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Answer given by Mr Hansen
on behalf of the European Commission
(3.2.2025)

Management of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is subject to strict rules on sound financial management. Article 61 of the Financial Regulation¹ details the obligations of Member States to avoid conflict of interests. This provision is directly applicable to all Member State actors involved in implementing the EU budget, including for preparatory acts and audits, and controls. It requires that situations involving conflict of interests are prevented and that such situations are addressed, including those which may objectively be perceived as a conflict of interests.

Rural Development Programmes are implemented through shared management with Member States. It is therefore primarily for the national competent authorities to implement these programmes and ensure related controls and transparency, including by publication of beneficiaries and using other tools to enhance control and audit functions. The Commission ensures through audits that the Member State systems adequately protect the Union budget. As part of these audits, the Commission verifies whether appropriate measures are in place to detect and address conflict of interests. Should the Commission become aware of deficiencies in the control system of a Member State, it can take a series of measures like financial corrections. Also, enhancing transparency and accountability in public decision-making remains a key priority for the Commission. In this regard, the Commission proposed a Directive on combating corruption which *inter alia* requires Member States to take the necessary measures to ensure that abuse of functions is punishable as a criminal offence, when committed intentionally². The proposal is now subject to co-legislative negotiations.

¹ Regulation (EU) 2024/2509 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2024 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union – recast OJ L, 2024/2509, 26.9.2024.

² Article 11 of the proposal for a Directive on combating corruption, replacing Council Framework Decision 2003/568/JHA and the Convention on the fight against corruption involving officials of the European Communities or officials of Member States of the European Union and amending Directive (EU) 2017/1371 of the European Parliament and of the Council, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2023%3A234%3AFIN>