addressing issues of transparency and representation within organizations like COPA-COGECA becomes crucial for fostering

inclusive and equitable agricultural policies (Win, 2023). Thus, a nuanced discussion of COPA-COGECA's influence must consider not only its role in policy advocacy but also the potential implications of its operations for smaller farmers and the broader agricultural community.

The influence of COPA-COGECA within the agrarian sector is substantial, yet nuanced, particularly in its impact on agricultural policies in the European Union. While COPA-COGECA presents itself as the united voice of farmers and agri-cooperatives in the EU, it's essential to recognize that the organization does not represent all farmers in the EU (Carlile, 2023). In an interview of Pekka Pesonen for POLITICO in Brussels, the secretary general of COPA admits that the claim according to which the organization would represent the 22 million European farmers and their families isn't totally true « *Technically speaking, it's less than [that]* » he said. However, he couldn't provide the real number of memberships that COPA-COGECA counts. Here, the 22 million's claim from the organization would appear more to an aspiration than an actual representation of European farmers. This lack of universal representation can be attributed to several factors and the first of them is the diversity of agricultural practices. The diversity of agricultural practices within the EU is immense, ranging from traditional small family farms to technologically advanced large-scale industrial operations. This diversity is shaped by various factors such as geographical location, climate conditions, cultural traditions, and economic considerations. However, despite this diversity, agricultural policymaking often faces challenges in adequately representing the interests of all types of farmers. COPA-COGECA, as a prominent agricultural lobby group, plays a significant role in influencing agricultural policies at the EU level. However, there are concerns that its composition may predominantly reflect and represent the interests of larger agricultural entities, thereby potentially marginalizing smaller farmers (Savage & Win, 2023). For example, larger agricultural businesses often have greater financial resources and organizational capacity to engage in lobbying activities and so influence policy decisions through their representatives. They may advocate for policies that align with their interests, such as subsidies or regulations that favor large-scale production methods. In contrast, smaller farmers, who may rely on more traditional or sustainable farming practices, could find their voices overshadowed in policy debates dominated by larger agricultural interests. Moreover, the influence of COPA-COGECA extends beyond policymaking to broader agricultural initiatives and programs. For instance,

in discussions on the CAP, which sets the framework for EU agricultural subsidies and support, the preferences and priorities of COPA-COGECA can heavily influence the final policy outcomes. This influence can have significant implications for the sustainability, competitiveness, and inclusivity of the EU agricultural sector. Overall, while COPA-COGECA's advocacy efforts aim to represent the interests of European farmers collectively, the organization's composition and priorities may inadvertently favor larger agricultural entities, potentially marginalizing smaller farmers and limiting the diversity of voices in agricultural policymaking processes. This emphasizes the importance of ensuring inclusivity and representation of all types of farmers to achieve balanced and equitable agricultural policies.

Another factor lies in the limited membership. Actually, COPA-COGECA's membership may not be fully inclusive of all farmers in the EU. While it claims to represent all European farmers, the organization's membership may primarily consist of larger and more influential farming associations, leaving smaller farmers underrepresented. Despite claiming to represent the 22 million of European farmers, COPA-COGECA's membership structure may not fully encompass the diverse landscape of farming across the EU. The organization's membership base might predominantly comprise larger and more influential farming associations, potentially sidelining smaller farmers and their interests as mentioned earlier. This situation potentially leaves smaller farmers, who make up a significant portion of the EU agricultural landscape (Šūmane et al., 2021), underrepresented in the decision-making processes and advocacy efforts of COPA-COGECA regarding agricultural policies and initiatives at the European Union level. According to Eurostat, there were approximately 9.1 million agricultural holdings in the European Union in 2016 (Eurostat, 2016). Among these, small-scale farms with less than 5 hectares of land accounted for a significant proportion (Graph 4). However, the exact number of small-scale farmers within the EU agricultural sector can vary over time due to changes in agricultural policies, land use patterns, and economic factors. It's also important to note that the agricultural sector in the EU is dynamic, with trends such as farm consolidation and the decline of small farms having been observed in recent years (Harvey, 2021). For instance, larger farming associations often have greater resources and capacity to participate in lobbying activities, thus exerting more influence within COPA-COGECA. This dynamic may lead to the prioritization of policies that align with the interests of these larger entities, such as subsidies or regulations that favor

industrial-scale farming methods. In contrast, smaller farmers, who may rely on traditional or sustainable farming practices, could find their voices marginalized within the organization, despite being an integral part of the EU farming community. This disparity in membership representation can have significant implications for the development of agricultural policies that adequately address the diverse needs and challenges faced by farmers of all sizes across the EU. It underscores the importance of fostering a more inclusive and representative membership structure within COPA-COGECA to ensure that the voices of all farmers are heard and considered in shaping EU agricultural policies (Herman, 2024).

Finding data that supports the notion that not all EU farmers are members of COPA-COGECA is hard, and a lack of transparency here is obvious. However, only a fraction of European farmers is affiliated with agricultural organizations, with membership rates varying significantly among EU Member States. According to the journalist Thin Lei Win in 2023, in some countries such as Denmark and Sweden, the membership rates in agricultural organizations are relatively high, while in others, such as Portugal and Greece, they are much lower. For instance, in Romania, known for its significant agricultural sector boasting nearly 2.9 million holdings, an alliance comprising four unions affiliated with COPA-COGECA represents approximately 3,500 farmers, as indicated by their official communications. Meanwhile, in Poland, an estimated 1.3 million farmers are said to be members of KRIR, a COPA-COGECA affiliate, although the lack of proper documentation raises questions about the accuracy of this figure, as highlighted by the findings of the country's Supreme Audit Office in 2021. In Denmark, the Danish Food and Agricultural Council (L&F) serves as the sole member of COPA-COGECA. Recent reports from 2016 and 2021 show a significant increase in membership, but without a clear explanation from the union. Spain, on the other hand, appears to have a more robust dataset, yet only 40 percent of the country's farmers are represented by the three farm unions that are affiliated with COPA-COGECA. This discrepancy highlights the diversity of participation levels and suggests that the organization's membership may not capture the perspectives and interests of all farmers equally.

Furthermore, COPA-COGECA's membership criteria and requirements may inadvertently exclude certain segments of the farming community. For example, smaller farmers or those practicing alternative farming methods may face barriers to joining or

participating in the organization due to factors such as membership fees, bureaucratic processes, or differing ideological stances. As a result, their voices and concerns may not be adequately represented in COPA-COGECA's lobbying efforts and policy advocacy initiatives, potentially leading to imbalanced policy outcomes that do not fully reflect the needs and realities of all EU farmers. In essence, while COPA-COGECA plays a significant role in shaping agricultural policies at the EU level, its limited membership and potential biases in representation underline the importance of ensuring inclusivity and diversity in agricultural advocacy and decision-making processes. Efforts to broaden participation and engage with a more extensive range of farmers' perspectives are crucial for fostering equitable and effective policymaking in the EU agricultural sector.

Finally, the third main factor that can be cited is the transparency concerns. There have been allegations of transparency breaches within COPA-COGECA, raising questions about the organization's legitimacy in claiming to represent all farmers in the EU (Sherrington, 2022). COPA-COGECA, as a prominent agricultural lobby group in the EU, has faced scrutiny over transparency issues, casting doubt on its ability to authentically represent the interests of all European farmers. A notable instance is the investigation launched by the European Union into potential transparency breaches by COPA-COGECA. These concerns stem from the organization's registration as a 'non-official organization' while purporting to represent millions of individual farmers and thousands of farming groups. Such discrepancies have prompted transparency activists to question the legitimacy of COPA-COGECA's claims of representing the diverse farming community across the EU. Relevant data showcases the severity of these transparency concerns : for instance, investigations into COPA-COGECA's activities and its handling of agricultural policies have revealed instances where decision-making processes lack transparency, potentially favoring the interests of certain agricultural entities over others. This lack of transparency undermines the organization's credibility and raises questions about its ability to genuinely advocate for the diverse needs and perspectives of all farmers within the EU. The allegations of transparency breaches within COPA-COGECA highlight broader concerns regarding the accountability and representation of agricultural lobby groups in influencing EU agricultural policies. Addressing these transparency issues is crucial for ensuring fair and equitable policy-making processes that genuinely reflect the interests of the entire farming community in the EU.

