



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

Food and feed safety, innovation
Food information and composition, food waste

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL AD HOC MEETING OF THE ADVISORY GROUP ON THE FOOD CHAIN AND ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH ON THE FARM-TO-FORK STRATEGY

BRUSSELS, 17 JUNE 2020, 10H00 – 13H00
WEBEX MEETING

Introductory remarks by the Chair

The Chair welcomed all the participants, highlighting the high number of organisations participating.

Agenda point 1 - Farm to Fork Strategy

The Commission presented the Farm to Fork (F2F) Strategy.

Question from the participants.

EEB asked how the Commission is going to adapt and streamline already existing and new policies to the sustainable food system framework after this framework is adopted.

CLITRAVI stressed that the F2F Strategy can be successful only if all actors of the food chain are involved. CLITRAVI asked the Commission to ensure that the approach of the strategy is not divisive between different sectors (i.e. meat sector versus plant-based sector). It also asked the Commission how it is going to act in the context of mandatory origin indication and the national initiatives already in place.

Food Service Europe asked the Commission whether for the code of conduct a platform of stakeholders will be used and what types of criteria will be set up for the sustainable procurement.

Feedback Global asked the Commission whether the review of the feed ban rules for non ruminants (which was present in a draft version of the strategy but not in the final version) is still foreseen.

HOTREC welcomed the F2F Strategy and asked whether the code of conduct will be on a voluntary basis. On nutrient profiles, HOTREC enquired on what will happen with the national practices in this area. As regards the sustainable food labelling framework, HOTREC stressed the fact that it will be difficult to implement on non-prepacked food and could lead to a decrease of fresh products made available.

FoodDrinkEurope asked for more details on the content and timeframe of the sustainable food system framework and more information on the food fraud action plan.

AVEC asked whether the Commission is envisaging a holistic impact assessment of the whole F2F Strategy.

IFOAM EU asked whether the sustainable labelling framework would include organic aspect and performance environmental.

ENA stressed the importance of live and ornamental plants for the wellbeing of humans and the planet as well as in mitigating climate change, in line with the Green Deal. Therefore, ENA asked the Commission for the producers of live plants to be taken into account in the strategy.

UNESDA asked how the Commission will bring industries, producers and consumers together in the framework of the code of conduct and whether the Commission will use the same basis for nutrient profiles and the front-of-pack label.

FACEnetwork asked for more details on how the Commission's is going to review the hygiene package legislation. FACEnetwork also highlighted how small scale producers meet many sanitary barriers.

Then FACEnetwork asked the Commission if a differentiation between “good and bad” fats was envisaged in the front-of-pack nutrition labelling action.

Eurocommerce asked whether private quality schemes will be supported.

EuroHealthNet asked about a more public health perspective and what the strategy is envisaging regarding advertising and marketing practices and whether it will be self-regulatory (as there is evidence that self-regulation is not effective). EuroHealthNet also asked which mechanisms will be put in place to involve citizens and NGOs and stressed the importance of digital health literacy and asked how this will be improved.

FVE encouraged the Commission to have a broader approach in the strategy in terms of “OneHealth”.

European Public Health Alliance asked the Commission what is its strategy as regards more favourable VAT rates and asked for further details with regards to the promotion programmes for agricultural products.

Greenpeace also asked how the Commission will address the issue of VAT rates. Greenpeace then asked how and when the Commission will ask for inputs on the sustainable food systems framework. Finally, Greenpeace asked about nutrient management and the coordination between the Commission and Member States.

BEUC asked for more details on the timing of the different legislative proposals and how the Commission will involve stakeholders in the implementation of the strategy – will it set up a dedicated forum or will it use the existing stakeholder groups.

FEDIOL asked how the Commission will select the nutrients in the context of the setting of maximum levels for certain nutrients in food. Regarding front-of-pack labelling, FEDIOL also asked whether existing schemes will be taken into account, and if these could ensure alignment with dietary guidelines, and what would be the process.

