



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

Food chain science and stakeholder relations

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

6 MAY 2021

Summary Record

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

SANTE Director of Directorate D (Food sustainability, international relations) opened the virtual meeting and welcomed the participants. The Chair further reminded participants that the meeting would be recorded and gave a brief overview of the agenda.

2. UPDATE ON THE SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS INITIATIVE

COM gave a comprehensive presentation on the [Legislative Framework for a Union sustainable food system](#), starting with a general state-of play and an update on the consultation activities for the FSFS. COM further elaborated on the overarching objective and scope of the new framework legislation, the elements of the FSFS (other than push and pull measures) and the broad scope. Lastly, COM gave a detailed overview of the push and pull measures to be analysed in the Impact Assessment.

Comments and questions raised

Independent Retail Europe asked whether minimum requirements would also include least economically sustainable operations.

COM replied that the aim would be to address the three dimensions of sustainability. COM acknowledged the need to address the least economic operations and welcomed stakeholder ideas and suggestions.

Copa-Cogeca commented that finally there are not many pull measures. It further commented that a sustainable food system comes at a cost and stressed that this should be taken into account by the legislative framework. As regards the fact that the framework would not replace the existing legislation and in view of the review of pesticides and animal welfare legislation, Copa-Cogeca expressed concern about duplication of the work and potential contradictions. Copa-Cogeca asked whether sustainability analysis was still on the table and what the consequences would be.

COM replied that there would be more pull measures through mechanisms to be put in place. With regard to the overlap of work and contradictions, COM replied that although timings are different and some other initiatives are more advanced, they are linked and will be taken into account for the framework on sustainable food systems. As regards sustainability analysis, COM said it would be introduced as a general principle to be taken into account in the future by policy makers.

On the pull measures – sustainability labelling, EuroCommerce stressed the importance of common criteria and definitions and asked whether different options could exist in parallel.

COM replied that theoretically different options could co-exist, but that this would depend on the future definition of a sustainable label.

FoEE asked to clarify the meaning of ‘wide scope’ and expressed concern about greenwashing/taxonomy.

COM replied that the question of sustainability of a certain operation/product was a different discussion and was not on the agenda at present.

COM explained that taxonomy referred to the process of defining some overall objectives. COM acknowledged that the social dimension is missing in taxonomy, but explained that it is the most difficult part and that COM wants to cover the three dimensions of sustainability.

ENA asked whether non-food agricultural crops would be included the sustainable food system initiative and if not included, whether there would be a parallel initiative for non-food agricultural products.

COM reiterated that there would be a wide scope that would not be solely limited to food products and explained that the legislative framework would try to cover everything that was not covered in the [Sustainable Products Initiative](#).

3. MONITORING OF THE FARM TO FORK STRATEGY

COM gave a presentation on the [Monitoring of the Farm to Fork Strategy](#), addressing the overarching objective, starting point, concept, operationalisation and the expected process.

Comments and questions raised

FEFAC expressed interest in the monitoring and sectoral indicators. FEFAC further asked to clarify the scope, whether there would be specific indicators and how to contribute to the discussion.

COM explained that there would be a wide scope and headline indicators, which would be easily readable. Nevertheless, COM added that it would not exclude the possibility of several layers, but it was difficult to prejudge at present and was a reason that COM would broadly consult.

FVE expressed interest in the results from JRC.

4. PLANT AND REPRODUCTIVE MATERIAL REVIEW AND INVERTEBRATE BIOLOGICAL CONTROL AGENTS STUDY

COM presented the [Plant and reproductive material review](#) and [invertebrate biological control agents study](#),

Plant and reproductive material review

COM provided an update on seeds and propagating material and temporary derogations for organic varieties.

Invertebrate biological control agents study

COM explained about the study, its aims and the ongoing stakeholder consultation.

Comments and questions raised

Euroseeds asked for a clarification regarding the presentation on organic varieties, namely whether the uniformity standards are only adapted for vegetable species and VCU for agricultural varieties.

COM explained that the temporary derogation only concerned the species mentioned in the presentation.

5. RUSSIA'S INVASION OF UKRAINE: CHALLENGES IN THE ENFORCEMENT OF FOOD LEGISLATION (PESTICIDES MRL AND FOOD LABELLING)

COM gave an update on the invasion of Ukraine and the challenges in the enforcement of food legislation, more specifically with regards to pesticides MRLs and food labelling.

Pesticides MRLs

COM gave a [brief presentation](#) to inform about the action taken in the area of pesticides MRLs to address the shortage of feed supply following the Russian invasion of Ukraine and on the flexibility under Article 18(4) of Regulation (EC) No 396/2005 for Member states to set national temporary MRLs in exceptional circumstances, provided that consumer protection is ensured.

Comments and questions raised

FEFAC thanked COM for the swift and helpful reaction to the crisis, emphasising that the measures helped to alleviate the pressure and prevented a disruption of the food supply. FEFAC recognised the need for temporary measure to deal with the immediate and short-term impediments, and noted that the situation had additionally somewhat improved as some exports from Ukraine were again taking place, but raised concern that access to the Ukraine might still pose an issue for the coming marketing years.

PAN Europe expressed concerns on a potential weakening of consumer safety standards and on allowing non-compliant imported products on the EU market, which is not in line with the goals of the Farm to Fork Strategy. The compliance of imported food to EU Regulation is a key commitment of the Farm to Fork Strategy and EU standards for imports should be aligned with the levels for EU producers.

COM welcomed ideas and views on the Ukraine crisis.

