



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

**Science, stakeholders, enforcement**

**PLENARY MEETING OF THE ADVISORY GROUP ON THE FOOD CHAIN AND ANIMAL AND PLANT  
HEALTH**

22 NOVEMBER 2017

**Summary Record**

**1. WELCOME AND OPENING BY MR MICHAEL SCANNELL, DIRECTOR, DIRECTORATE FOOD  
CHAIN: STAKEHOLDER AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

SANTE Director of Directorate D (Food Chain: stakeholder and international relations) opened the first meeting of the Advisory Group in its new form after the revision of membership. He welcomed all new members as well as permanent observers. He shortly reported on the evaluation and selection process leading to the new Group's composition. The Chair stressed the importance of engagement with stakeholder representatives and the added value of the Group as a consultative body and a sounding board for SANTE policies. He introduced the new Head of Unit responsible for the management of the Advisory Group, Péter Bokor. Furthermore, he informed participants that the Deputy Director-General Ladislav Miko has been appointed as the new Head of EU representation in Slovakia from 1 January 2018. The Chair then presented the agenda which reflects some of the key issues in SANTE's current work.

**2. FOLLOW UP ON FIPRONIL**

Ladislav Miko, Deputy Director General firstly thanked all stakeholders for their input and views into SANTE policy making and stressed the significant importance of the interface between COM and interest representatives.

On fipronil COM summed up the steps whereby the crisis developed from whistleblowing to RASFF notification when COM started the coordination and presented the actions taken stressing the two main priorities, namely a high level of consumer protection and collective enforcement of EU rules. COM highlighted that this crisis was a food fraud with a low public health risk. The judicial investigation is still on-going. COM presented the lessons learned from the crisis, *inter alia* the need to collectively improve the use and efficiency of the Administrative Assistance and Cooperation system (AAC) and the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF). COM stressed the importance of improved risk communication and collaboration between MS and Commission and informed participants on the outcome of the Ministerial meeting of 26 September 2017 with 19 concrete measures to reinforce the EU's action against food fraud including e.g. ensuring common rapid risk assessment, capacity building activities such as trainings and regular crisis exercises or establishing a "food safety officer" in each MS to ensure information flows as fast and as efficiently as possible.

**Comments and questions raised**

FEFAC underlined that, even though the feed industry sector was not directly involved in the crisis, it formed the task force to check what the possible exposure to fipronil could be in the food chain. FEFAC welcomed the fact that formal foodstuffs was taken out from the waste legislation which will help to limit the food/feed fraud. FEFAC also suggested that within OCR on capacity building side a stronger interface should be found between auto control and official controls on a routine basis. Regarding the monitoring of chemicals FEFAC requested clarification on how the operators can play a more proactive role when triggering AAC.

EUROCOMMERCE expressed concern that stakeholders were not adequately informed. In a context where the crisis had a strong impact on consumers, distributors suffered from a lack of precise harmonised communication from COM since messages received from MS differed from one MS to another. It called for the involvement of stakeholders at a much earlier stage in the future.

AVEC supported EUROCOMMERCE, highlighting that precise communication in such cases is needed to avoid confusion and limit the economic impact caused by e.g. banning the import of EU products by non-EU countries.

COM agreed that effective communication was essential. The proposal from the MS Ministers to establish a "food safety officer" in each MS could make communication faster and more efficient. COM will also try to improve the flow of information to stakeholders. COM commented on negative impacts resulting from actions by individual producers/companies such as withdrawals of products without justification. Coordinated reaction among companies is needed.

FOODDRINK EUROPE asked about the current situation, whether it can advise its members that the crisis is over and what is the harmonised approach followed by MS.

COM replied that all food business operators producing egg products are obliged to ensure that the eggs used for production are compliant with the EU MRL as regards fipronil. These measures are correctly applied in all MS, therefore it can be confirmed that all eggs and egg products produced in the EU and placed on the market, or exported are compliant with EU legislation.

### **3. UPDATE ON OCR 625/2017 PROCESS ON IMPORTS AND DE-BRIEF FROM DISCUSSION WITH MEMBER STATES**

COM presented priority projects for the OCR Work Programme on derived legislation including implementing acts on the Animal Welfare Reference Centre and the EU Reference Laboratories on Plant Health. Priority is given to the entry into the Union empowerments, Computerised Information Management System for Official Controls (IMSOC), Multi-annual National Control Plans (MANCP) reports, COM Control Programme as well as a delegated and implementing act on meat inspection. COM then detailed the state of play of individual acts and the calendar for sending the sector specific documents to national Competent Authorities. COM listed the planned empowerments together with the expected timing. COM informed stakeholders that each empowerment will be discussed with MS and after reaching consensus COM will consult stakeholders via the Advisory Group on major initiatives. COM outlined the next steps including the meeting with MS on 15 December 2017 to discuss import controls, a tentative ad hoc stakeholder meeting in the first quarter of 2018, if needed, as well as further meetings scheduled for

2018. COM concluded by stressing the need for close cooperation with stakeholders and invited participants to follow the updates on a dedicated website.