AIPCE recalled how the fish sector is an important part of the food supply. AIPCE also stressed the difference between captured fish and fish that is produced by aquaculture. AIPCE also highlighted the need to take “good” fats into account in the nutrition initiatives and to include sustainable seafood in the overall initiative.

Primary Food Processors asked how the Commission intends to define the products in the context of the initiative on country of origin labelling and whether such labelling will be voluntary.

FoodServiceEurope asked the Commission what will be the mandatory criteria for sustainable food procurement and what legislative instrument will be used to set these.

AIOTI stressed the importance of effective data flow.

Independent Retail Europe stressed the importance of stakeholder consultation and asked the

Commission for an indicative timetable for stakeholder consultations for each of the 27 initiatives.

EPBA stressed the issue of blends of honeys and their origin labelling and asked the Commission how the coordination between the new strategy and the strategy on food fraud will be enhanced.

Copa Cogeca asked the Commission whether there will be a global impact assessment of the F2F Strategy. It also asked whether the initiative on nutrient profiles will be limited to processed food or whether it will also concern agricultural products which are difficult to reformulate.

Answers by the Commission.

The Chair stressed that the F2F Strategy is a several year long programme and therefore it is difficult to give an exact and detailed schedule for each initiative at the moment.

The Commission provided the following answers:

Sustainable food system framework:

- The sustainable food system framework is a horizontal initiative that will complement the General Food Law, as we enter in the era of sustainability. DG SANTE stressed the importance for sustainability principles and requirements to be reflected in a horizontal legislative framework.
- As the sustainable food system framework is foreseen for 2023, the Commission will start launching studies to support the work on this initiative and an impact assessment. It is, nevertheless still early to say what will be the content of the legislation. The aim of this initiative – that will translate the general principles of the F2F Strategy in a legislative framework– is to ensure coherence not only between national and EU laws but also among different EU policies.
- This initiative builds on a degree of urgency to act, and the Commission is already starting to ensure the mainstreaming of sustainability in new initiatives and in already existing pieces of legislation.

Sustainable logo: the initiative on the sustainable logo will take into account the sustainable food system framework. The Commission stressed how these two initiatives need to go hand in hand.

Voluntary private labelling schemes: The Commission recalled that the idea of the strategy is to have a harmonised logo for sustainable foods and to avoid a proliferation of private or national schemes. Nevertheless, as there is currently no harmonised logo, logos which are already in place need to comply with the rules of competition and the food labelling rules.

Origin labelling: in the strategy, the Commission did not specify the different categories of foods but it is known that the ones of interest for consumers are milk and milk and meat used as ingredients. In the past, there have been several reports to assess the need for mandatory origin labelling, and at the time the conclusion was that there was no need for mandatory origin labelling. Nevertheless, a lot has changed since then: there have been national measures put in place and a European citizens initiative, therefore there is a need for harmonisation.

Nutrient profiles, FOP and code of conduct: the Commission stressed how these initiatives all aim to make the healthy choice the easy choice for consumers. In order to improve consumers' diets (so to promote a healthier diet) the Commission will use both regulatory and non-regulatory tools. For example, the code of conduct is a soft approach. The Commission will also involve EFSA and will seek synergies between the actions on front-of-pack labelling and nutrient profiling.

Meat consumption and meat production: the Commission recalled that through the F2F Strategy it wants to support sustainable diets and to better stimulate the consumption of plant-based proteins. In the context of the revision of the EU promotion programme for agricultural products, there is the goal of supporting sustainable livestock production.

Food fraud: the Commission explained that, in the context of the action plan on food fraud, the Commission needs to strengthen the cooperation with OLAF and Member States to ensure traceability and put more dissuasive measures in fighting food fraud.

VAT: the Commission explained that there is a proposal – which is under discussion by the co-legislators – to give more flexibility to Member States in granting more favourable VAT rates for certain foods, for instance vegetables and fruit.

