



## **AD HOC MEETING OF THE EXTENDED ADVISORY GROUP ON THE FOOD CHAIN AND ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH**

16 FEBRUARY 2022

### **Summary Record**

#### **1. WELCOME AND OPENING BY THE CHAIR, MS NATHALIE CHAZE, DIRECTOR – FOOD SUSTAINABILITY, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

Ms Chaze opened the virtual meeting and welcomed the participants. She informed that this was an ad hoc working group, to which representatives of non-member organisations were also invited.

She explained that the meeting was convened to provide information about the ongoing work on the [report](#) – see point 2, as well as to invite participants to express their views through the [Call for Evidence](#) – see point 3. She added that the feedback received during the meeting and gathered via the Call for Evidence would be used for the preparation of the report.

#### **2. INFORMATION BY THE COMMISSION ON THE ORIGIN, THE OBJECTIVES OF THE REPORT AND THE STATE OF PLAY**

COM explained that the [report](#) was requested by the European Parliament and the Council in June 2021 during the negotiation of the CAP reform where the Commission was invited *‘to present, at the latest in June 2022, a report containing an assessment of the rationale and legal feasibility of applying EU health and environmental standards (including animal welfare standards as well as processes and production methods) to imported agricultural and agri-food products as well as identifying the concrete initiatives to ensure better consistency in their application, in conformity with WTO rules.’*

The report, which will be of a technical nature and will not anticipate any policy initiatives, will focus on the application of EU standards referring to process and production methods. The Commission has already stated in the Trade Policy Review that it will consider applying process or production requirements to imports based on the need to protect global environment or to respond to ethical concerns, in full respect of WTO rules. The Farm to Fork Strategy further announces concrete measures to achieve sustainable food systems.

In preparation of the report, DG SANTE is co-lead with DGs AGRI, TRADE and ENV.

In reaction, participants drew COM attention to the role of voluntary instruments and private standards and of the international standard setting bodies (FEFAC), the problem of controls and audits of standards applied to imported products and the importance to have a level playing field, in particular in the field of animal welfare (AVEC); the issue of trade agreements and trade policy rules, especially environmental rules which are not enforceable instruments (FoEE); and the risk of retaliation by third countries in response to unilateral actions by the EU (SpiritsEUROPE).

### **3. CALL FOR EVIDENCE – INVITATION OT PROVIDE INPUTS**

COM assured that the meeting was not the only opportunity to provide feedback and informed about the [Call for Evidence](#) launched on 16 February in the 24 official EU languages on the Have Your Say portal for four weeks. All interested citizens and stakeholders will be able to express their general views on the matter and inform the Commission of their respective positions on the matter. A synopsis report, summarising the feedback received, will also be prepared and published on the Have Your Say portal.

### **4. EXCHANGE OF VIEWS, INITIAL FEEDBACK**

COM proposed to structure the discussion around the following questions:

- 1) *What are the main concerns and interests of your organisation, and the stakeholders you represent, on the issue of applying EU health and environmental standards (including animal welfare standards as well as processes and production methods) to imported agricultural and agri-food products?*
- 2) *What are your views on challenges and opportunities in relation to the different possible EU means of action in this field?*

During the discussion, participants pointed out the relevance of the Code of Conduct in this context (FoodDrinkEurope) and the due diligence initiative (CIBE), as well as the importance of international cooperation and dialogues with third countries (FoodDrinkEurope, CropLife). They asked what kind of environmental standards the EU had in mind specifically (FoodDrinkEurope, FRUCOM). The same standards applied to imported agricultural products would ensure the competitiveness of EU farmers who want to be treated fairly, especially because the production costs are rising due to the measures aiming to ‘green’ European agriculture (Copa-Cogeca). Participants mentioned the importance to assess how such standards would affect third countries (incl. social impacts) (FTAO) and the volumes of imports (COCERAL). Enforceability would also be an important element of such an assessment (Fediol). Participants further noted that we face now new challenges that were not known a few decades ago and that ambitious action is also in the interest of farmers in third countries, who also need biodiversity (in particular pollinators) and will benefit in the long run (PAN Europe, FoEE).

The Chair thanked all speakers and participants for their constructive contributions and participation and invited them to provide written inputs to the Call for Evidence.