Despite these challenges, COPA-COGECA wields significant influence in shaping agricultural policies in the European Union. The organization actively engages with EU institutions to promote the interests of its members and advocate for policies that support sustainable agriculture. For instance, COPA-COGECA has been involved in discussions on the Common Agricultural Policy, influencing decisions that impact farming practices and subsidies. However, the organization's perceived lack of representativeness raises concerns about the inclusivity and fairness of these policy outcomes. Small-scale farmers, who may not be adequately represented by COPA-COGECA, risk being overlooked in policy discussions that primarily cater to the interests of larger agricultural entities. This imbalance could hinder efforts to address diverse challenges facing the agricultural sector, such as income disparities, sustainability, and climate change adaptation. In conclusion, while COPA-COGECA plays a significant role in influencing agricultural policies in the EU, its influence must be viewed within the context of its limited representativeness and transparency issues. A nuanced understanding of COPA-COGECA's influence necessitates consideration of the diversity of the agricultural sector and the potential implications of its advocacy efforts on different farming communities. Efforts to enhance transparency and inclusivity within the organization are essential for fostering more equitable policy outcomes that address the needs of all farmers in the EU.

> *A difficult alignment with EU green's agenda*

The influence of COPA-COGECA within the agrarian sector is nuanced and subject to scrutiny, particularly regarding its alignment with environmental agendas and its lobbying practices. COPA-COGECA, as the largest agricultural lobbying group in Europe, maintains considerable power in shaping agricultural policies. While it claims to represent the interests of over 22 million farmers and their families, its actions sometimes diverge from the EU's green agenda. This misalignment stems from COPA-COGECA's prioritization of the economic interests of its members, which may conflict with environmental measures aimed at sustainability and climate action. In some instances, COPA-COGECA has lobbied against stringent environmental regulations, arguing that they would impose undue burdens on farmers and hinder agricultural productivity (Sherrington, 2022). For example, the organization has opposed certain pesticide bans and restrictions on fertilizer usage, citing concerns about the economic viability of farming operations. As an example, COPA-

COGECA has vigorously opposed proposed bans on specific pesticides by the European Union, citing concerns over their potential adverse effects on agricultural productivity and profitability. For instance, in October 2022, COPA-COGECA reiterated its opposition to the financial support of transitioning away from certain pesticides through EU funds (Corporate Europe Observatory, 2023). The organization argues that bans on these pesticides could lead to reduced crop yields, increased pest pressure, and heightened production costs for farmers across the EU. Similarly, the organization has lobbied against strict regulations on fertilizer usage, citing concerns about the economic viability of farming operations. They argue that excessive restrictions could hinder farmers' ability to maintain high yields and meet market demands. By advocating against excessive restrictions, COPA-COGECA contends that such measures could impede farmers' capacity to uphold high agricultural yields and fulfill market requirements. Real-world data supports this position, with studies indicating the vital role of fertilizers in enhancing crop productivity. For example, research conducted by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) underscores the significant contribution of fertilizers to global food security, with estimates suggesting that nearly half of global food production relies on fertilizers (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO], 2019). Moreover, COPA-COGECA's lobbying efforts against fertilizer regulations coincide with broader industry interests, as highlighted by the substantial financial investments made by agribusinesses in lobbying activities related to fertilizer usage within the European Union.

Moreover, COPA-COGECA's lobbying efforts have been instrumental in influencing EU agricultural policies that prioritize profit over sustainability. This lobbying power extends to negotiations on trade agreements, where COPA-COGECA advocates for policies that benefit European farmers but may disregard environmental considerations (Corporate Europe Observatory, 2020a). A striking example of this is the emphasize that COPA-COGECA put on the importance of maintaining access to a diverse range of plant protection products to effectively manage pests and diseases, crucial for ensuring food security and sustainability in European agriculture. This was highlighted in their « Copa and Cogeca's position on the Proposal for a Regulation on the Sustainable Use of Plant Protection Products » edited on September 30th, 2022 (COPA-COGECA, 2022). This stance aligns with COPA-COGECA's broader advocacy for policies that support the economic interests of farmers and agri-cooperatives, highlighting the need for balanced regulatory approaches that consider both environmental objectives and the practical realities of agricultural

production (Harvey, 2023). The omnipresence of COPA-COGECA in EU agricultural policymaking reflects its ability to leverage its extensive network and resources to advance the interests of its members. However, this influence raises questions about the organization's commitment to sustainable agricultural practices and its accountability to broader societal concerns. While COPA-COGECA plays a crucial role in advocating for the interests of European farmers, its influence on agricultural policies is not without controversy. The organization's divergence from the EU's green agenda and its powerful lobbying against environmental measures highlight the complex interplay between economic interests and sustainability in shaping agricultural policies.

COPA-COGECA has also been critical of the EU's Farm to Fork Strategy, which aims to promote sustainable food systems and reduce the environmental footprint of agriculture. The EU's Farm to Fork Strategy, introduced as part of the European Green Deal, seeks to transition towards more sustainable and environmentally friendly food systems. However, COPA-COGECA, representing farmers and agri-cooperatives, has voiced concerns about certain aspects of the strategy, and have actively lobbied against them. One major point of friction is that they view some of the proposed measures as detrimental to farmers' interests. It was argued that stringent measures such as pesticide reductions and fertilizer restrictions could adversely affect agricultural productivity and profitability, posing challenges for farmers in meeting market demands. Additionally, they raise apprehensions about the feasibility and practicality of implementing some of the strategy's ambitious goals within the agricultural sector. Data supports COPA-COGECA's stance, with studies indicating potential economic repercussions of the Farm to Fork Strategy. For instance, research conducted by agricultural economists highlights the potential income losses for farmers under certain proposed regulations (Dawson, 2023). Furthermore, analysis of the strategy's impact on agricultural practices reveals concerns regarding its compatibility with the realities of farming operations and the need for pragmatic approaches to ensure both sustainability and economic viability.

Finally, COPA-COGECA has resisted efforts to impose stringent targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in agriculture. They argue that such targets could impose undue burdens on farmers and undermine the competitiveness of European agriculture (Land and Climate Review, 2023). COPA-COGECA's opposition against rigorous greenhouse gas

emission targets in agriculture stems from several key factors. Firstly, they contend that agriculture already faces numerous challenges, including market volatility, climate uncertainties, and regulatory burdens. Introducing rigid emission reduction targets could exacerbate these challenges, particularly for small and medium-sized farmers who may lack resources for costly mitigation measures. Furthermore, COPA-COGECA emphasizes the importance of maintaining the competitiveness of European agriculture in the global market. They argue that imposing strict emission targets could lead to increased production costs, potentially rendering European farmers less competitive compared to their counterparts in regions with less stringent regulations. Some data tends to support COPA-COGECA's concerns : studies show that implementing ambitious emission reduction measures in agriculture could significantly impact farmers' profitability and farm incomes (Coyne, 2024). Additionally, agricultural organizations across Europe have echoed similar sentiments, highlighting the need for a balanced approach that considers both environmental objectives and the economic viability of farming operations (Sengupta & Pronczuk, 2024). Ultimately, COPA-COGECA advocates for a pragmatic approach to addressing greenhouse gas emissions in agriculture, one that acknowledges the complexities of farming while striving for sustainability. All these examples demonstrate COPA-COGECA's tendency to prioritize the economic interests of its members over environmental concerns, leading to conflicts with European institutions' efforts to implement stricter environmental measures.

6 Conclusion

In examining the evolution of the traditional function of agrarian diplomats in recent years, it becomes evident that the landscape of European agrarian diplomacy is undergoing significant transformations. This conclusion has the objective to synthesize the findings from the different chapters/sections/parts of this thesis — the literature review, the practical study, and the results and discussion — to provide insights into the changing role of agrarian diplomats and the implications for agricultural policies.

