



**When COPA first started out it was made up of 13 member organisations from the then six Member States. Today COPA is made up of 60 organisations from the countries of the European Union and 36 partner organisations from other European countries such as Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey.**

**The IFA is the only Irish farm organisation represented in COPA. John Bryan was elected Vice President of COPA on 07 April 2011 for a two year period.**

**This broad membership allows COPA to represent both the general and specific interests of farmers in the Member States and, since its creation, COPA has been recognised by the European Community authorities as the main representative body for the entire agricultural sector throughout Europe.**

### **COPA: European Agricultural Union**

**The Treaty of Rome establishing the European Economic Community signed on 25 March 1957 already contained the most important framework provisions of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).**

**The relationship between the Community authorities and the representatives of the agricultural sector was left open by the Treaty, but the Commission expressed its desire for close cooperation at an early stage and invited representatives of agricultural organisations to attend the 1958 Stresa Conference as observers.**

**Farmers themselves were convinced of the importance of the Community for their sector, and on 6 September 1958, the first European representative organisation, COPA, was created.**

**One year later, on 24 September 1959, the agricultural cooperatives of the European Community created their European umbrella organisation, COGECA (General Confederation of Agricultural Cooperatives).**

**COPA's Secretariat was established in Brussels on 1 April 1959, merging with that of COGECA on 1 December 1962.**

## **COPA: Defence and development of the European Model of Agricultural**

**COPA has a number of objectives, such as:**

- to examine any matters related to the development of the Community's Agricultural Policy;
- to represent the interests of the agricultural sector as a whole;
- to seek solutions which are of common interest, and
- to maintain and develop relations with the Community authorities and with any other representative organisations or social partner established at European level.

### **COPA: an advisory, decision making and representative process**

**The working structures of COPA are determined by three basic ideas, i.e.:**

- to enable representatives of the European Union from the various agricultural production sectors and areas to discuss matters affecting their respective sector or area and to suggest solutions to the problems posed;
- to co-ordinate work in the overall context of agriculture, agricultural policy and policy in general;
- to represent all sectors and areas together.

**These ideas have resulted in the following structures:**

#### **Praesidium**

**The Praesidium consists of one representative per member organisation.**

**Apart from these national representatives, the following additional persons take part in Praesidium meetings: the President of COGECA, the President of CEJA (European Council of Young Farmers), and the Chairman of the COPA Women's Committee.**

**The I.F.A., President, General Secretary and the Director of the IFA Brussels Office sit on the powerful Praesidium of COPA**

**The COPA President, who chairs the Praesidium meetings, may also invite any additional persons whose presence is regarded as useful. This applies in particular to the Chairmen of the various Working Parties and Specialist Sections of COPA, as well as to the Chairmen of the joint COPA/COGECA Working Parties, whenever a subject relevant to their respective sectors is on the agenda.**

**The Praesidium normally meets every second month.**

**It is its function to represent COPA and to take all necessary decisions within the general guidelines laid down by the Assembly.**

**Positions of the Praesidium are taken jointly with COGECA whenever they concern the agricultural sector as a whole.**

## **PRESIDENCY**

**The Praesidium elects from among its members a President and six Vice-Presidents for a two year term of office. The Presidency of COPA and COGECA together form a Coordination Committee which tries to reach an agreement as far as the activities and positions of COPA and COGECA are concerned.**

### **Current COPA Presidency 2011-2013**

**President: Gerd Sonnleitner (Ger)**

#### **Vice-Presidents**

**John Bryan (IRL)**

Xavier Beulin (FR)

Albert Jan Maat (NL)

Juha Marttila (FI)

Lorenzo RAMOS (SP)

Wiktor Szmulewicz (PL)

#### **COPA Policy Co-ordination Committee**

**Every month, the Policy Coordination Committee examines certain major horizontal issues and proposals from the COPA/COGECA Working Parties before they are submitted to the Praesidium. Every week, the Committee**

**also exchanges information, coordinates the activities and follows up the decisions made by the Praesidium.**

## **Working Parties**

**COPA has more than 50 Working Parties, sub-Groups and Specialist Sections, either from specific commodity sectors or for general questions (structural, social, environmental etc.). Most of these Working Parties and Specialist Sections are constituted jointly with COGECA, but both COPA and COGECA also have separate Working Parties of their own. The Working Parties examine all questions concerning their sector, either on their own initiative or at the request of the Praesidium or the President of COPA. IFA has a seat on most of these working parties and specialist sections and attends meetings in Brussels almost daily.**

## **COPA: Targeted action**

### **COPA and the European Institutions**

**These methods vary, depending on the stage which the Community's decision-making process has reached. It is the Commission that drafts proposals; these are submitted to the Council for adoption and, in most cases, to the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions for their opinions. Once the decision is adopted, the Commission is in charge of its implementation.**

### **The European Commission**

**COPA representations must begin at Commission level.**

**COPA's Praesidium regularly meets the Commissioner for Agriculture and Fisheries in order to discuss the general development of the Common Agricultural Policy and the market situation, as well as specific issues of particular importance (such as the annual farm price review). Meetings with other Commissioners and with the Commission President are arranged whenever the need arises.**

**As for the more technical issues, regular contact takes place between COPA experts and those of the Committee and Standing Group meetings, personal contacts at staff level, attendance of Commission officials at COPA meetings, transmission of letters and written positions.**

## **Council of Ministers, European Parliament, Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions**

**Once the Commission has agreed on a proposal, the main focus of attention shifts to the Council as well as to the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, all of which are involved in the eventual adoption or rejection of EU legislation.**

**COPA can communicate with the Council both directly and indirectly. Direct representations consist in the transmission of COPA positions on the subject in question, and occasionally in meetings with the President of the Council or the Council as a whole.**

**Indirect representations are more frequent - these consist of contact at national level between the member organisations of COPA and the national ministers or their staff. Such contacts, in order to be successful, must be based on the joint EU-wide positions established in COPA and COGECA.**

**Regular contacts also take place between COPA and the European Parliament and particularly with the members of the Committee on Agriculture and the Secretariats of the political groups.**

**Contacts between COPA and the Economic and Social Committee (ESC) are particularly close, since a number of representatives of the COPA member organisations are members of the ESC.**

## **COPA and its European socio-economic partners**

**COPA's Secretariat, its member organisations and their members are called on daily to develop and reinforce its relations with other socio-economic representatives who are directly and indirectly related to the agricultural sector. These meetings may take the form of bilateral contacts, participation at General Assemblies, official or informal meetings.**

## **COPA on the international stage**

**COPA enjoys privileged relations with many organisations beyond the European Union's frontiers. Whether these organisations are national or international, agricultural or general, the aim of these relations is the same: to strengthen dialogue with all actors who are relevant for European agriculture.**

## The Member Organisations of COPA

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**Austria**

**Belgium**

**Denmark**

**Finland**

**France**

**Germany**

**Greece**

**Ireland**

**Italy**

**Luxembourg**

**Netherlands**

**Portugal**

**Spain**

**Sweden**

**United kingdom**

**Bulgaria**

**Cyprus**

**Czech Republic**

**Estonia**

**Hungary**

**Latvia**

**Lithuania**

**Malta**

**Poland**

**Romania**

**Slovakia**

**Slovenia**

**36 partner organisations from other European countries such as Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey**