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FINAL MINUTES

Meeting of the Civil Dialogue Group Organic Farming

07/05/2019

Chair: Ms Lone ANDERSEN (COPA)

Organisations present: All Organisations were present, except BEUC, ECPA, EFFAT, FTAO.

1. Approval of the agenda (and of the minutes of previous meeting¹)

The minute of the previous meeting were adopted. The agenda was adopted with the following AOB items asked by:

- ECVC on Vitamin B2
- SACAR on the possibility to import already new products from regulation 2018/848 and on ingredients to use for organic flavours

2. Nature of the meeting

The meeting was non-public.

3. List of points discussed

2. STATE OF PLAY OF THE DISCUSSION ON DELEGATED AND IMPLEMENTING ACTS OF THE NEW ORGANIC REGULATION

The representative from the COM gave a presentation on the state of play of implementing and delegating acts in relation to production rules, organic seeds and heterogeneous, controls and annexes of regulation 889/2008. The presentation is available on the website of [DG AGRI](#).

On production rules, the vote on the implementing act is expected in July or September 2019. The 2 delegated acts will be ready at the same period and then sent out to the Council and European Parliament for adoption. Before being adopted, delegated and implementing acts are open for a feedback mechanism of 4 weeks : citizens and stakeholders have the opportunity to react. Here is the link to this mechanism :

¹ If not adopted by written procedure (CIRCABC)

https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say_en#legislative-proposals-providing-input-before-the-law-becomes-final

However, the COM have informed stakeholders about the calendar of work of implementing and delegated acts long before the feedback mechanism, and, as a result, has already received substantial comments from many stakeholders.

In addition, in view of adopting the delegated and implementing acts, the COM follows the following approach :

- the delegated and implementing acts must be in line with the legal provisions of the basic Regulation 2018/848
- the basic standards, objectives and principles of organic farming should be preserved, such as animal welfare standards. In addition, if there is a consensus between Member States to adopt stricter standards, it is possible to do so, otherwise the status quo remains the baseline.
- the proposal has to reach a majority at Member States level.

On the rules on controls, the discussion with Member States started in January and discussions on organic heterogeneous material will start in June.

EEB asked a question on the stocking density proposed for rabbits in the implementing act on production rules. The COM replied that the general rules are : no cages and access to pasture.

Copa highlighted that veranda represents an important part of the building for poultry and should be included in the usable area. For Copa, it is more important to have a maximum stocking density on the ground floor than having a limit of levels for multilayer systems. Breeding parents should not have to go to the outdoor area. Copa added that they adopted a new position on controls that will be sent out to the COM as soon as possible.

The COM replied that using the square meters of a veranda to increase the density of the indoor area would not be in line with the basic act. However, veranda remains an option.

IFOAM EU said that they support the comments raised by Copa on poultry and in addition in the annexes, for outdoors area, the specification "m2 of area available in rotation/head" should be added. Pullets must have access to the outdoors, even if a veranda is in place. But in the annexes, it has to be clarified that pullets need to have access to the outdoor only once they are "fully feathered". They will soon have a position on plant reproductive material and heterogeneous material and they will send it to the Commission as soon as possible. On insects, they are an interesting option for organic livestock and therefore the sector needs rules urgently on it.

On the specification "m2 of area available in rotation/head" the COM answered that this rule is already addressed by the rules for mobile housing, therefore there is no need to repeat it in the Annex.

Eurogroup for animals asked if the ruling from the European Court of Justice on halal slaughter and organic farming will have an impact on the new regulation? The COM replied that they plan to have a discussion with Member States in June on this very topic.

AREPO stressed that pullets should not have to go outside because of health risks.

ECVC stressed the need for farmers to be able to reproduce and exchange seeds on a small scale.

PanEurope asked a question on organic heterogeneous and crossing population in order to preserve biodiversity on field. On data collection: how users could have a better access to it?

The COM replied that for insects, the sectors is asking for it. However, it will not be possible to have a regulation before having a clear view on horizontal rules. On pullets, the basic act requires pullets to have access to outdoor area.

IFOAM EU asked a question on the ban of ion exchange as regards processing. This might have a big impact as many ingredients used for organic products are produced today through this technique, therefore a ban without transitional period would be problematic. The COM replied that EGTOP already issued a recommendation which suggests a case-by case evaluation but they are aware of the current market situation. IFOAM EU also asked about the list of cleaning and disinfection products for processing and added that having a comprehensive list is almost impossible as processing means bakeries and slaughter houses. The Commission answered that they will go for a positive list, even if very difficult, as the Basic Text does not leave room of maneuver.