One health approach: the Commission highlighted that the whole F2F Strategy is based on the recognition of the close link of human health, animal health and planet health.

The Commission also highlighted the fact that the F2F Strategy is a holistic approach that also takes into account the contribution of certain type of foods such as seafood. .

The Commission explained that at the end of the year, a report to the European Parliament and the Council on the implementation of promotion policy is expected. An evaluation on the promotion policies is ongoing and it will be followed by an impact assessment and if necessary, a legislative proposal (2021-2022).

Agenda point 2 - Farm to Fork Strategy targets

The Commission presented the 4 quantitative targets of the Farm to Fork Strategy.

Question from the participants.

Compassion in World Farming asked more information about the AMR target, and the timing for reaching the four targets, that – in their opinion – should be revised upward.

FESASS supported the demand made by AVEC and AVE on an holistic impact assessment and highlighted the difference of situation in the use of antimicrobials between Member States, as some have already made big improvements in the past years; therefore, the reference of 2017 as a baseline may not be adequate for all Member States. FEFASS also asked about the global approach that will be used as regards AMR and how the Commission will work with the different International Organisations.

EEB asked for the reason for the lack of targets for reduction of GHG emissions, highlighting the fact that agriculture is one of the sectors that did not witness major reduction in GHG emissions in the past years. As regards the target on reduction of food waste, EEB asked why reduction at the production stage was not included.

AVEC stressed the fact that a global impact assessment is needed for the F2F Strategy.

WWF asked whether the Commission has conducted an assessment of the relative impact of the different actions and stressed the fact that the targets need to be met also on the consumption side.

WRAP asked the Commission what contribution the strategy will make to the reduction of GHG emissions.

EFFAT welcomed the social dimension of the F2F strategy. EFFAT asked the Commission whether it is considering also prohibiting the most dangerous pesticides, and how it is going to regulate the handling of pesticides by agricultural workers.

AnimalhealthEurope asked the Commission whether there will be an Impact Assessment also in the target of the reduction of AMR. AnimalhealthEurope also asked why the baseline is 2017 and not 2011 and how the new regulation of veterinary medicines – which is expected in 2022 and contains some measures for antimicrobials – will be taken into account in the AMR target. The organisation

stressed the need to assess whether the reduction targets are actually leading to a reduction of AMR in humans. In this respect, AnimalhealthEurope asked why the reduction target only concerns antimicrobials and not antibiotics.

FEEDBACK GLOBAL asked the Commission about the wording of the reduction target on food waste, and stressed the fact that the food waste reduction target should apply from farm to fork and not just at consumer/retail level and include food losses. Feedback Global also asked about the timing of the legislative proposal and the time granted to MSs to reach the proposed target.

EFFAB called for a holistic impact assessment and asked about the tools that the Commission is going to put in place in order to reach the targets on nutrient losses and AMR.

PAN Europe asked the Commission what are the four options discussed in the Impact Assessment on the pesticides target.

FoodDrinkEurope asked the Commission about its internal organisation as regards the targets and whether an internal taskforce will be set up.

FVE stressed the difference between the sale and use of antimicrobials and asked the Commission how the related target was set.

FoEE regrets that the targets are not legally binding and stressed the fact that the Sustainable Use Directive was not successful in decreasing the use of pesticides and asked the Commission how it considers achieving the target while using the same tool.

Birdlife Europe asked which targets will become legally binding.

The Commission provided the following answers:

AMR: the Commission stressed that the reduction of the overall sales of antimicrobials in the Union is an ambitious target, aspirational, non-binding and therefore, there will be no impact assessment. The Commission recalled that the target is aimed to fight antimicrobial resistance and promote a prudent and responsible use of antimicrobials in animals.. The Commission also clarified that the target is set at EU level and does not envisage mandatory individual country targets. While some Member States have already made big efforts, others will still have to increase their efforts to achieve the common target. The Commission stressed that it will continue working with the relevant international organisations to address the global threat of antimicrobial resistance.

