

RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE CIVIL DIALOGUE GROUP

ORGANIC FARMING

THE CIVIL DIALOGUE GROUP ON ORGANIC FARMING,

Having regard to Commission Decision of 3 August 2022¹ setting up the Civil Dialogue Group on Organic Farming ('the group')

Having regard to the standard rules of procedure of expert groups²,

HAS ADOPTED THE FOLLOWING RULES OF PROCEDURE:

Point 1

Operation of the group

The group shall act at the request of the Commission's Directorate-General Agriculture and Rural Development ('DG AGRI'), in compliance with the Commission's horizontal rules on expert groups³ ('the horizontal rules').

Point 2

Meetings

1. Meetings of the group are convened by the Chair on its own initiative, or at the request of a simple majority of members after DG AGRI has given its agreement.
2. Member organisations shall designate their representative(s) on an ad hoc basis, depending on the meeting agenda of the group, and as indicated by the Chair.
3. If agreed by the Chair, member organisations might be represented by more than one representative in light of the Commission's agenda and the necessity to harvest a specific expertise. The overall number of representatives to each of the meetings may be modified on a case-by-case basis.
4. Regarding the participation to meetings, and given the diversity of their thematic configurations in the future, umbrella organisations may be represented by experts representing their sectoral member organisations to benefit from their in-depth thematic expertise relating to the agenda set by the Chair.
5. Member organisations cannot be represented by experts from other organisations /entities which are not formally their members.

¹ [Commission Decision \(EU\) 2022/1368 of 3 August 2022 setting up Civil Dialogue Groups in matters covered by the common agricultural policy and repealing Decision 2013/767/EU \[OJ L 205, 5.8.2022, p. 278\]](#)

² C(2016) 3301, Annex 3.

³ C(2016) 3301.

6. Member organisations shall be responsible for ensuring that their representatives provide a high level of expertise.
7. Member representatives should be prepared to attend meetings and contribute actively to discussions in the group, when required, to be involved in preparatory work ahead of meetings, to examine and provide comments on documents under discussion, and to act, as appropriate, as 'rapporteurs' on ad hoc basis.
8. Joint meetings of the group with other groups may be convened to discuss matters falling within their respective areas of responsibility.
9. Commission officials from other departments with an interest in the proceedings may attend and contribute to meetings of the group and its sub-groups.
10. Depending on the meeting agenda, DG AGRI may hold some of the meetings with restricted participation to address certain topics more efficiently, on the basis of the specific expertise required for the meeting. This will have no impact on the membership of the group.
11. As a general rule, working documents will be drafted in English and meetings will be also conducted in English, with interpretation provided according to available resources.
12. Meetings of the groups shall, in principle, be held virtually or on Commission premises, depending on the circumstances.

Point 3

Agenda

1. The secretariat shall draw up the agenda under the responsibility of the Chair and send it to the members of the group.
2. The agenda shall be adopted by the group at the start of the meeting.

Point 4

Documentation to be sent to group members

1. The secretariat shall send the invitation to the meeting and the draft agenda to the group members no later than fourteen calendar days before the date of the meeting.
2. The secretariat shall send documents on which the group is consulted to the group members no later than fourteen calendar days before the date of the meeting.
3. In urgent or exceptional cases, the time limits for sending the documentation mentioned in paragraphs 1 and 2 may be reduced to five and two calendar days respectively before the date of the meeting.

Point 5

Opinions of the group

1. As far as possible, the group shall adopt its opinions, recommendations or reports by consensus.
2. In the event of a vote, the outcome of the vote shall be decided by simple majority of the members. The members that have voted against or abstained shall have the right to have a document summarising the reasons for their position annexed to the opinions, recommendations or reports.

Point 6

Sub-groups

1. DG AGRI may set up sub-groups for the purpose of examining specific questions on the basis of terms of reference defined by DG AGRI. Sub-groups shall operate in compliance with the the horizontal rules and shall report to the group. They shall be dissolved as soon as their mandate is fulfilled.
2. The members of sub-groups that are not members of the group shall be selected via a public call for applications, in compliance with the horizontal rules⁴.

Point 7

Invited experts

DG AGRI may invite experts with specific expertise with respect to a subject matter on the agenda to take part in the work of the group or sub-groups on an *ad hoc* basis.