#### Comments and questions raised

UECBV asked about the legal text on import conditions to which COM replied that the act on import conditions is a very complex and sophisticated one. The work is led by the SANTE Food hygiene unit. COM stated that subject to the required administrative procedures the text might be shared with stakeholders, probably at the beginning of 2018.

FVE expressed thanks for the extensive work already done and clear non-papers presented in the ad-hoc Working Group on meat inspection on 7 November and asked whether the same approach will be used with border controls which COM confirmed.

#### **4. AMR: NEW EU ONE HEALTH ACTION PLAN**

COM presented the achievements of the 2011-2016 Action Plan to counter the threats of AMR in three areas: animal health, human health and research and development. After the evaluation of this Action Plan, the set of recommendations was prepared, namely to reinforce the One Health approach including environment, support and assistance to MS, fostering research and innovation, and enhanced cooperation at international level. It was also stressed that the AMR problem persists and continued action is needed. In view of these recommendations COM launched the open public consultation aimed at gathering views on specific proposals under the three pillar approach, as well as receiving feedback from stakeholders on additional actions of interest. COM reminded participants that the new EU One Health Action Plan was presented on 29 June 2017 with the following three pillars: making the EU a best practice region on AMR, boosting research, development and innovation on AMR, and shaping the global agenda on AMR. COM highlighted the important role of stakeholders and their individual actions in combatting AMR and the effort to consolidate these actions. COM concluded by informing participants about a dedicated website where a progress report with all updates on implementation will be available.

#### Comments and questions raised

FVE expressed their appreciation for what has been achieved by COM in recent years on AMR prevention and informed participants on FVE collaboration with EMA. FVE asked whether a similar guidance to one issued by WHO on antibiotics in food producing animals will be issued in the EU. FVE expressed the opinion that in the area of human health progress is slower with fewer actions.

BEUC confirmed that it is active in both human and animal health areas and asked about the state of play of negotiations on veterinary medicine. Regarding veterinary medicine, COM replied that the proposal is at Council level and that COM is pushing for accelerated negotiations on formal adoption.

AVEC agreed with the FVE impression that there are fewer actions in the human health area and mentioned an interesting exhibition of a project in the EP on an interdisciplinary approach to countering AMR.

FEFAC underlined that there should be a closer connection with the REFIT exercise and certain legislation concerning e.g. animal nutrition should be accelerated.

FEFAC drew attention to the upcoming joint WHO/FAO CODEX Intergovernmental Task Force on AMR where animal nutrition will be on the agenda.

COM stressed again the significance of the One Health approach (plus environment) and that there are many activities on both sides, veterinary and human health. Nevertheless, COM stated that it has more powers on the veterinary side.

COM pointed to the difficulties of convincing people about a need to reduce the use of antibiotics. It mentioned research projects dealing with the behavioural side of the issue. COM stressed that it supports WHO, OIE and other international organisations in their efforts to reduce the use of antibiotics as a growth promoter also outside the EU. COM agreed that animal nutrition plays an important role in combatting AMR and the AMR will be addressed in the feed legislation proposal.

EGGVP underlined the importance of the agreements with third countries and stated that the global action should not be limited only to reducing of use of antibiotics as growth promoter.

COM replied that global action is very broad, the additional cooperation with India and the Asian region concerns not only the problem of antibiotics as growth promoters. COM cooperates with international organisations (OIE) on definitions and supports WHO surveillance.

INDEPENDENT RETAIL EUROPE stressed the need to raise awareness and improve cooperation in the retail chain.

COM agreed on the importance of raising awareness in a broad sense by targeting consumers, patients, and doctors as well.

On COPA and COGECA's question why, if AMR is a priority, zinc oxide which is an alternative to antibiotics has been banned, COM explained that the ban was based on scientific evidence and emphasised that each possible alternative to antibiotics must go through a risk assessment.

## **5. PLANT HEALTH LAW AND THE IMPLEMENTING AND DELEGATED ACTS**

COM introduced the series of implementing and delegated acts to be drafted under the new Plant Health Regulation which will be applicable from 14 December 2019 and outlined the timing of procedures stressing the importance of stakeholders' contribution to these acts, via stakeholder feedback.

Regarding formats of plant passports, the implementing act was voted in the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed on 15 November 2017, with adoption by the COM foreseen by 14 December 2017. Implementing and delegated acts concerning plant passport – other provisions, *inter alia* on final users and traceability code exemption will be discussed in committees and expert groups in the course of 2018.