As regards PAN Europe's concern, COM replied that consumer safety remained the most important objective in all its actions and that there was no reason for concern. The national derogations are only applicable for feed, not for food, and products will remain on the national territories. Thorough risk assessments were performed, and no residues are expected in products of animal origin for human consumption. COM reassured stakeholders that there was no risk for consumer safety and emphasized the temporary character of the measures. In addition, COM highlighted that those measures were still theoretical and not yet implemented in practice as no increased imports from third countries had yet materialised.

Food labelling

COM gave a short oral update presenting the feedback received from MSs at the PAFF General Food Law meeting, which took place on 28 April 2022.

Comments and questions raised

FoodDrinkEurope, BEUC and EuroCommerce called for a harmonised approach with regard to food labelling and urged COM to reconsider its position.

BEUC further asked if COM could reconsider providing guidance to MSs. BEUC urged COM to ensure that the measures would be temporary and would not have a long-term impact.

COM explained that it would continue to follow developments - taking into account all elements and exploring the possibilities within the FIC remit – and that dialogue with MSs would continue.

6. UPDATE ON THE REVISION OF THE FOOD INFORMATION TO CONSUMERS REGULATION

COM gave a comprehensive update on the [revision of the Food Information to Consumers \(FIC\) Regulation](#). COM provided a state-of-play on the milestones reached, the ongoing work and next steps with regard to the revision of the FIC Regulation concerning food information initiatives announced in the Farm to Fork Strategy and Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan:

- ✓ Harmonised front-of-pack nutrition labelling;
- ✓ Setting nutrient profiling criteria for restricting nutrition and health claims on foods;
- ✓ The extension of mandatory origin indications to certain products;
- ✓ Reviewing the current rules on date marking to fight food waste;
- ✓ Labelling of alcoholic beverages (list of ingredients and nutrition declaration).

Comments and questions raised

EuroCommerce enquired how the responses received to the open public consultation will be taken into account in order to avoid imbalances between different sectors/ stakeholder groups.

COM replied that the available data for the open public consultation allow analysis at different levels, for example in terms of an overall percentage for all contributions as well as more detailed information for each type of stakeholder group. A factual report together with the contributions to the consultation is available on the Have Your Say portal.

7. NEW GENOMIC TECHNIQUES – STATE OF PLAY

COM gave an update on the policy action on legislation for plants from certain new genomic techniques with a [short presentation](#) of the feedback received on the inception impact assessment and on the recent launch of the [public consultation](#) that will feed into the impact assessment.

Comments and questions raised

FoEE asked how COM planned to consider the campaign replies and enquired about the timeline for a clear outline on the consultation strategy and the involvement of JRC. FoEE further commented that labelling and traceability for NGTs would have wide economic impacts and asked how COM planned to assess this in the impact assessment without consultation. Finally, FoEE asked whether COM has stakeholder working groups planned as part of the Advisory Group.

COM reassured FoEE that all views would be taken into account. On JRC’s level of involvement, COM replied that it has asked JRC to support with case studies and that the outcome would be fed into the impact assessment. Regarding further consultations, COM replied it is not able to share more information at present but said it hoped to have more clarity soon on further consultations.

Regarding the Advisory Group working groups, COM replied that it did not have any specific targeted working groups in mind, but would keep Advisory Group informed on the progress in any case.

Euroseeds and FVE expressed a view that campaign replies should be counted as a one reply. COM reiterated that all replies will be respected and taken into account.

8. GUIDANCE ON INTERPRETATION OF CERTAIN OFFICIAL CONTROLS REGULATION PROVISIONS

With Regulation (EU) 2017/625 (Official Controls Regulation, OCR) a harmonised framework for the organisation of official controls along the entire agri-food chain has been established. Based on the discussions with Member States and stakeholders since its date of application in 2019, a guidance document on certain OCR provisions is under preparation that contributes to a harmonized understanding and application of this regulation.

COM gave a presentation on the [Guidance Note on Regulation \(EU\) 2017/625](#), giving a brief overview of the document and its content.

Comments and questions raised

FoodDrinkEurope asked whether stakeholders would be officially consulted on the draft guidance note before finalisation.

COM replied that the guidance document is a non-legislative initiative for interpretation purposes only and that the adoption procedure did not foresee a public consultation.

UECBV welcomed the guidance document, which will facilitate interpretation of the Official Controls Regulation.

9. UPDATE ON SUSTAINABLE USE OF PESTICIDES

COM gave a brief oral update on the progress of the review of the sustainable use of pesticides, which was one of the actions under the Farm to Fork Strategy.

Adoption had been foreseen for the 1st quarter of 2022 (indicative date 23 March 2022), but due to the events in the Ukraine, the initiative was postponed. The new indicative date for adoption is 22 June 2022.

COM reminded participants of the main policy areas covered by the proposed regulation.

Comments and questions raised

PAN Europe asked whether COM considered ECI (Save Bees and Farmers) Farm to Fork objectives in the review of the sustainable use of pesticides Directive.

COM replied that it was not directly addressed in the regulation, but that it was acknowledged.

10. AOB

The Chair reminded participants that it was the last meeting with this group and composition. The composition of the new Advisory Group on Sustainability of Food Systems would be announced before the end of June and all applicants would be informed.

The next plenary meeting, which was planned on 26 November 2022, will be brought forward and the date will be confirmed in due course.

The Chair informed participants about the dates for upcoming Advisory Group meetings, namely:

- Animal Health Advisory Committee meeting (AHAC) – 7 June 2022
- The second AG plenary meeting this year would take place on 25 November 2022. However, in view of the establishment of the new group, this date will be moved forward. Stakeholders will be informed in due course of the new date.

The Chair further informed stakeholders that the summary reports of the plenary meetings would be less detailed in the future.

Finally, the Chair thanked all speakers and participants for their constructive contributions and participation and closed the meeting.