First, it was seen that the emergence of agriculture as a pivotal sector for EU diplomacy signifies a fundamental shift in diplomatic priorities, underlining its economic and social significance. Historically, agriculture has been integral to the European identity and economy, but its newfound prominence in diplomatic agendas reflects a recognition of its multifaceted impact on global affairs. The sector's expansion further amplifies its importance, as agricultural issues increasingly dominate diplomatic discussions, necessitating a reevaluation of traditional diplomatic practices. This evolution underscored the need for agrarian diplomats to adapt to changing realities, as they navigate the complex intersections of national and supranational political structures. In the context of my research question on the evolution of the traditional function of agrarian diplomats, the redefining of the European agrarian diplomacy context provides crucial insights. The growing prominence of agriculture in diplomatic agendas reflects broader transformations in global governance and the increasing interconnectivity of economic and political spheres. As agricultural issues take center stage in diplomatic discussions, agrarian diplomats are compelled to reassess their roles and approaches. Therefore, by examining the redefined context of European agrarian diplomacy, my research sheds light on the specific contours and directions of the transformation in the traditional function of agrarian diplomats. This understanding is essential for informing future diplomatic strategies and ensuring the effective representation of agricultural interests in national and supranational political structures.

Then, the rise of new agrarian diplomats in the EU signifies a pivotal shift in diplomatic practices, driven by the pressing need to address contemporary agricultural challenges with innovative strategies. As the agricultural sector continues to evolve, traditional diplomatic approaches are being reexamined to meet the demands of a changing landscape. These new

diplomats play a crucial role in navigating the complexities of policy landscapes, where issues such as sustainability, food security, and trade negotiations intersect. Their ability to engage with diverse stakeholders effectively is paramount in fostering collaboration and achieving meaningful outcomes in agricultural diplomacy. The emergence of these new diplomats is not merely incidental but central to understanding the evolution of their roles. The research question posed — How has the traditional function of agrarian diplomats evolved in recent years, and what are the specific contours and directions of this transformation ? — directly addresses the shifts observed in diplomatic practices. By highlighting the importance of innovative strategies and effective stakeholder engagement, this section underscored the relevance of redefining the traditional function of agrarian diplomats. It emphasized the imperative for diplomats to adapt to changing circumstances, navigate complex policy environments, and engage with diverse stakeholders to address contemporary agricultural challenges effectively. Thus, the examination of the rise of new agrarian diplomats provides critical insights into the evolving nature of agrarian diplomacy and its implications for national and supranational political structures.

In examining the practical aspect of COPA-COGECA's role in agrarian diplomacy as a case study, it became apparent that as a non-institutional actor, the organization occupies a pivotal position in representing European agricultural interests. COPA-COGECA serves as a unified voice for farmers and agricultural stakeholders, advocating for policies that promote sustainability, innovation, and competitiveness within the sector. Its role transcends traditional diplomatic structures, providing a platform for grassroots engagement and ensuring that the concerns of farmers are heard and addressed in national and supranational decision-making processes. Furthermore, COPA-COGECA's engagement with policymakers underscores its influence in shaping agricultural policies at various levels of governance. Through strategic partnerships and advocacy efforts, the organization leverages its expertise and networks to influence policy agendas, promote agricultural development, and address emerging challenges facing the sector. This practical study highlights the dynamic nature of agrarian diplomacy, where non-state actors like COPA-COGECA play an increasingly significant role in shaping the direction of agricultural policies. The organization's proactive engagement with policymakers and its ability to mobilize support within the agricultural community exemplify the evolving function of agrarian diplomats in contemporary political structures. This analysis of COPA-COGECA's role not only provides

valuable insights into the changing landscape of European agrarian diplomacy but also contributes to answering the broader research question regarding the transformation of traditional diplomatic functions. By examining the organization's influence on policy formulation and implementation, it becomes evident that the role of agrarian diplomats has evolved to encompass broader advocacy, collaboration, and engagement strategies aimed at addressing the complex challenges facing the agricultural sector in the 21st century.

In the results and discussion section, COPA-COGECA's role as a non-institutional actor emerges as a pivotal aspect shaping the landscape of agrarian diplomacy, underscoring the dynamic evolution of traditional diplomatic structures. By operating outside conventional state-centric frameworks, COPA-COGECA highlights the growing influence of non-state actors in shaping agricultural policies at both national and supranational levels. This shift reflects a broader trend towards inclusivity and collaboration in diplomatic practices, wherein traditional roles are redefined to accommodate diverse stakeholders. Furthermore, the organization's proactive engagement in policy advocacy signifies a departure from traditional state-centric roles towards more inclusive and collaborative approaches to diplomacy. By advocating for agricultural interests through collaborative initiatives and stakeholder engagement, COPA-COGECA exemplifies a new paradigm in agrarian diplomacy, where traditional boundaries are transcended in favor of more flexible and adaptive strategies. This departure from traditional diplomatic approaches not only underscores the evolving nature of agrarian diplomacy but also suggests a redefinition of the function of agrarian diplomats in contemporary political structures. As such, the findings of this study provide valuable insights into the transformation of agrarian diplomacy in recent years, shedding light on the specific contours and directions of this evolution in response to changing geopolitical and socioeconomic realities. In answering the research question regarding the evolution of the functions of agrarian diplomats, the analysis of COPA-COGECA's role serves as a pertinent illustration of how non-state actors are reshaping traditional diplomatic practices and driving the emergence of more inclusive and collaborative approaches to addressing agricultural challenges on both national and supranational platforms. Thus, by examining COPA-COGECA's significance and its implications for agrarian diplomacy, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the evolving role of agrarian diplomats in contemporary political structures and the broader implications for global food security and sustainability.

Through an in-depth exploration of the function of agrarian diplomats in national and supranational political structures, this thesis has provided a comprehensive analysis of the evolution of their traditional roles in recent years. By delving into the current context of agrarian diplomacy, examining contemporary developments, and illustrating practical examples such as COPA-COGECA, a nuanced understanding of the transformation of agrarian diplomacy has been highlighted. The study employed a multifaceted approach, exploring specific contours and directions of this evolution and highlighting the dynamic nature of diplomacy in response to agricultural challenges. The case study of COPA-COGECA realized with the interview of Ksenija Simovic, a senior policy advisor at the secretary general's team of COPA-COGECA provided interesting and internal insights regarding the research question of this thesis. It is evident that the traditional function of agrarian diplomats has undergone significant changes, necessitating adaptability and proactive engagement with stakeholders across various levels of governance. As agricultural issues continue to gain prominence in diplomatic agendas, diplomats must navigate complex landscapes with agility and foresight, embracing innovative approaches to address the diverse needs and challenges facing the agrarian sector. Ultimately, this research underscores the imperative for agrarian diplomats to embrace change and drive policies promoting sustainability and food security. In conclusion, the study provided valuable insights into the evolving role of agrarian diplomats, highlighting the importance of adaptability, collaboration, and inclusivity in navigating contemporary agricultural diplomacy. Finally, by examining COPA-COGECA as a case study, the thesis contributes to a deeper understanding of the diverse actors shaping agricultural policies and the broader implications for global food security and sustainability.