Point 8

Observers

1. Individuals, organisations, including stakeholders' organisations, and public entities other than Member States' authorities may be granted an observer status, in compliance with the horizontal rules, by direct invitation.
2. Organisations and public entities appointed as observers shall nominate their representatives.
3. Observers and their representatives may be permitted by the Chair to take part in the discussions of the group and sub-groups and provide expertise. However, they shall not have voting rights and shall not participate in the formulation of recommendations or advice of the group and its sub-groups.

⁴ C(2016) 3301, Articles 10 and 14.2.

Point 9

Written procedure

1. If necessary, the group's opinion or recommendation on a specific question may be delivered via a written procedure. To this end, the secretariat shall send the group members the document(s) on which the group is being consulted.
2. However, if a simple majority of group members asks for the question to be examined at a meeting of the group, the written procedure shall be terminated without result and the Chair shall convene a meeting of the group as soon as possible.

Point 10

Secretariat

DG AGRI shall provide secretarial support for the group and any sub-groups.

Point 11

Minutes of the meetings

Minutes on the discussion on each point on the agenda and on the opinions delivered by the group shall be meaningful and complete. Minutes shall be drafted by the secretariat under the responsibility of the Chair.

Point 12

Attendance list

1. At each meeting, the secretariat shall draw up, under the responsibility of the Chair, an attendance list also specifying, where appropriate, the member organisations or observers to which the participants belong⁵.
2. Regarding the attendance in active mode (physical or online), only the experts registered via the dedicated system Advanced Gateway to your Meetings (AGM), in due time before the meeting, are authorised to join the meeting and will be included in the list of participants accompanying each meeting minutes.

In the case of online meetings, the experts who are identified in AGM receive a connection link, which should not be further shared or disseminated.

3. After the registration deadline, for meetings using the video-conferencing tool Interactio, the AGM correspondents of the member organisations may receive upon decision of the Chair an additional 'observer link' to allow additional participation in listening mode only. No AGM registration is required for this type of attendance.

⁵ The names of the representatives of member organisations and observers may be included only subject to their prior freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous consent, in compliance with Article 3(15) and Article 7 of Regulation 2018/1725.

While the use of the observer link is not limited, it is strictly reserved for member organisations of the group. Disseminating the link outside the member organisation may result in exclusion from the group.

Point 13

Correspondence

1. Correspondence relating to the group shall be addressed to DG AGRI, for the attention of the Chair.
2. Correspondence for group members shall be sent to the e-mail address which they provide for that purpose.
3. The Commission publishes, on a dedicated website, all relevant documents such as agendas, minutes etc. only for the member organisations of the group.
4. The address to the website dedicated for this is <https://circabc.europa.eu/>. The member organisations shall request the Directorate General to have access to CIRCABC.⁶

Point 14

Transparency

1. The group and its sub-groups shall be registered on the Register of Commission expert groups and other similar entities ('the Register of expert groups').
2. As concerns the group composition, the following data shall be published on the Register of expert groups:
 - (a) the name of member organisations; the interest represented shall be disclosed;
 - (b) the name of observers.
3. DG AGRI shall make available all relevant documents, including the agendas, the minutes and the participants' submissions, via a link from the Register to a dedicated website <http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/civil-dialogue-groups>, where this information can be found. Access to dedicated websites shall not be submitted to user registration or any other restriction. In particular, DG AGRI shall publish the agenda and other relevant background documents in due time ahead of the meeting, followed by timely publication of minutes. Exceptions to publication shall only be possible where it is deemed that disclosure of a document would undermine the protection of a public or private interest as defined in Article 4 of Regulation (EC) N° 1049/2001⁷.

⁶ Access to CIRCABC is to be provided by DG AGRI via a "EU Login" account. Two access rights per member organisation shall be requested. Additional access rights may be granted if agreed by the Chair.

⁷ These exceptions are intended to protect public security, military affairs, international relations, financial, monetary or economic policy, privacy and integrity of the individual, commercial interests, court proceedings and legal advice, inspections/investigations/audits and the institution's decision-making process.

Point 15

Access to documents

Applications for access to documents held by the group shall be handled in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001⁸.

Point 16

Deliberations

In agreement with DG AGRI, the group may, by simple majority of its members, decide that deliberations shall be public.

⁸ Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2001 regarding public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents (OJ L 145, 31.5.2001, p. 43).