

## **EuroCommerce President Dame Lucy Neville-Rolfe addresses the Forum for Agriculture conference 2013**

Today at the Forum for Agriculture conference on the future of the CAP and the food value chain, Dame Lucy Neville-Rolfe, President of EuroCommerce, stressed that a reform of the Common Agricultural Policy would only be a success if it will lead to more efficient and competitive European agriculture sector. *"Commerce relies on a stable and sustainable agriculture sector to supply fresh, safe and wholesome products. In many parts of Europe, retailers are increasingly working with farmers to improve efficiency and to meet consumer demands,"* the President said during the conference.

Speaking on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy, she said, *"The reform of the CAP will be judged by whether it will move us in the right direction, by allowing human endeavour and enterprise to profit through fair competition. We need a well-functioning, market-driven Common Agricultural Policy that helps farmers respond better to market needs. The success of our members and our customers' interests depend on the health of our suppliers."*

We also need a CAP that encourages innovation and productivity in the agricultural sector. That could mean more CAP funds devoted to developing new products and applying new techniques that would result in reducing waste in the food supply chain, and products that appeal by their provenance or the way they are produced.

Finally, she said, *"We need a CAP that will facilitate more collaboration between partners in the supply chain."* This referred to the voluntary framework to implement the principles of good business-to-business trading practices in the food supply chain, an initiative by EuroCommerce and other pan-European business organisations representing various actors in the supply chain. Dame Lucy said, *"This has game changing potential! Come May, I would like to see a critical mass of retailers and manufacturers sign up to the voluntary initiative to implement the principles of fair trading practices."*

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### **EuroCommerce and the commerce sector**

EuroCommerce represents the retail, wholesale and international trade sectors in Europe. Its membership includes commerce federations and companies in 31 European countries.

Commerce plays a unique role in the European economy, acting as the link between manufacturers and the nearly 500 million consumers across Europe over a billion times a day. It is a dynamic and labour-intensive sector, generating 11% of the EU's GDP. One company out of three in Europe is active in the commerce sector. Over 99% of the 6 million companies in commerce are small and medium-sized enterprises. It also includes some of Europe's most successful companies. The sector is a major source of employment creation: 33 million Europeans work in commerce, which is one of the few remaining job-creating activities in Europe. It also supports millions of dependent jobs throughout the supply chain from small local suppliers to international businesses.