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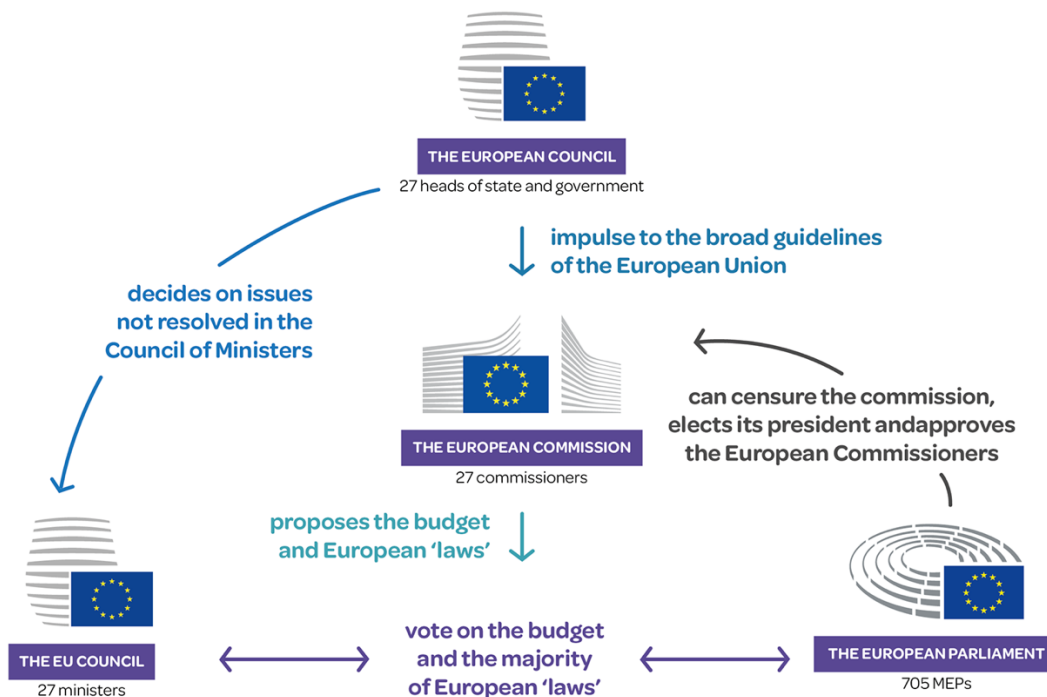
8 List of pictures, graphs, and abbreviations

8.1 List of pictures

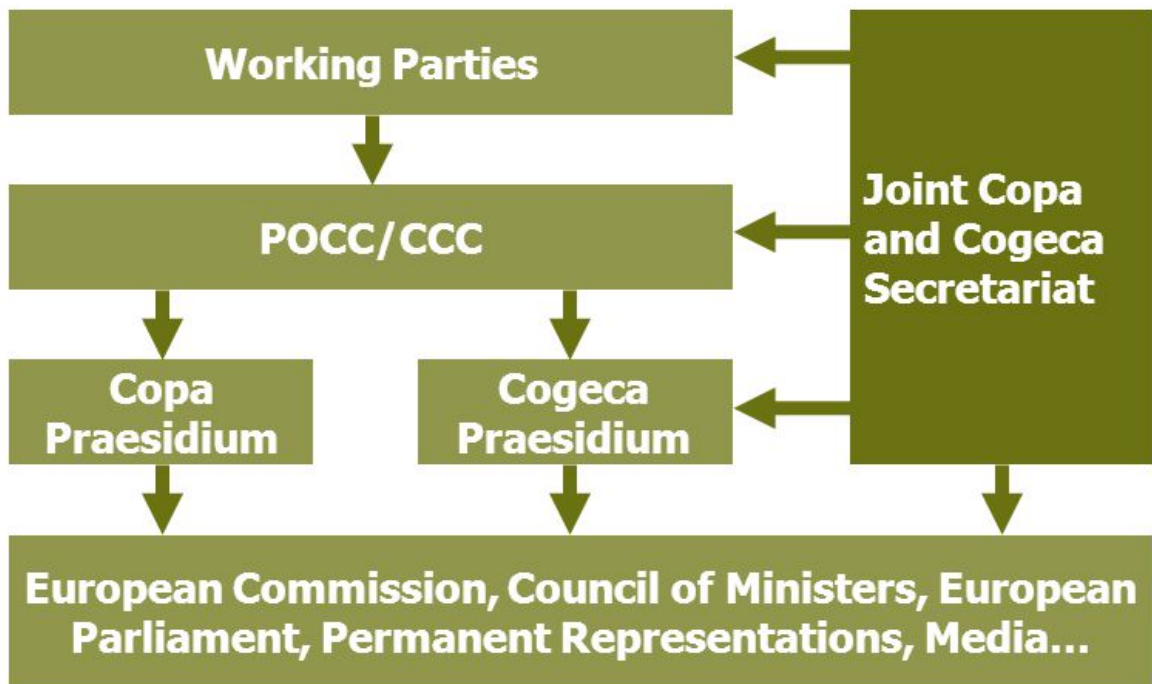


Image 1 : Logotype of COPA-COGECA (in colours), the largest agricultural organisation in Europe, source: copa-cogeca.eu, 2024.

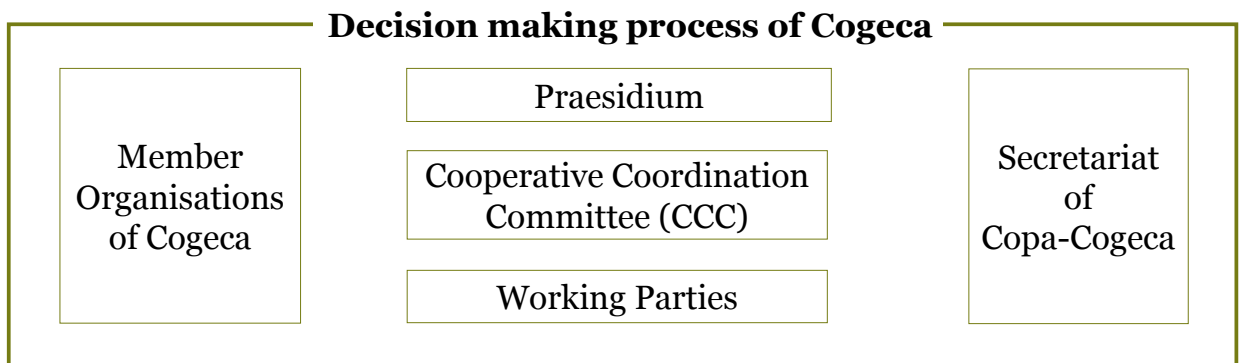
8.2 List of graphs



Graph 1 : The European decision-making process, source: europedirect.nicecotedazur.org, June 2022.



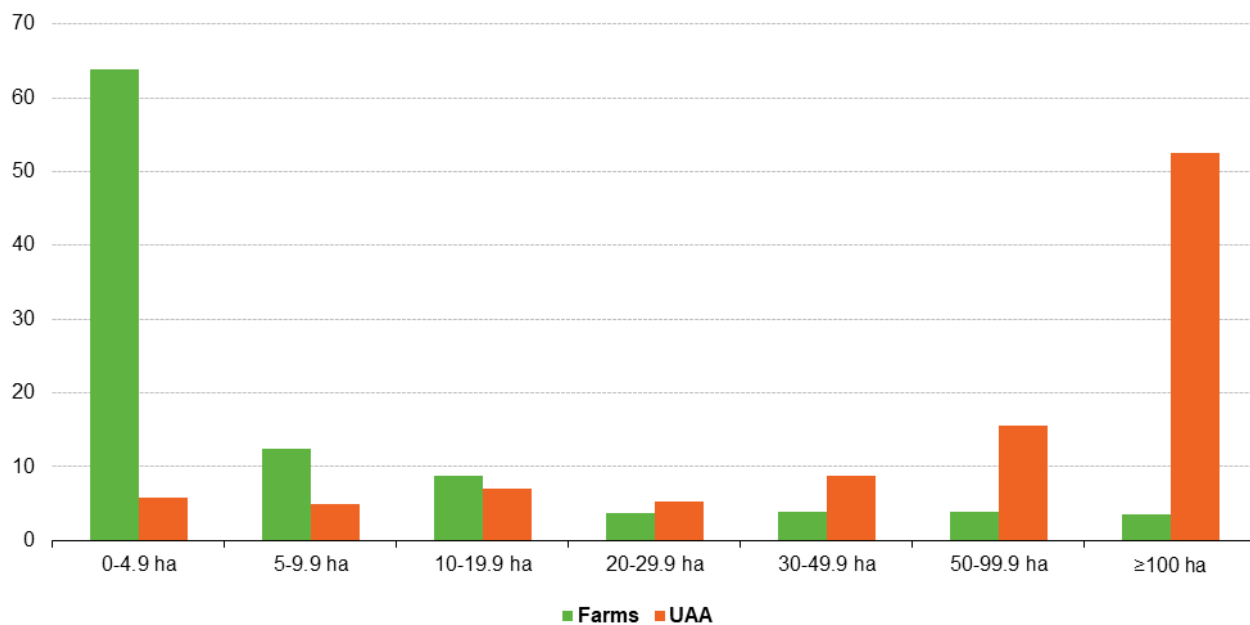
Graph 2 : Organisation of COPA-COGECA and the links with EU institutions, source : copa-cogeca.eu, n.d.



Graph 3 : Decision making process of Cogeca, source: laukutikls.lv, Prague, 2009.

Distribution of EU farms and utilised agricultural area according to farm size

(%, 2020)



Note: There are some differences in the threshold applied by some Member States, often to exclude the very smallest agricultural holdings which together contribute 2% or less to the total UAA excluding common land, and 2% or less to the total number of farm livestock units.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: ef_m_farmleg)

eurostat 

Graph 4 : Distribution of EU farms and utilised agricultural area according to farm size (%), 2020), source Eurostat, November 2022.

8.3 List of abbreviations

CAP – Common Agricultural Policy

CSO – Civil society organizations

COGECA – General Confederation of Agricultural Cooperatives

COPA – Committee of Professional Agricultural Organizations

COPA-COGECA – Committee of Professional Agricultural Organizations and General Confederation of Agricultural Cooperatives

DBV – Deutscher Bauernverband (Germans Farmers’ Association)

DG Agriculture – Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development

EIP-AGRI – European Innovation Partnership for the Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability

ETP Plants for Future – European Technology Platform “Plants for the Future”

EU – European Union

F2F – Farm Two Fork

FAO – Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

FNSEA – Fédération Nationale des Syndicats d’Exploitants Agricoles (National Federation of Farmer’s Union)

GMOs – Genetically Modified Organisms

NGOs – Non-Governmental Organizations

SDGs - United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

UTP – Unfair Trading Practices Directive

WTO – World Trade Organization

Appendix A. Interview Transcript

Interview transcript of Ksenija Simovic, senior policy advisor at COPA-COGECA's secretary general's team. Interview done on March 12, 2024, via Zoom meeting. Interview prepared and conducted by Esther Desmoulieres.

“

- *So, first of all, good morning Ksenija and thank you for having accepted this interview. My name is Esther Desmoulieres and I'm a student in European Agrarian Diplomacy master in the Czech University of Life Science in Prague. I'm currently doing my diploma thesis on the role of agrarian diplomats in the national and supranational political structures. So that's why it will be really interesting for me and a good benefit for my research work to show the importance of non-governmental actors in the sector of agriculture and for that purpose. I think Copa-Cogeca is a good example of such an organization having a big role in building the new EU diplomacy for the EU agriculture. So, thank you again for having accepted the interview and thank you for letting me record this interview. I assure it's only going to be for my master's thesis purpose and of course I will show you the results at the end once I will support my thesis. Can we start ?*
- *Yeah, of course, go ahead.*
- *Okay, so first I would like to know how does Copa-Cogeca engage with policy makers or with national or supranational political structures in the EU to advocate for agricultural interests ?*
- *Yeah, so as you know Copa-Cogeca represents European farmers and agriculture cooperatives. So farmers and Copa-Cogeca are the cooperatives from 27 member states covering all production sectors in agriculture. The way we engage with the policy makers and the decision makers is really on various levels. We engage with the European institutions that includes the parliament, the council and the commission. Throughout that you can say is, the legislative process of a potential new regulation that would in any way impact our sector or any of our like sub-sectors. And we also engage with other relevant institutions such as at the international level like WTO like FAO that are also of relevance for the European agriculture. Now when it comes to the national level, in principle, it is our members that engage with their national authorities. So we, as Copa-Cogeca, we do not operate at the national level. However, what we do at the Brussels level is that we engage with the permanent representations of member states. So that we do, usually in coordination and in support of our members from said countries. So in Brussels, I would say our engagement mainly focuses on the Parliament Council and the Commission. But of course, Council is kind of at two levels : one is towards the ongoing presidency that there is in the Council. Like right now, this is Belgium and then it will be Hungary, etc. So we engage regularly with the presidency and the relevant minister presiding the Agri-Fish Council. And then the second level of engagement at the Council is with the permanent representations of the 27 Member States. But as I said, whenever it comes to the national level, we tend to do this in cooperation with our members from said country. So this is the first level, this is just kind of the basics. Of course, at the international level, we engage with relevant institutions such as WTO or FAO, but we also tend to engage with our colleagues and other governments of third countries as well. So for example, I myself am in charge of trade and international aspects. So I would talk to the representatives of USDA, for example, it's the US relevant*

body for agriculture equally to the one from Canada, equally to the one from New Zealand, equally to the one of Brazil. Should they have an interest in engaging with us as well. So there is also part of work that is done at the international level, but of course, this is not our main focus. Our main focus is the policy and decision making at the European level. Because as we know, agriculture is an exclusive competence of the European Union. So basically, most of it is decided at the Brussels level. And hence, our organization is very relevant because we need to follow the whole process of decision making and potential legislations that can impact our sector.

- All right, very detailed answer thank you. Can you discuss any specific strategies or channels that Copa-Cogeca used to communicate with these policymakers ?

- Well, you know, there is a bit of a timeline when we are talking, for example, about a single piece of legislation, you know. Usually, there are always indications that some new legislation is coming up or that there is a revision of an existing legislation. And hence, we would first start with active engagement with the Commission. This is usually, let's say, the proposing body, the technical structure where we would engage with them prior to the publishing of the proposal. Normally, the Commission also organizes an official consultation, so a survey, to which we contribute as well. And this, all work that is done prior to the publication of a proposal, is with the Commission. And internally, it is done within, so in Copa-Cogeca, we have 45 working parties, so these are working groups, basically, made of experts from our members to deal with specific topics. For example, you have specific working parties on commodities such as pig meat, honey, wine, olive oil, cereals, etc., etc., all of the commodities. And then you have working parties that deal more with, for example, the production of food, and then you have working parties that deal more with horizontal issues such as the environment, such as social aspects, such as organic quality, such as food-related issues, or like mine, international or trade. So, in these working parties is where we discuss our position towards a potential new proposal from the Commission. This position is kind of made in the working parties. But it's then further adopted by our presidents, so the presidents of the member I. So we have a very detailed and a very democratic process in the way we come up with our positions and how our positions are agreed. I do believe this is our strength because, A, we have members from 27 member states, and B we, internally and in order to have a position, have to go through a lot of compromises. So we have to have a compromise building between our members. So our positions are already a very big compromise at the European level. Hence, it is very important for the Commission to understand where we stand on certain issues. Because probably these kind of problems that we might point out in our positions are also going to be reflected then in the Council and potentially also in the Parliament because of the different national aspects. So this is what we do prior to the publication. And once the Commission has published their proposal, we will I the proposal again in our working parties. And we would have kind of a build-up position to the actual proposal. And once the proposal is published, kind of our focus shifts to the Parliament and the Council. Because the proposal from the Commission is the Commission's position on that topic. And then the Council and the Parliament have to have their own positions. And then the Council and the Parliament have to have their own positions on the Commission's proposal. Hence, our focus would then shift towards the Council and the Parliament to explain to them our positioning on the proposal of the Commission. So there is actually a lot of work because there are a lot of steps, so the Council needs to adopt their position, the Parliament needs to adopt the report, it needs to be adopted in the Plenary, etc. So that the three organisations... can then move to trilogues towards the final agreement. So this whole process sometimes takes up to two years. It's not really immediate in these steps. But what we do is really we are there at each step, on one way or another, with different focuses, but we do follow the whole process from A to Z. I would say

even before A, because we start to be active on a topic even before there is actually an official indication. From the Commission that they are either going to revise something or going to explore a new legislation. So that's how we do. We tend to be very active in that sense. And kind of follow very much anything that has to do with agriculture or any of our sectors. So we are a team of let's say 35 policy and support staff and 15 people in our language team. Because we work in seven languages. And this is also something very important to underline. Because there are not many I at Brussels level that work in seven languages. And why this is important for us ? Because it's very important that our members are active in the process of taking our own position. And that is facilitated by the languages, because we want our members and our members' members to understand the different implications and to be active in our work. And we cannot expect farmers from across Europe to be fluent in English and to be able to do all of the work in English. And so we facilitate this translation in seven languages. And also interpretation of all of the meetings that we do as well, so they can really be active in the meetings where decisions are taken internally. So I think this is also a strength because all of us are active. And also our communication, external communication, is usually available in seven languages, which allows us also to communicate on the issues on the national level as well.