In relation to high risk plants and plants to be exempted from phytosanitary certification (PC) confirming their compliance with EU legislation, the discussion on a text of an implementing act started in 2017. Further meetings of experts on plants to be exempted from PC and on high risk plants are scheduled for November and December 2017 respectively. The stakeholder feedback on SPS notification is expected in June-July 2018, with an adoption of a joint implementing act on both lists by 14 December 2018. On a delegated act on priority pests COM highlighted that it relies on support from JRC and EFSA to develop methodology to identify the

priority pests. The Expert Group meetings are scheduled to take place between the first half of 2018 and the first half of 2019, with stakeholder feedback in the second half of 2019. COM adoption is foreseen for the second half of 2019.

COM further outlined the main steps in the implementing act concerning the update of pests and measures where the stakeholder feedback is expected in the second half of 2018 and the adoption in the second half of 2019. A delegated act on movement of scientific material is scheduled for adoption in December 2018 with stakeholder feedback expected in October-November that year.

COM further introduced the legislation under the Official Controls Regulation, namely the delegated act on the establishment of EU Reference Laboratories where stakeholder feedback is expected in December 2017 and adoption in February 2018. It also presented the implementing act on designation of EU Reference Laboratories with a call for selection to be published in the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2018 with adoption of COM Decision at the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter 2018.

COM listed the horizontal empowerments of the Official Control Regulation where plant health aspects will be included. COM also informed participants about amendments of the Annexes of Council Directive 2000/29/EC (I and II) with regard to data needed to be provided prior to the start of trade by non-EU countries.

Regarding *Xylella fastidiosa* COM reported on the latest revision of Decision (EU) 2015/789 which is expected to be adopted soon and informed participants about a high-level conference scheduled for 1 December 2017 with the participation of COM and ten mostly affected countries.

COM emphasised the importance of awareness raising on plant health risks and informed participants about the establishment of a Working Group on awareness raising for plant health to start in early 2018 with the aim of assisting MS with national and regional campaigns, as well as the exchange of information. Relevant stakeholders will be invited as well in order to present their views.

#### Comments and questions raised

FRESHFEL expressed thanks for this important overview and asked COM to elaborate on the methodology used by the Working Group on high risk products and asked about the criteria used for their definition. Regarding the amendment of the annexes mentioned, FRESHFEL asked for clarification following the corrigendum published recently, on the 60 day implementation deadline and whether it changes the notification deadline. It also stressed the need for regular updates regarding the countries that have notified already.

COPA and COGECA expressed an interest in participating in the Working Group on awareness raising. It asked how the treatment of fruits will be assessed since COPA and COGECA fears this could be the entry point for risky plant products.

ENA asked in relation to the plant passport format what the final wording is in the Regulation concerning the registration number of the operator who issued the initial plant passport. ENA stressed that on *Xylella* one solution does not fit all and suggested that EFSA provides a new risk assessment. Regarding the Working Group on awareness raising ENA is willing to participate.

ARCHE NOAH welcomed the swift actions in plant health area, in particular on final users and small quantities. It commented that to distinguish between final and professional users is not easy, and stressed the need of awareness raising in a broad

sense. Regarding the update of pests lists ARCHE NOAH asked which criteria are used in the current update.

On high risk products' methodology COM explained that firstly MS provide their preliminary assessment using the criteria defined in the annex. This assessment and the resulting list are then reviewed in working groups and later in the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed.

COM clarified that there is no delay in the entry into force of the modified Annexes of Directive 2000/29/EC of 1 January 2018, the mentioned corrigendum of the SPS information note is just informative.

On the assessment of treatment of fruits, COM explained that the data received on treatment will be discussed with MS in the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed; in case of no special concerns raised on the efficacy of the treatment no action is foreseen. If the details on the treatment or the treatment itself raise questions, COM might ask EFSA for opinion and request from the non-EU country further elements regarding the treatment. MS will in such case be asked to reinforce controls in the meantime.

COM confirmed to ENA that the element on the registration number of operators who issued the initial plant passport is not required in the new Plant Passport Implementing Regulation (except for replacement of Plant passport for protected zones). Regarding EFSA risk assessment on Xylella, COM informed participants that EFSA will be asked to review its pest risk assessment in the light of the latest developments but stressed that this will not change the policy which is that Xylella is a harmful organism which has to be eradicated.

COM stated that ARCHE NOAH will be consulted in relation to issues of final and professional users.

Regarding the list of pests, COM assured participants that the risk assessment is scientifically based with input from different sources including MS, EPPO and EFSA.

COM concluded by thanking stakeholders for their willingness to contribute to the Working Group on awareness raising.