– presentation on “Official certification in the organic sector: official certificate and official attestation are complementary. The real value of the organic certificate, now and in the future”

EOCC gave a presentation on the requirements for the certificate as well as on the responsibilities of the buyer and sellers according to the regulation 2018/848 on organic production and based on ISO 17065. His presentation is available on the website of [DG AGRI](#)

IFOAM EU asked to have more details about how this can be done in practice.

EOCC explained that like member states, a lot of EOCC members have different opinions on the detail level of products to be mentioned in the certificate, that is why we want to have a common approach on the aim of the certificate. For EOCC, flexibility should be let at CB’s level. EOCC is also in favour of a simplified list of operator activities: production, preparation and distribution.

The Commission said that there is a misunderstanding on the certificate between the certificate of inspection (accompanying the lot) and this certificate that can be considered like a “driving license”. The future electronic database will aim to allow any buyer to be sure that their supplier comply with the organic regulation. However there are different visions on this topic. Some want to have on the certificate very detailed products (carrots, flowers, etc.) and also detailed activities. The COM would like to have it simple and harmonized and also to be easily updated in the database. In addition, we would like to take this opportunity to achieve a better harmonization among all requests for statistics (Eurostat, imports, annual report of members states..). Categories based on CN codes could be an option.

SACAR mentioned the need to have the same interpretation within the EU for third countries that export to the EU.

EURAF asked how small farmers can have a cheaper price for the inspections, in particular in the agro-forestry sector.

EOCC replied that not all CBs are member of EOCC, but they develop guidelines. As regards small scale farmers, it will be possible for them to have a group certification with the new regulation.

ECVC mentioned the lack of harmonised criteria within Member States such as in Spain between public and private certification process. All CBs do not certify in the same way or according to the same criteria. We should avoid different interpretations.

The COM replied that different practices among CBs are a concern as well. But we still need a flexibility degree at CBs level. CBs have to face more frequently legal action when they have to decertify. We have to find a good balance. With the new regulation 2018/848, there should be less “à la carte” derogations and less grey zones. We can send interpretation letters to MS and we prepared already a FAQ, but it will take a few months to be published, as a specific procedure should be followed.

FEFANA asked for more harmonization on feed additives between the register and Annex VI of regulation 889/2008.

3. STUDY ON THE CIVIL DIALOGUE GROUPS FOR THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY – ANALYSIS OF EU POLICY CONSULTATION

The consultant in charge of the study gave a presentation on the objective and structure of the study. The aim of the study is to examine the role of the CDGs in the consultation process and in the context of the better regulation toolbox. They will examine the area where the functioning of the CDGs can be improved in terms of composition, balance of representation, contributions during CDGs. He then asked 4 questions to the attendees such as on examples where the views of CDG were taken into account or on suggestions regarding balanced representation.

The Chair said that CDGs are very important for the EU food sector and farmers. In particular, it allows the sector to network with all the organisations involved in the food industry. The participants become also ambassadors of the work of the European Commission when they go back home.

EEB said that as regards representation, there are many different indicators that can be used, such as the economic interest of the organisation, geographical coverage, local scale, age distribution. In addition, the number of seats should be reduced to have a more balanced representation. More representation of the consumers is also needed.

Copa said that we cannot forget farmers when it comes to representation in the CDG, which focus on agriculture. In addition, many people depend on the food farmers produce.

The consultant informed the participants on the way the interviews and case study were selected.

4. FOLLOW-UP REPORT OF THE EUROPEAN COURT OF AUDITORS ON ORGANICS

A representative from the COM presented this item. The presentation is available on the website of [DG AGRI](#). The control system for organic products has improved but some challenges remain. The COM accepted all recommendations made by the European Court of Auditors (ECA). In particular, the ECA pointed out the lack of harmonised measures to take in case of non-compliance, and the COM should work on a better definition of non-compliances. On imports, there are still weaknesses in the checks on incoming consignments (still incomplete). On traceability exercise, there is a clear request not to wait for the next ECA report to organize some other ad hoc traceability exercises.

5. ORGANIC IMPORTS IN THE EU

A representative from the COM presented this item. Thanks to the new electronic certificate for imports, we finally have detailed figures regarding imports of organic products from third countries in volumes. Once we have the volumes, it is possible to have an estimate of the value of the imports. The presentation including the tables is available on the website of [DG AGRI](#).