- Okay. And that makes the link with my following question : how does Copa-Cogeca ensure that the voices of farmers and agri-cooperatives are heard and considered in police making processes ? You just talked about the language facilities for example, so can you give more insights on that ?
- Well, we are very active in communication. So whenever we have a position, whenever there is something to say something about, we usually do it. I mean, if you take a look at our website, you will see we publish a lot of press releases. But we also have a lot of direct communication to the decision makers : we organize meetings, we invite the Commission or the Parliament or the Council, whoever, to come to our meetings, working party meetings. Normally they come, sometimes they don't. But, you know, we always try to bring them in to explain to our members. Now, what is important is the representativeness at the members level. Of course, this is a decision to our members, but normally they do try to be present in Brussels and to be present in the discussion. Of course, not all of our members have the same capacities and the same finances to be as active, there are, of course, big differences, there are differences in our membership. But we do, I mean, the process we follow is the same for everyone. So it's really up to our members the way they are organized nationally and internally and how they distribute their priorities, how much they would be active then at the European level. But from our side, we include everyone at the same level.
- Perfect. Are there any notable examples of Copa-Cogeca diplomatic efforts that actually leads to a real significant advancement or even political changes, like tangible outcomes that could be linked with the Copa-Cogeca's work ?
- Well, you know, it's always a joint effort. I think it's really just us. I mean, normally. Another aspect that is important to underline is how much we work with other stakeholders. So in the agriculture area, there is a lot of different stakeholders, it's not just ours. So what we tend to do on very important issue is to build consensus and to build partnerships with like-minded I. We might not always be on the same page with these I on every topic. But when there are topics where we are like in agreement with them to then kind of build strength and go forward. I wouldn't really take a specific example that I would push forward, but maybe one that was quite successful in the sense that there was this process of partnership building and

that we managed to have a legislation after 15 years of kind of trying to have it and battling for it was the unfair trading practices directive. And this one is very important because it tries to balance the power within the food supply chain and to give fair remuneration to farmers. Why I am a bit hesitant to say it was a success is because it was a success in terms of passing the legislation, but right now we are into a period of evaluation whether it is working because it started being implemented from 2019. So we are now kind of five years later into evaluation to see how much it is actually working. So, I would wait for the results to see if this was actually a real success in concrete terms. But in the way the process went, I think we had. We worked a lot on this. We built consensus with other partners, we made the partnership, and we had a very successful campaign there, so that would be an example where things really. The way we work showed benefits, but now it's always the issue whether a concrete piece of legislation, how it has been transposed in the national legislation and whether it is actually working. So that's always the second part, you know, the post evaluation is very important, because then, when we come to this revision of legislation, we have concrete data and information as to what needs to be improved, to make things work for our farmers.

- *You mentioned just before that there is a real variety and diversity of stakeholders in the argument within the agricultural sectors. What are the main challenges or obstacles that Copa-Cogeca faces when engaging with this variety of stakeholders ?*

- *Well, I guess where we mainly diverge is, of course, in the difference of interests. So, of course, we represent the interests of farmers and agri-cooperatives, and this is who we defend, this is who we answer to, so that's our position, you know. But the consumers are not necessarily in line with us, those that represents the big risk, retailers and supermarkets are not necessarily in line with us. Not necessarily always even the food and drink industry is in line with us. So we have to try to, you know, where possible, build consensus. But where it's necessary, we also need to go against the position of other I. That's not always easy. Where we find the most challenges is with the NGOs, so the civil society I, and mainly those that focus on environment, because they see a complete contradiction between farming and environmental preservation. Their idea of farming is a bit far from the reality of how markets function. So where we have a challenge with them is for them to understand the reality of markets, and to consider farming as an economic activity. So what they would like is that farmers are just providers of public goods, which they are in part, but they are also economic actors. And for us it's very important that they maintain their economic viability. So we are sometimes in conflict as to how things need to be done, because we are, of course, very conscious about the future. About the need of improving our environmental performance, of investing more in sustainability and fighting climate change. Because it's the farmers that experience the effects of climate change first, which impacts their economic performance. So we are very well aware that things need to be done. It's just that where we disagree is about how and in which time frame. Because farming is not something you can change overnight, you know ? These are natural processes, these are investments, these are long-term planning, and that is involved in the operations. So imposing changes basically from one day to the other. And pushing for objectives without giving the tools to reach those objectives, it's an issue for us. And this is where we often disagree with the NGOs, the environmental NGOs, because sometimes we see them, yeah, a bit one-sided. They don't want to kind of engage on these practical issues. Because farmers are very practical people. You know ? And we need to talk how much things cost, what are the tools I have available ? Like they need to be very practical, and here sometimes it's a bit ideological, and that's where then we come into opposition. And this is often what is in the media, and it's not nice for us either, because we fully understand the necessity to do more for the environment and the climate.*

- *That actually links to my next question. How does Copa-Cogeca manage diverse divergent interests and potential conflicts of interest when engaging in collaborative efforts with these different stakeholders ?*

- *Well, we do. Wherever we can. You know, first we engage. First thing is we try to engage. Always. We try to stay in our position, whenever it's possible we try to build consensus, but it's not always possible. So, you know, sometimes it's just not possible. We have divergences, and that's a bit what has been lately a big problem. Because on many topics with the Green Deal there has been a big divergence, and it has created a bit of an organized in the debates around agriculture. So I would say in the last few years it hasn't been so easy. But we continue to do it the way we do, which is to engage, and which is to consult our members. And try, first of all, to build consensus among our members. For us the first step is finding a compromise in our membership because we have very diverse membership : it's 27 member states, it's 66 I. So it's not so straightforward to come out with a position that we want, but there is a full agreement on it. That's our first and biggest work. It's always internal.*

- *So maybe you could give an insight on in what capacity does Copa-Cogeca engage in liaison with other stakeholders ? Both within the agricultural sectors and also beyond to represent interests and shape police making in the EU level ?*

- *But what do you mean in which capacity ? Because, I mean, we engage, we are the representative organization, so we have our status, we are registered in the EU. We have transparency register, so we have a status of a representative organization of interest for farmers and cooperatives. And it's in that extent that we engage. And also, we have a very democratic system as to how the decisions are taken. We also, our representatives are elected people. So you have Copa-Cogeca presidents who are elected by their peers from other countries. And then you have also the vice presidents who are also elected. So these are our core people that represent us and give us the validity to do things. And also every working party, you would have a chair of the working party, which is also being elected amongst all the experts in that working party. So we have a very democratic system which gives us certain representativeness in terms of who we represent and why we do what we do. And it's based on that that we engage with the decision makers. And this has been like that since the 60s, you know, so we also have a very long tradition. We are one of the oldest interest groups in Brussels. For example, we always meet with the council presidency before the AgriFish Council. And this is something that has been going on for more than 50 years. So there is a certain legacy as well as to how we work. Our statutes have not been changed; very little changes have been done to our statutes in the past 60 years. So the way we are organized is very democratic, it's very representative, and this is how we operate. Of course, 50, 60 years ago, we were the only organization that was representing farmers at the European level. Now this has changed a bit. You have the organic farmers that are also represented by IPOM, so the organic EU, but actually, in the numbers, we represent more organic farmers in our membership. So some membership overlaps as well. But, for example, IPOM also represents organic traders, retailers, etc. So the structures are different. But there are new I now that are representative in different ways : you also have Via Campesina, for example, that focuses on very small-scale farmers across Europe. But quite frankly, to the date, there is no other organization that is as representative as Copa-Cogeca in terms of the wide representation and the numbers. So that's why we remain still the main organization. Although with years, other I have joined the, let's say, the, how can I say, this spectrum that we have here in Brussels on our culture.*