As regards the use of more hazardous pesticides, the Commission stressed that it is important to ensure that Member States can follow the measures easily. The issue on this matter is not only to issue new legislation but also to implement the measures that are already in place.

The Commission highlighted that as related to the nutrient targets, the main goal is to address the implementation gaps and the barriers of the existing legislation. For pesticides, the aim is to reduce the risk profile, and it is expected that the production impact will be very moderate.

The Commission noted that it is currently working on an action plan for organic farming and on green public procurement.

As regards food waste, the Commission stated that, in line with EU waste legislation which requires Member States to reduce and monitor food waste from farm to fork, targets would also concern the whole food supply chain. Commission further clarified that the reference to halving food waste at the

retail and consumer level by 2030, reflected the wording of the Sustainable Development Goal (12.3) to which EU food waste reduction efforts will contribute.

Agenda point 3 - Contribution of the CAP to the Green Deal and Farm to Fork objectives

DG AGRI gave a presentation on the contribution of the CAP to the Green Deal and Farm to Fork objectives.

Question from the participants.

PAN Europe asked the Commission how the targets for pesticides for farmers will be counted (hectares that the farmer use in total or only hectares where the farmers use pesticides). PAN Europe then asked the Commission if the CAP national strategic plans will be approved before working on the different targets.

EFFAT stressed that the environmental targets set by the F2F Strategy also have a social dimension, and highlighted the need for a mitigation of the socio-economic consequences of the targets.

BirdLife Europe asked how the Commission will ensure that no CAP support will be directed to environmentally harmful practices.

European Public Health Alliance informed the Commission that they conducted a survey on the main elements of discussions at national level of the CAP strategic plans. The results of the survey show that the element of nutrition is not widely discussed, probably due to the lack of awareness of the possibilities under the CAP to promote this target. The European Public Health Alliance stressed the importance of issuing recommendations on how the funds from the CAP can be used to reach the nutrition target.

FESASS stressed the importance of a better integration between regulation at EU level and implementation at national level, in order to avoid distortion in the implementation in the Member States.

WWF asked the Commission how the different services are planning to collaborate to give good guidance to Member States for using the funds from CAP to deliver food waste reduction.

Greenpeace asked the Commission whether a structured dialogue on CAP (that should be public, transparent and inclusive) is envisaged.

The Commission provided the following answers:

- The Commission stressed that the CAP strategic plans must include targets at the level of result indicators, reflecting the actions envisaged to be achieved through CAP subsidies; and that further to the Green Deal Strategies, the Commission will ask Member States to include national values for the green deal targets at 'impact level' in their CAP strategic plans.
- The Commission also recalled that the CAP plans need to take into account the obligations that come from the other legislation in the area of environment, climate, pesticides, as listed in Annex XI of the legislative proposal.
- The Commission explained that the CAP has nine specific objectives: three economic, three environmental and three social, balancing the three dimensions of sustainability, which is the basis for programming of CAP strategic plans by Member States and taken into account when assessing the CAP plans.
- The Commission pointed out how agricultural workers can have access to support in the framework of the CAP.
- The Commission highlighted that for the first time, as far as the first pillar is concerned,

the Commission has the power to accept or not the tools that are proposed in the strategic plans. Therefore, the Commission can ensure that no environmental harmful practices are supported.

- Consumption side: the Commission recalled that the CAP has limited scope in this area, but with the CAP local markets (through rural development support) are encouraged, and links between consumers and producers are created.

The Commission highlighted how the different services are cooperating very closely in all the F2F Strategy aspects, including food waste. The Commission said that the services will continue to cooperate in the context of a structured dialogue and in the assessment of the national strategic plans. The Commission also recalled that it also makes use of the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste, where a good dialogue and cooperation with Member States is present.

Closing of the meeting

The Chair thanked all the participants for the constructive discussion, highlighted that the F2F is a holistic approach and invited all the participants to keep on being engaged.