The discussion went on the issue of the origin of processed products in the EU but farmed in a third country; the issue of the access to TRACES for control bodies to extract data, as currently only member states have access to TRACES; and on the lack of data for exports.

6. ORGANIC FARMING IN THE EU

A representative from the COM gave a presentation on this item. The presentation including the tables is available on the website of [DG AGRI](#). There has been a rapid growth of organic farmland in the EU : + 70% organic land growth 2007-2017, reaching 12.6 million hectares of organic area in 2017.

Cogeca said that in order to increase yields in organic farming, farmers need to have access to advise in terms of soil nutrients and rotation for example.

IFOAM EU said that the information on yield should be carefully presented, since organic farmers are more sustainable. IFOAM EU also questioned the terminology used: "premium price" for organic products should be avoided.

Eurogroup for animals said that the COM should make a comparison between animal welfare standards in organic farming and what consumers want.

7. MARKET TRANSPARENCY AND ORGANIC PRODUCTS

A representative from the COM gave a presentation on this item. The presentation is available on the website of [DG AGRI](#). Political and economic context calls for increased level of market transparency. There is support to extend the collection and publication of market data as long as the system is not too costly, the publication raises no new competition concerns, reporting is targeted on key products only, data are of good quality and published in a timely manner and information contributes to a better understanding of structural issues in the chain. A draft implementing act is on the table that could include organic products.

Copa asked if they take into account the sectorial agreements which can sometimes determine the prices of the products. The COM replied that they will in future.

8. STATE OF PLAY OF THE ACTIVITIES OF EGTOP

A representative from the COM gave a presentation on this item. The presentation is available on the website of [DG AGRI](#).

IFOAM asked a question on the state of play of struvite (fertiliser). Since the annexes of regulation 889/2008 are going to be revised, does it mean that all plant protection products and fertilisers will be revised?

The COM replied that regarding struvite, without authorisation from the horizontal legislation on fertilisers, it is not possible to allow it in organic farming. Plant protection products will be revised now and for fertilisers, it will be at a later stage.

9. CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE ORGANIC SECTOR

– presentation of the report from IDDRI

IDDRI made a presentation on their [report](#) “Agroecology and carbon neutrality in Europe by 2050: what are the issues?”. The presentation is available on the website of [DG AGRI](#).

– exchange of views

The Chair said that farmers in the EU are getting more and more efficient and have one of the lowest carbon footprints at world level. In addition, decreasing any kind of production in the EU could lead to a delocalisation of the production in third countries with no decrease of emissions at world level. EU farmers invest in measures promoting welfare standards and biodiversity, but they need to have access to more innovation. Farmers are key when it comes to address the challenge of climate change.

Copa mentioned that in the EU, farmers produce food of higher standard. In the presentation, it is however strange that rural farmers were never mentioned in the study.

IDDRI replied that farmers were taken into account when considering the safe conditions of workers.

10. UPDATE ON GUIDELINES ON ADDITIONAL OFFICIAL CONTROLS ON PRODUCTS ORIGINATING FROM UKRAINE, KAZAKHSTAN, RUSSIAN FEDERATION AND CHINA.

A representative from the COM gave a presentation on this item. In terms of background, in 2015, there were problems of high volumes of imports from several East European countries that were not organic contrary to what they claimed. Member States asked the COM to draft official guidelines to solve these problems. The guidelines released were effective in solving this issue, because there has been less and less irregularities. Last year, the Commission included two other countries in these guidelines, i.e. Moldova and China.

SACAR mentioned that the guidelines for China were published quite late in December 2018, so operators did not have much time to get ready.

The COM replied that the intention is to publish them sooner in 2019.

11. INFORMATION ON THE STATE OF PLAY OF BREXIT AND IMPACT ON THE ORGANIC SECTOR

On 10th of April, an EU Summit allowed a further extension of negotiations until 31.10.2019. Until then, the UK remains an EU Member, so they will have to prepare European elections. The UK has still a possibility to leave the EU before that date. The COM issued a preparedness notice on 20 March 2019 on EU food law, which also includes guidance for the organic sector.

CELCAA asked if in the case of a No Deal Brexit, the UK will have to negotiate an equivalence agreement, what would be the time line for this scenario?

The COM replied that the UK will become a third countries and the COM has all the legal instruments to deal with this scenario. As regards the timing, it will depend on the quality of their application.

12. AOB

ECVC asked the COM about the state of play of Vitamin B2 for feed. The COM replied that there were no change in the EU legislation and that there it is not the intention of the COM to allow the use of Vitamin B2 produced from GMO.