- *Right. Could you set examples of strategic partnerships or alliances that have facilitated the advancement of Copa-Cogeca's objectives and goals in the EU?*
- *Well, maybe a few things where we have built alliances was to, but more on communication side than actually legislative things. You know, maybe like European Livestock Boys, Agri-Food Chain Coalition, so we have some of these like more structured partnerships. There is also European Bioeconomy Alliance. Those are three that come together. And then there are some that come to my mind where we have built partnership with other I on specific topics, on livestock, on bioeconomy, on agri-food innovation. So we try to, in topics where we think with the other I, we can find consensus and where we can kind of be more proactive. In that way, we try to organize ourselves. So these are some examples.*
- *Okay. Are there any ongoing diplomatic initiatives or projects in which Copa-Cogeca is currently engaged? Involving also, for example, collaboration with stakeholders and from different sectors or backgrounds?*
- *Well, the ones I mentioned are still very much active. There is also ETP Plants for the Future. So it's a technology plant platform for plant breeding. That's also something we're active in as a project. But yeah, those are the main ones we are still active in.*
- *Perfect. From a diplomatic standpoint, what do you perceive as the primary advantages of cultivating those robust partnerships and collaborative networks within the agricultural industry?*
- *Well, of course, as I said, you know, when you have consensus between different partners and stakeholders on certain file, let's say, or a piece of legislation, it always reinforces your position and the possibility of getting a positive outcome for yourself. Because then it's not just you asking for things, but it's a wider variety of stakeholders. So whether we engage on some proactive topics that are not necessarily, you know, linked to a piece of legislation or we engage together on a piece of legislation, building partnerships has always been very important in Brussels. It's not just us doing it. Everyone does this because it gives you relevance.*
- *Now I want to focus a bit more on the skills and qualities for agrarian diplomats since it's one of the core element I will mention in my thesis. From your experience, what skills and qualities do you believe are essential for individuals working as agrarian diplomats or representing agricultural interests in diplomatic settings?*
- *Well, first of all, working at the European level, you have to understand the cultural sensitivities. You have to be very diplomatic in order to build consensus and to find compromises. That is an absolute must. So you really need to understand also the structures and the priorities of different countries when it comes to agriculture. I think this is very key. The second aspect of course is you need to understand how decision-making works at the European level the main actors etc and how the process works. That's, that those are really*

two key things. Of course, knowing languages, especially when you're working in agriculture, is a plus. Of course. But yeah, I would think those were the main.

- *How does Copa-Cogeca nurture and develop these skills among its staff and members ?*

- *Well, I think internally we have a bit of an informal mentorship program, so to say, senior staff always tends to kind of take in more junior staff under their wings and kind of follow them through the process. Nobody is really left alone. So that's how we work internally. I think that's maybe the first thing. But then it's also, I think it's also about our hiring process, you know ? We do tend to hire similar profiles of people. So as I said, those that have some experience in the sector, those that quite often have done also some internship in the institutions or have some national experience and also have good set of languages, which is very important for us. And then really, as I said, through this informal mentorship kind of program, we do try to bring up the juniors, you know, through the assistance of the senior people. Another important aspect is that, of course, we organize different trainings internally for our staff, whether it is on public speaking, whether it is on social media, whether it is on different things. We do organize this at different moments because skills also evolve. So if you think about working at Copa-Cogeca 10-15 years ago, social media was not an important factor, but now it is. And it's actually usually more senior staff that need these updates or new skills, you know, and how to manage them, because these are new things that are developing. So it's not always the same, not always necessarily senior to junior, sometimes it's also more junior to senior in different aspects.*

- *Can you share any personal anecdotes or experience that highlight the importance of those specific skills or qualities in your role ?*

- *Well, specific. I don't know. Sometimes I think I was born to do this.*

- *If you don't have any, that's totally okay.*

- *Now, I'm thinking maybe it's really important to be comfortable engaging with other people and being very confident in what you know and in what you do. And also being open to learning, because quite frankly, you know when I came to Copa-Cogeca after two masters in European studies, after focusing my thesis on food safety, after being in the DG Agri, being at the European Food Safety Authority, so I did my share before coming, and on my first day, I was completely humbled as to what I knew, because it was a whole other. So I think you also need to be very humble and very ready to learn, because especially in agriculture, it's such a huge field. There is so much variety, there's so much technical knowledge that even to the day, I do not even pretend to say that I know most of it, I only know some of it. But it's very important to understand where you can find information and to rely on your colleagues as well, because not everyone is going to be following the same things, so some people are going to go in depth on different topics, and being also able internally with your colleagues to maintain good relationships and work together is also very, very important.*

- *On a more general aspect, do you observe a form of a new agrarian diplomat emerging ? And if yes, how triggered, who, and so on ?*

- *I observe more of an environmental profile than agri profile. I observe that more the younger generations come with an environmental profile, and more the older generations come with an agri profile and dive into agriculture. I observe also less agro-trained professionals going into diplomacy, and this, I think, is a bit dangerous, because I feel profiles with more environmental studies do not necessarily know the agro-economics and the technical aspects of agriculture as well. So this might be an issue.*
- *And from your perspective, what distinguishes an agrarian diplomat from traditional diplomats ? And how does this concept relate to the work of Copa-Cogeca ?*
- *The knowledge, the technical knowledge of agriculture is really important. It's not straightforward at all, it's super complex, and I think we have an issue, especially when we look at the agriculture. The agriculture used to be really a different kind of agriculture. We had a DG with a lot of technical knowledge, like older generations, really agrarians, agro-economists, et cetera, and now this is not really a case as much. So I really do believe, and I say this as someone who has not studied agriculture. You know, I studied international cooperation, I studied the European studies, and then in my second master's, I I in agriculture and food safety, but it's a very short organization. And I do see this being a big difference between me and my colleagues who have actually studied agriculture. That's why I take care of international cooperation and trade, et cetera, and they take care of the more technical issues. All right. But I do envy them. You know, if I could go back now, I would study agriculture.*
- *Okay. Can you define maybe a modern agrarian diplomat ?*
- *Define ?*
- *Define, yeah. With your own words, it doesn't have to be long or academic.*
- *Well, I would say that they are practical diplomats, because if you have this technical knowledge, then you can look at all the proposals, et cetera, through this more practical lenses, and advocate for practical solutions. Okay. And I think that's very important. But as I said, you still need to be, to have the part of the diplomat if you're working at the European level, because there's so much consensus building, so many compromises that need to be made. So you really need to be good at that, there are very important you know so I think globally things are changing um there are different pressures so it's very important that a new diplomat is also aware as to you know what's happening not only in EU and different Member States but also globally.*
- *Are there any ongoing training programs or initiatives within Copa-Cogeca aimed at enhancing the diplomatic capabilities of its members ?*
- *Hum, at the moment no, not a specific training program no. We had some in the past where we focused on different team mainly communication aspects uh but at the moment no.*

- *Looking ahead, how do you envision the role of agrarian diplomats evolving in the future particularly in the light of shifting political dynamics and global challenges affecting agricultures ? It was talked earlier about climate change for example.*

- *Yeah, well, I'm not very objective of course. I think that agrarian diplomats are extremely important and there is a lack of such especially people with technical agriculture knowledge that want to be diplomats because I think there is already a lack of such people to work in the industry, in the business-related operations that then thinking about focusing on diplomacy is really an extra thing. And I think it's great quite frankly because I think like people go to study diplomacy or on international relations etc, but they don't take a focus on a specific field and that, I think it's a pity not to have more people interested to work in agriculture in that sense.*

- *Okay. And just to finish, I'm going to ask some final questions to have an overview of Copa-Cogeca's role and also like your function. So can you please introduce yourself and provide a brief overview of your role within Copa-Cogeca ?*