## **6. UPDATE ON DEVELOPMENTS ON THE SUSTAINABLE USE OF PESTICIDES (DIRECTIVE 2009/128/EC)**

COM gave an update on the work that has been carried out within the framework of the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive (SUD) aiming at reducing the risk from pesticides to human health and to the environment. All provisions of the Directive are now fully in place. MS have an obligation to adopt National Action Plans (NAPs) with measurable objectives, targets, measures and timetables. All action plans are available on the dedicated website. COM has to report on the progress of implementation. The latest report to the EP and Council was published on 10 October 2017 reporting on assessments of MS NAPs and the progress in the implementation of the Directive. COM further informed on the publication of the Overview report on implementation with details on measures and good practice and the adoption of a Guidance document on monitoring and surveying the impact of pesticide use on human health and environment. COM detailed the information sources on which the SUD update is based, namely the assessment of NAPs, audits carried out between 2012 and 2016, surveys in MS as well as fact finding visits.

COM gave an overview of its main actions. COM explained that there is a huge diversity in the MS NAPs and stressed the need to improve them and address shortcomings, mainly to be more precise in establishing measurable targets. COM underlined the progress related to aerial spraying which is prohibited in all MS but three, and that derogations are strictly controlled and monitored. Another positive feature mentioned is the implementation of training of professionals where high level compliance with training requirements has been reported. Positive reporting concerns also the pesticide application equipment where all MS have a system in place and a majority of sprayers were tested. There is still room to improve the information and awareness raising, as well as the area of gathering information on acute poisoning incidents. On protection of aquatic environments COM noted the high level of compliance, although more measurable targets are needed in this area as well. COM stated that the area requiring significant improvement is the integrated pest management (IPM) which prioritises the use of low risk pesticides and non-chemical methods. Although there are good practice examples across MS the criteria are not clearly defined and assessable. COM invited participants to visit the new web portal where all relevant documents, including MS reports are publicly available.

COM further outlined COM actions *inter alia* to support MS to develop methodologies to assess compliance with the eight IPM principles, to run a series of training courses for MS experts on implementation of IPM via the Better Training for Safer Food, to discuss with MS the development of harmonised risk indicators, increase the availability of low-risk substances and biological control techniques and promote them, and explore with MS a functioning surveillance system on occupational pesticide poisoning. COM announced that the new report to the EP and Council will be published in 2019, based on the results of assessment of new NAPs, results of audits as well as progress on implementation.

#### Comments and questions raised

EPBA called for further action by COM regarding the engagement of stakeholders on national level. EPBA complained that the input from stakeholders to the national action plan in Germany was ignored (e.g. pushing for measurable indicators) so all relevant stakeholders pulled out. COM should be aware of this and ensure that in future stakeholders in MS are involved and listened to in the preparation of NAPs.

INDEPENDENT RETAIL EUROPE stressed that the use of pesticides is relevant to the retail sector, as is the use of recognised standards of the levels of pesticides in produce in order to minimize the usage of chemicals. INDEPENDENT RETAIL EUROPE would welcome in the Advisory Group presentations from MS governments in order to be aware of the national perspectives and be able to intervene accordingly.

COPA and COGECA expressed concerns regarding IPM criteria, since the decision on which tool to apply is made at a farm level after considering many aspects. Farmers decide on a crop rotation, sowing a specific crop variety, etc. COPA and COGECA stressed that IPM is currently applied and asked how the current positive practice is taken into consideration when defining IPM. COPA and COGECA touched upon consumers' non- acceptance of the use of new technologies.

PAN EUROPE stressed the need for urgent actions since the report is published with a three-year delay. PAN EUROPE would like to know how COM ensures that MS will identify in their revised NAPs quantitative targets, timetables, and measures. It

underlined that it is crucial to include environmental, health and consumer organisations in the preparation of these plans.

FoEE asked whether the environmental risk assessment on the use of pesticides on GMO crops is incorporated in the pest assessment since it does not fall under GMO legislation.

ECCA understands the desire to have harmonised risk indicators but disputed that pursuant the Pesticide Regulation, the authorised products have in every section of risk assessment confirmation of no adverse effects. The possible risk indicator is to measure how much bigger the margin of safety has become, not the impact on environment.

COM explained how the revised NAPs are assessed and detailed the specific feedback provided by COM in the form of general comments, e.g. on measurable targets as well as specific deficiencies in the individual action plans. Based on these comments the NAP should be improved. COM confirmed that it will examine with MS stakeholder engagement when assessing the revised NAPs in 2018-2019.

COM explained the difference between fact finding visits and audits and underlined that all reports including recommendations as well as MS responses are publicly available on its website.

Regarding IPM, COM explained that there are difficulties to demonstrate the level of implementation, so it is important to have certain criteria. In some MS IPM does not always consider all tools available to farmers.

COM mentioned that PAN EUROPE's concerns were addressed in a bilateral meeting with this organisation that took place two weeks ago.

Regarding FoEE question COM invited FoEE to send it in writing so it can be replied to by the relevant COM colleagues.

COM highlighted that the aim of the legislation is to reduce the risk to health and the environment; there are various criteria to be used for different risks. It is desirable to have some indicators in order to be able to demonstrate that the legislation is working.

On COPA and COGECA's concern that currently there are only 10 active substances authorised as low risk, COM recognised farmers' concern but commented that an indicator to measure the increase of low risk pesticides should not be ruled out.

## **7. PLANT PROTECTION PRODUCTS**

### REFIT on pesticide legislation

COM informed stakeholders that the REFIT programme, a rolling programme aiming at evaluating if the legislation is fit for purpose and looking at the possibilities to simplify it, has been initiated for the pesticide legislation, covering both the authorisation of, and the legislation on, residues.

COM explained that different steps are foreseen in the evaluation process which is expected to be concluded in 2019. As a part of this evaluation process several consultations have been opened: a public consultation open until 12 February 2018 and available in all EU languages aimed at citizens and a stakeholder survey open until 31 December 2017 available in English. COM stressed that the stakeholder survey is extensive but it is possible to reply just to selected questions, and invited



stakeholders to use this opportunity to express their opinions. Further, a survey of Small and Medium Size Enterprises is open until 15 January 2018. It is available in all EU languages and distributed via the EEN network with the help of DG GROW. Finally, a survey of Member State Competent Authorities is also on-going.

COM underlined that a dedicated website facilitates the transparency of the process: [https://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/pesticides/refit\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/pesticides/refit_en)

#### Revision of COM Communication

COM explained that the revision of the two communications published in 2013 listing the data methods and guidelines to fulfil the data requirements under the plant protection product legislation has been launched. These updates will take into account new techniques, and the refinement of test methods.

As a first step COM asked EFSA and MS to provide the information on test methods relevant for the assessment of pesticides and discussed this with MS in the Standing Committee for Plants, Animals, Food and Feed. The draft updated Communication will be available for stakeholders' feedback in the first part of the first semester of 2018 via the feedback mechanism. The adoption of the revised Communication by COM is foreseen in the second part of the first semester 2018. Where relevant, it is intended to align the data requirements with those in the REACH and Classification, Labelling and Packaging (CLP) regulations, in order to increase harmonisation. In addition, alternatives to animal testing will be listed where available in order to reduce it.

### **8. UPDATE ON ENDOCRINE DISRUPTORS**

COM informed participants that after the presentation of draft criteria to identify endocrine disruptors in June 2016 and discussion with MS over the course of the year, criteria for endocrine disruptors for biocides were adopted and published after the scrutiny period by the Council and the European Parliament had been finalised. The criteria will enter into force on 7 December 2017, and will be applicable on 7 June 2018. These new criteria apply to both new applications as well as those which are on-going, i.e. where no decision as regards approval/non approval has been taken at the respective Committee.

For criteria under the pesticide legislation, similar in content to those on biocides, a qualified majority of the MS was achieved in July 2017. The proposal was then subjected to scrutiny of the EP and Council. EP passed a resolution opposing the COM proposal on legal grounds. Thus COM cannot proceed with the adoption of criteria and is now reflecting on the next steps. For the time being, the interim criteria set in the Pesticide Regulation continue to apply.

COM further highlighted the need for guidance in order to implement the criteria for biocides, and in the future, pesticides. COM informed participants that the EU agencies EFSA and ECHA have been jointly developing a guidance document. The public consultation on this draft guidance document will be launched, most probably, in December 2017 and last until the end of January 2018. The document is expected to be finalised by mid-2018 when the criteria for biocides become applicable. COM concluded by inviting the stakeholder representatives to provide their feedback via the public consultation.

## 9. REMARKS BY COMMISSIONER ANDRIUKAITIS

The Commissioner for Health and Food Safety addressed participants and welcomed new members and permanent observers who have joined the Group. He thanked all stakeholders for their time, efforts and contributions to this forum – where the COM and stakeholders representing the whole food and feed supply chain gather together to discuss matters of key importance. He stressed that stakeholders' active involvement and constructive input is needed to develop fit-for-purpose policies and legislation, striking an optimal balance between various interests. He then provided a brief overview of SANTE's most important files.

On fipronil he reminded participants that this contamination incident showed how the criminal actions of a few can threaten the integrity and reputation of the entire food chain. He summed up the measures agreed in a Ministerial meeting of 26 September aimed at maintaining strong and efficient food controls and fraud detection systems and procedures and at communicating and cooperating at all levels. The Commissioner emphasised the important role and responsibility of food business operators and organisations representing food business operators to implement or improve existing self-monitoring programmes at sectoral level.

Regarding endocrine disruptors the Commissioner pointed out the significant progress made towards adopting scientific criteria for their identification in the context of the Pesticides and Biocides Regulations. For biocides, COM adopted a delegated Regulation setting out the same criteria as for pesticides for the identification of active substances and co-formulants that have endocrine disrupting properties. The criteria for biocides will enter into force and become applicable by mid-2018. These new criteria are protective of human health and the environment as they are based on the WHO's definition of an endocrine disruptor. They identify known and presumed endocrine disruptors on the basis of all available scientific information, including animal, in-vitro, and in-silico data.

However, COM cannot adopt the criteria for pesticides and is now reflecting on the next steps.

The Commissioner stressed COM's efforts to find a solution to the question of the renewal of the approval of "glyphosate", a solution which ensures a high level of protection of human health and the environment – in line with the EU legislation and based on the available scientific data. The Commissioner briefly recapped that the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) both concluded that glyphosate should not be classified as carcinogenic. This is in line with the conclusions of many other risk assessment regulatory bodies, both inside and outside of the EU. He mentioned that additional factors were taken into account when considering the appropriate period for renewal, not least the fact that additional information on glyphosate is being published at an exceptionally high rate compared to other active substances, and that glyphosate is one of the most widely used herbicides in the Union. Moreover, glyphosate has attracted considerable attention in the public sphere, including the recent Resolution of the EP and the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) referring specifically to glyphosate. He stated that the proposal by COM to renew the approval of glyphosate for five years failed to attract a qualified majority in the Standing Committee vote on 9 November, and the matter is now being referred to the Appeal Committee for consideration next week. The matter is urgent as the current authorisation will expire on 15 December.

The Commissioner was pleased to say that the Fitness Check on the General Food Law Regulation is being finalised. Its adoption by the College is expected by the end of this year, or early in 2018. He reminded participants that on 27 November an anniversary event to mark the 15 years of the General Food Law Regulation will be held in Brussels, where the final findings of the Fitness Check will be presented.

Regarding the efforts to prevent food losses and food waste, the Commissioner mentioned the establishment of the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste, as part of the Circular Economy Action Plan, which is now fully operational and delivering concrete results. He listed the latest achievements, namely publication of the EU guidelines on food donation, discussions on food waste quantification, setting up a sub-group dedicated to action and implementation and introducing new digital tools to facilitate the exchange of information and best practices. Furthermore, COM is examining with Platform members new findings from research launched by COM on date marking practices and their relation to food waste. In addition, EU guidelines on the use of former foodstuffs as feed is expected to be adopted by the end of this year.

On the EU Platform on Animal Welfare the Commissioner referred to the second meeting of same, where the establishment of a first sub-group on animal transport was announced to consider with other fora (notably the National Contact Points) how EU legislation on animal transport might be better enforced. He highlighted the recent launch of a call for the selection and designation of the first EU Reference Centre for Animal Welfare – as foreseen in the Official Controls Regulation – which will help bridge the gap between fundamental research and practical enforcement of EU legislation. He also announced that all the outstanding actions under the EU Animal Welfare Strategy which includes the publication of five animal transport guides, with five short instructive videos, are in the pipeline. Two remaining studies have now been completed and the reports will be published shortly. One concerns best practice on animal protection at the time of slaughter and the other concerns the transport and killing of farmed fish.

Regarding antimicrobial resistance (AMR) the Commissioner stressed the significant progress made in recent years, but emphasised that AMR continues to grow, and at an ever increasing cost in terms of both human suffering and economic damage. He gave an overview of a new EU One Health Action Plan against AMR, which takes into account the lessons learned from the previous activities. This plan focuses on key areas with the highest added value for EU countries, and includes human, animal and food-related actions under all three of its pillars.

The Commissioner stressed the role of the Advisory Group in supporting a collaborative effort to change out-dated practices that have contributed to the development of AMR, as well as promoting and implementing new initiatives to help reduce inappropriate antimicrobial usage. He concluded by underlining that the added value of the Advisory Group is in its collaborative effort aiming, not only, at promoting specific interests, but at working together towards a better, more sustainable and even safer food and feed chain in the interests of our economy and ultimately of EU citizens.

Comments and questions raised

EUROCOMMERCE expressed its full commitment to sell safe food, and requested again to be involved at an early stage in the case of a crisis. It welcomed the guidance on food donation and stated that there are many innovative actions by businesses.

The Commissioner assured participants that possibilities of stakeholders' involvement will be examined, but emphasised that it is crucial to communicate about crisis without creating panic and to avoid misinterpretation. Regarding food waste, he encouraged EUROCOMMERCE to call upon its members to update commercial and marketing practices and to contribute to awareness raising.

FEFAC underlined that AMR is a key priority and efforts should be made to explore possible solutions and alternative strategies to prevent the use of antibiotics in farms. Regarding food waste and the use of former foodstuffs for feed FEFAC stressed the need to have safety in mind and to be extremely cautious.

The Commissioner agreed that food safety cannot be compromised. He mentioned his meeting with International Platform of Insects for Food and Feed (IPIFF) and in this sector he sees some possibilities of using food waste. COM stressed that while looking for innovative and dynamic solutions the lessons learned from previous food crises, as well as scientific opinion, have to be kept in mind.

COPA and COGECA raised the issue of glyphosate, stating critically that support from MS for renewal is decreasing with decreasing number of years being proposed for renewal, viz. at the outset the proposal was for fifteen years renewal with twenty MS backing it.

The Commissioner replied that the time framework varied from four to fifteen years and indeed support from MS had decreased since the first proposal with public opinion negative despite the scientific opinion. He encouraged all operators and NGOs to debate together with other interest groups and local communities to achieve reasonable compromises. He stated that MS should take responsibility for the decision.

PAN EUROPE stressed there is a public desire to ban glyphosate and it has been proven by the European Citizens Initiative (ECI) with more than 1, 3 million signatures. PAN EUROPE also stated that there are alternatives to glyphosate.

The Commissioner agreed that ECI is important as an educative tool for citizens and that the Commission was taking the initiative very seriously. However, he highlighted that the voices of all sides and interested parties must be heard i.e. NGOs, farmers, etc. since they all have their legitimate concerns. He stressed the need to openly debate among all parties in order to address these concerns.

ECCA agreed that there is a need for self-reflection by industry and it confirmed it is on-going. ECCA underlined that if no qualified majority is achieved in the Appeal Committee it will be for COM to decide. Since COM already announced it is not going to take a decision without a qualified majority of MS supporting it, ECCA would like to know what would then be COM's next step.

The Commissioner was not in a position to reply but stressed that COM has a legal obligation here and the rule of law must be followed. It might become possible to change the law in the future, either the Pesticides Regulation or the General Food Law, but at present COM is working within the current legal framework.

FESASS underlined that farmers are working hard to produce and put on the market good products based on scientific advice. FESASS argued against bowing to negative public opinion since if it is done there will soon be no food production. FESASS stressed that ultimately it is consumers that have to bear the consequences, as it is in case of fipronil where the price of eggs has doubled.

The Commissioner agreed that we have to act against fraud and operators should also take their share of responsibility. Regarding glyphosate, based in particular on the work of EFSA and ECA, the Commissioner stressed that currently there is no scientific evidence that glyphosate is carcinogenic. He accepted that some argue that scientific evidence is in favour of industry. He acknowledged the importance of public opinion but warned against creating misconceptions. The Commissioner concluded by stating that achieving compromises and finding solutions is essential.

#### **10. FOOD 2030 - EUROPEAN RESEARCH AND INNOVATION FOR FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY**

COM presented the latest developments in shaping research and innovation policies for the food supply chain and food related areas. COM stressed the importance of tackling the challenges in a holistic way, including increasing the role of research and innovation.

COM highlighted the challenges for the future due to a growing population, unhealthy life style or malnutrition, extremely high demands for energy and natural resources for food production. COM stated that at present there are political opportunities to reshape the way how we approach the food system including COM priorities, Sustainable development Goals, COP 21 to mitigate the climate change. COM pointed to the challenges currently impacting the European agricultural sector and its vulnerability with additional stress created by increasing demand for food and feed, increasing environmental concerns and uncertainty generated by climatic changes. The way forward would be sustainable farming meaning more efficient agricultural production systems with less impact on the environment. However, moving to sustainable farming is a complex process requiring a system approach. COM presented FOOD 2030 - a R&I policy framework, a strategy to future-proof the nutrition and food systems with priorities including nutrition for sustainable and healthy diet, climate smart and environmentally sustainable food systems, circularity and resource efficiency of food systems, innovation and empowerment of communities. FOOD 2030 is built around the food system approach, from farm to fork and back addressing food safety and nutrition security.

COM further drew the attention of participants to Horizon 2020 as an implementation tool where in its Work Programme for 2018-2020 under Societal Challenges, point 2, there are several topics addressing sustainable farming and the food chain. The Work Programme and the open calls for applications are available online. COM highlighted the need for collaboration with others and listed on-going initiatives promoting the work with MS, regions, and the private sector.

COM concluded by giving an overview of the next steps in FOOD 2030 stressing the focus on food system approach, new partnership with MS and businesses, mapping and closing the investment gap, new technologies, and business models.

## 11. UPDATE ON FOOD WASTE PLATFORM

COM recalled that food waste prevention (to limit the millions of tonnes of food wasted in the EU) was identified as a key priority area in the Circular Economy Package adopted by COM in 2015 due to its important economic and environmental impact and the need for targeted action. The Circular Economy Action plan confirms COM commitment to Sustainable Development Goals, in particular to SDG 12.3. to halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels by 2030 and reduce food losses along production and supply chains.

COM further updated participants on the goals and activities of the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste (FLW). The aim of the Platform is to support all actors in monitoring progress towards SDG 12.3, defining measures needed to prevent food waste, fostering inter-sectorial cooperation and sharing best practices. COM gave a state-of-play on waste legislation, where new provisions on food waste are one of the elements of COM proposal to revise the Waste Framework Directive, currently under negotiation in trilogue. These obligations require MS to reduce food waste and monitor food waste levels based on a common EU methodology to be proposed by COM following adoption of the revised Waste Framework Directive. COM informed participants that EU food donation guidelines, elaborated in cooperation with members of the EU Platform on FLW were adopted by COM on 16 October 2017 in order to provide clarity and common interpretation as to how relevant EU measures (*e.g.* food hygiene, food labelling, VAT, etc.) apply to the practice of food donation. The sub-group on food donation within the Platform will work on a document identifying food donation practices and implementation of the EU guidelines in MS. COM is also launching a pilot project on food redistribution in order to map and analyse the policy and operational frameworks existing in MS as well as support dissemination and implementation of the EU food donation guidelines at national level. There is also work on-going on EU guidelines to clarify the legal status of former foodstuffs intended for feed; these will facilitate safe use of former foodstuffs in feed, aiming at clarification and lifting of unnecessary administrative burdens for both industry and control authorities. These guidelines should be published by the end of 2017. Regarding date marking COM launched a study in 2016 on date marking practices in MS investigating how food business operators and national competent authorities understand and utilise date marking. Main findings were presented at the meeting of the Platform on FLW on 7 November (presentations published on COM website) and the final report should be published by the end of 2017. COM concluded by mentioning the specific sub-group on "Action and Implementation" established within the Platform to facilitate sharing of best practices, experience, business cases and models. COM has established a digital network in order to promote cooperation between Platform members. Under the Horizon 2020 REFRESH project, a Community of Experts has been established where all interested stakeholders may share and publish initiatives on food waste prevention.

### Comments and questions raised

EDA expressed support to COM work on the food waste prevention. Regarding the guidelines on the use of former food for feed EDA expected the guidelines to be more ambitious and stated that for a dairy sector there are more opportunities to use former food for feed without compromising feed safety.

COM replied that the clarifications in the guidelines can only be done within the existing regulatory framework.

## 12. UPDATE ON ANIMAL WELFARE PLATFORM AND ITS ACTIVITIES

COM gave an overview of the Expert Group Platform on Animal Welfare, established by COM Decision of 24 January 2017 outlining its composition and tasks under three pillars, namely better apply and understand EU legislation, facilitate voluntary commitments, and promote EU standards globally. The inaugural meeting took place on 6 June aiming at a general discussion around these three tasks. Although there were many expectations and demands from the Platform members on what problems COM should tackle, the Platform should be seen within the philosophy "everyone is responsible". The second meeting on 10 November focused on enforcement, in particular on the animal transport, voluntary commitments regarding unwanted horses presented from different angles (MS, industry, NGOs), as well as information and knowledge sharing by EFSA and by a contractor on a pilot project on animal transport guides. It was agreed to establish a sub-group on animal transport requested by many Platform members.

COM further outlined the next steps in the work of the Platform, including two meetings of the Platform in 2018, two meetings of a sub-group on animal transport, establishment of a second sub-group on the welfare of pigs and building broad collaborative networks. COM concluded by inviting participants to visit the dedicated website and informed them about the possibilities to access the video recordings of the meetings.

### Comments and questions raised

EUROGROUP FOR ANIMALS welcomed the outcome of the discussion in the meetings and the establishment of sub-groups on animal transport and welfare of pigs, where a topic on pig castration should also be included. EUROGROUP FOR ANIMALS agreed with the philosophy "everyone is responsible" and informed participants that it led to the establishment by MS of two unofficial sub-groups: on illegal trade of dogs and responsible ownership and care of equines, led by Belgium and Denmark respectively.

ATA expressed its willingness to contribute to the work of the sub-group on animal transport and asked how to do it as a non-member. ATA further asked whether the Platform focuses on animal welfare of all animals or only farm animals for slaughter.

COM explained that regarding pig castration a pilot project will be launched in 2018 aiming at collecting the good practices and their dissemination.

COM welcomed ATA's commitment to contribute and confirmed that experts with specific knowledge will be needed for this sub-group and can be invited on an ad-hoc basis. COM explained that ATA could send a letter of interest to participate. COM confirmed that the focus of the Platform is on farm animals where COM has competencies within a legal framework.

COPA and COGECA suggested to first evaluate the structure and results of the sub-group on animal transport before establishing the second one on the welfare of pigs.

On FACE's question on wild animals COM confirmed that neither wild animals nor hunting dogs are within the scope of the Platform.

### 13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair informed participants about upcoming events, namely the General Food Law anniversary event on 27 November, the ASEM conference on SPS and food safety on 5-6 December, meeting of the Advisory Group sub-group Animal Health Advisory Committee on 18 December as well as the preliminary dates of the Advisory Group plenary meetings in 2018, viz 27 April, and 28 November. The Chair thanked all speakers and participants for their constructive contributions, and closed the meeting.