SACAR asked if the new products from the scope of regulation 2018/848 can already be imported? The COM replied that it is not possible before the entry into force of the new regulation on 01.01.2021

SACAR asked a question on the issue of flavour: could it be conventional as long as the 5% limit of non-organic product is not over?

The COM replied positively.

4. Conclusions/recommendations/opinions

5. Next steps

6. Next meeting

7. List of participants - Annex

Disclaimer

"The opinions expressed in this report represent the point of view of the meeting participants from agriculturally related NGOs at community level. These opinions cannot, under any circumstances, be attributed to the European Commission. Neither the European Commission nor any person acting on behalf of the Commission is responsible for the use which might be made of the here above information."

List of participants– Minutes

Civil Dialogue Group Organic Farming

Date: **07/05/2019**

MEMBER ORGANISATION	NAME	FIRST NAME
Association des régions européennes des produits d'origine (AREPO)	ALAMPI	Francesca
Association des régions européennes des produits d'origine (AREPO)	JAUREGUI	Juan
EU Association of Specialty Feed Ingredients and their Mixtures (FEFANA)	CAPODIECI	Giuseppe luca
Eurogroup for Animals	DI CONCETTO	Alice
European Agroforestry Federation (EURAF)	LAGERQVIST	Elsa
European Agroforestry Federation (EURAF)	SILVA	Pablo
European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC)	BENITEZ CASTAÑO	Jose Manuel
European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC)	SEVÓN	Aira
European Council of Young farmers (CEJA)	DE FALCO	Osvaldo
European Council of Young farmers (CEJA)	FORTE	Donato Matteo
European Council of Young farmers (CEJA)	SPIJKERMAN	Auke
European Council of Young farmers (CEJA)	ZAHRL	Robert Thomas
European Environmental Bureau (EEB)	DUPEUX	Berenice
European Environmental Bureau (EEB)	KIKOU	Olga
European Environmental Bureau (EEB)	SLABE	Anamarija
European Landowners' Organization asbl (ELO asbl)	MADEIRA	João
European Landowners' Organization asbl (ELO asbl)	PADOURKOVA	Adela
European Liaison Committee for Agriculture and agri-food trade (CELCAA)	BUONANNO	Matilde
European Liaison Committee for Agriculture and agri-food trade (CELCAA)	DERUWE	Helene

European Organic Certifiers Council (EOCC)	NEUENDORFF	Jochen
European Organic Certifiers Council (EOCC)	QUINTIN	Aurelie
European Rural Poultry Association (ERPA)	GUYOT	Marie
European agri-cooperatives (COGECA)	BENITES	Cynthia
European agri-cooperatives (COGECA)	NEUHOFER	Theresia
European agri-cooperatives (COGECA)	JAKOVICKIS	Raimonds
European agri-cooperatives (COGECA)	RENAGHAN	Nigel
European agri-cooperatives (COGECA)	ELO	Jaana
European farmers (COPA)	ANDERSEN	Lone
European farmers (COPA)	TOZZI	Luigi
European farmers (COPA)	DIENEL	Wolfram
European farmers (COPA)	VETEMAA	Airi
FoodDrinkEurope (FoodDrinkEurope)	LAVA	Paul-Henri
FoodDrinkEurope (FoodDrinkEurope)	JENSEN	Line
FoodDrinkEurope (FoodDrinkEurope)	SKAERBAEK	Niels
FoodDrinkEurope (FoodDrinkEurope)	GONZÁLEZ	César
International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements EU Regional Group (IFOAM EU Group)	ATKINSON	Christopher
International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements EU Regional Group (IFOAM EU Group)	BLOM	Marian
International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements EU Regional Group (IFOAM EU Group)	BUSACCA	Emanuele
International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements EU Regional Group (IFOAM EU Group)	REYNAUD	Michel
Pesticide Action Network Europe (PAN Europe)	BATUR	Fulya
Secrétariat des Associations du Commerce Agricole Réunies (SACAR)	VORSS	Romans

Secrétariat des Associations du Commerce Agricole Réunion (SACAR)	DR. KOLB	Norbert
Secrétariat des Associations du Commerce Agricole Réunion (SACAR)	KULLIK	Martin
EuroCommerce	MANDRILLE	Julie
WWF European Policy Programme (WWF EPO)	MEISSNER	Matthias
-	AUBERT	Pierre-Marie
-	FAURE	Antoine
Deloitte - Agra Ceas	BRADLEY	Dylan
Total:		48