- *Yes. So I am a senior policy advisor at Copa-Cogeca in the secretary general's team and they take care of trade and international aspects, as well as external advocacy. So I mainly focus on following European trade policy trade negotiations at the work at WTO, but I also do a lot of international cooperation activities with the farming I in third countries or their governments. And as I said, external advocacy as well so for example what I'm doing now this interview is part of an external advocacy as well, but also to our stakeholders and third country partners.*

- *How long have you been involved within Copa-Cogeca, and what initially drew you to that organization ?*

- *Well, I've been now eight years at Copa-Cogeca. As I said, I studied international cooperation for development as my bachelor and then I did two different masters in European Studies, at the second master I had the opportunity to organize in specific fields of the European policies and I chose agricultural food safety and consumer protection, which then led me to do a thesis in the similar field and got me to a traineeship at the European Commission at the DG Agri. After that, I went for one year traineeship to European Food Safety Authority and then I really wanted to come back to Brussels because that's where main things happen at the European level. The only thing is I was a non-EU citizen so I knew that I could not work in the institutions and quite frankly Copa-Cogeca is the next best thing in terms of the kind of work that I wanted to do and the relevance of this work and also the kind of exposure that you get to things. So I was very focused on getting a job either at Copa-Cogeca or at Food and Drink Europe, the relevant counterpart of the food and drink industry. I was lucky enough to get a good spot at Copa-Cogeca and I've been here eight years. I started as an officer, then I was a senior manager for the communication team and then I came to this role of trade at the Secretary General's office a year and a half ago.*

- *All right. Could you describe a typical day or week in your role at Copa-Cogeca ? If there is any, of course.*

- *Typical. Well, usually there are a few meetings always. Now, of course, after COVID, increasingly online. Sometimes it involves a visit to the Parliament if we need to engage with the members of the Parliament on an upcoming vote, like it was the case in the past weeks. Or there is a meeting with the Commission, or the Commission organize a meeting on something. For example, I follow a lot of meetings organize by DG Trade on market access issues, where there are always relevant issues for our sector. So sometimes I would sit half a morning in such a meeting. Other times I would be invited to speak at the meeting. For example, I'm speaking on a meeting about EU-Armenia relations on Thursday. So it really depends. There is a lot of meetings, always, but there is also, of course, downtime on the computer when I'm answering a lot of emails, I'm organize our internal meetings our agendas, or I'm writing background notes for our secretary-general or our president, so yeah, a lot. It's a lot of variety but there is there is a lot of engagement with other people, there's a lot of meetings so you need to be also depending on a role but for my role for sure you also need to be a bit of an extraverted person because you do speak a lot with other people.*

- *What are some of the main responsibilities or tasks you handle as part of your role within the organization ?*

- *Well, definitely representativeness do I represent Copa-Cogeca at a lot of these meetings and I have to be prepared for this meeting to contribute to them. I need to organize a lot of meetings and prepare their briefing notes for this meeting so I also need to follow a lot what is going on, so that either myself or our president or secretary-general can be ready for their meetings. And then of course a lot of communication with my members because in order for me to be prepared and to have the information, I need to run a lot of consultations with our members and get feedback from them and then put these feedback together and do something that is you know a coherent note.*

- *All right. You tackled it a bit before, but how does your background or expertise contribute to your work ?*

- *Well, I would say greatly. I mean I think nowadays it's not so common that you work 100 percent on what you studied and yeah, it's true. So I always wanted to do when I was 18, I said I wanted to do diplomacy, at the time I didn't know that I wanted to do diplomacy related to agriculture. That came through a thought process when I had to decide on an area, I wanted to focus in my second master's and I'm very glad that I made that decision at the time because simply, you know, I looked at the time where there is almost the most legislation in the European policies. If you put agriculture, food safety, consumer protection together this is the biggest bulk of legislation in Europe. It's also where a lot of budget is, so that's how I decided that this was relevant. Also just from a basic standpoint like we can go without many things, but we cannot go without food, and agriculture is related to everything : it's related to environment, it's related to social aspects, it's related to international and geopolitical strategies, it's related to trade, so agriculture can relate to anything. That was my thought process when I was 24 and I'm glad I had it. And the outcome of it so I ever since that point on I really focused on building my capacities and skills to the job that I'm still*

doing and I'm still developing skills because as I said I really had the opportunity to grow and get different responsibilities in these eight years so I I did grow a lot as a professional.

- *Now as far as Copa-Cogeca is concerned, what are the primary objectives and missions of the organization, and particularly in relations to advocating for farmers and agri-cooperatives ?*
- *Hum, I think you know the mission has never changed we represent our members, and our objective is to advocate for farmers and agri-cooperatives, and to bring their voice forward in the European decision-making and to influence this European decision-making in that sense. I think things that have changed in the last years with the different crises : Covid, Ukraine and all these latest discussions. And I think you can see that reflected also in the protests; the farmers really feel the need for agriculture to come back to the center of attention. And importance as well, the strategic importance of agriculture for Europe. We have huge issues in the sector, generational renewal being the first of them. So this sector has to have positive outcomes, has to have good economic balance, has to have performance, and has to have relevance in our society, in the media, in the policies. We need to ensure that agriculture sustains in Europe, that this is seen as a viable and good career for future generations. Otherwise, we have a big problem on our hands. So I think the strategic role of agriculture needs to be kind of revived in various debates. And this is where we are focusing now.*
- *All right. Can you provide examples of recent initiatives or campaigns that align with the missions you just described, like an objective mission ?*
- *Yes. So we are talking, there is one happening right now in Strasbourg in front of the European Parliament. If you go on our Twitter, you will be able to see some information. We are organizing a flash action. I'm a bit sick, so I'm not there, but my colleagues are there, and a lot of our members are there as well. It's to really, we are calling this Compass Campaign, where we want to put agriculture at the center of the policy. And I think a lot of this work is done now prior to the European elections.*
- *How will you describe the role of Copa-Cogeca within the broader landscape of agricultural policy and policymaking in the EU ?*
- *Well, I would say still relevant because of our representativeness. And, you know, we are, I dare say that the most relevant interest representative, so the most important interlocutor for decision makers.*
- *And last question is more linked to the actuality. We observed some strikes and demonstrations within different parts of different countries of Europe. How is Copa-Cogeca has a role in it or what's the position ? What's the opinion on all of that ? And, I guess, the support also ?*
- *Yeah. So up until today, we haven't organized anything ourselves. So this flash action that is now in front of the Parliament, this trust work is organize by us. But up until now, Copa-Cogeca has not been directly involved with any of the protests. It is our members in some member states that have in fact been actively involved, etc. There is a variety of reasons for*

this protest : some are more of a national nature, like in Germany, Spain, Italy, in France as well. But others have also this, almost all of them have a bit of this common aspect, which is the EU legislation and the burden coming from EU legislation. I think someone gave me the information yesterday that in 1990s in Sweden, there was about 260 pieces of legislation that were applied to farmers, in 2021 this is 643. So you can understand how the cumulative effect of all these new legislations that are coming up on farmers really do leave a lot of discontent and a lot of burden for them. Because farmers, what they want to do is farm. But if they have to spend a third of their time making papers and signing up forms, etc. I mean, this is super frustrating for them, so this needs to be simplified, this needs to be organized. That's, I think, one of the main claims.

- *All right. Well, that was it for me. So thank you.*

- *We have another meeting at 11, so it's perfect.*

- *Glad that the timing is perfect. Thank you so much for answering all my questions. That would be a real insight and support for my thesis.*

- *No problem. If you have any follow up questions, you can write me an email. It's not a problem.*

- *Yeah, I was just about to ask, is there any documents or materials that maybe you can provide ?*

- *Everything that is public is on our website. Really, I would recommend you just go stream through. There are all these different policy areas, relevant documents. And also on our news side, you have all the press releases. You can search by year or by keywords. There's really a lot of content there. But then if you're interested in something particular, you can ask me.*

- *Okay, I will. I will. Thank you so much again.*

- *No problem. Have a good day.*

- *Thank you, you too, goodbye.*

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