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MINUTES

Meeting of the CDG Forestry and Cork

22 April 2022

Chair: AGRI.B2

Organisations present: All member organisations were present, except European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions (EFFAT), IFOAM Organics Europe and WWF European Policy Programme (WWF EPO).

1. Approval of the agenda and of the minutes of previous meeting

The agenda as formerly distributed was adopted.

2. Nature of the meeting

The meeting was non-public.

3. List of points discussed

3.1 Implementation of the new EU Forest Strategy

Commission representatives from DG AGRI, DG ENV and DG ENER gave a joint presentation (PPTs available on CIRCABC) on the state of implementation of the new EU Forest Strategy in their respective area of competence.

Responding to COPA on how the Commission was going to take into account the upcoming EP report, COM (DG ENV, DG ENER) responded that interaction between the EP and COM is ongoing via the relevant EP Committees, and that any legislative proposal will be subject to the usual decision-making process involving both co-legislators.

On the issue of EU competence for forests, raised by European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC) and CEPF (Forest Owners Organisation), COM (DG ENV) responded that the EU has shared competence for several forest related policies and has already exercised these in the past (for instance in the area of LULUCF).

Responding to ECVC on the announced voluntary guidelines related to closer-to-nature forestry, DG ENV indicated that the aim of the voluntary guidelines was to flesh out the

biodiversity-related dimension of Sustainable Forest Management taking account of existing international guidelines.

In response to a number of questions from EEB, COGECA and EUSTAFOR on the upcoming legislative proposal on EU forest Observation, Reporting and Data Collection, DG ENV pointed out that there will be broad consultation: including a (four weeks) call for evidence, followed by a longer fully-fledged public consultation and dedicated stakeholder and expert workshops in parallel.

Reacting to CEPF, DG ENER confirmed that thirteen REDII-related voluntary certifications schemes had already been approved and had been published on the DG ENER website.

On additionality in the three billion trees pledge, DG ENV clarified that replanting trees in existing forests would not be counted.

On governance of the EU Forest Strategy, raised by COGECA, DG AGRI pointed out that, as far as the dialogue with member states is concerned, discussions were still ongoing within the Commission, while as far as the dialogue with civil society is concerned, the current CDG setup would continue until the end of the year, and the Commission will adopt a Decision on the new CDG set-up, which will be followed by an open call for applications.

3.2 Carbon farming – What is in it for the forest sector?

DG CLIMA presented the COM communication on sustainable carbon cycles and the current work on a EU framework for the certification of carbon removals; the PPT presentation is available on CIRCABC.

Responding to questions by EOS (Sawmill Industry), CLIMA highlighted possibilities for new value chains in bio-energy production and in construction with wood. She also informed that COM had conducted a study reviewing the currently existing carbon credit schemes. An impact assessment on the framework for the certification of carbon removals will be conducted, and will include a discussion on the impact on raw materials.

Responding to EUSTAFOR, she explained that a call for interest for a new expert group on carbon removals should be launched in May, and activities would start in September. In response to CEPI (Paper Industries) she indicated that sustainable carbon cycles also included storage in wood products including for the construction sector, and did not mean a ban or limitation on harvesting.

She concluded in saying that there is a high demand for the certification of carbon removals, and that the final aim was to build trust and provide a number of quality guarantees.

3.3 Impact of the current conflict between Ukraine and Russia on the EU forest sector including raw materials security for the bioeconomy

JRC gave a PPT presentation (available on CIRCABC) which provided an overview of usual trade flows of wood products, in particular on imports from wood from Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus.

This was followed by an oral presentation from EOS (Sawmill Industries) on trade flows of round wood and sawn wood.

CEPI (Paper Industries) drew attention to the need for qualitative figures on more recent trade flows. ECVC highlighted the need for more self-sufficiency in the EU.

Responding to CEPF, JRC agreed that possibilities for substitution of the currently decreased timber imports is an important line of research.

For COPA, the way to avoid EU dependency of wood from Russia, was through sustainable forest management.

3.4 CAP strategic plans and forestry

DG AGRI gave a PPT presentation (available on CIRCABC) on the main forest-related articles in the CAP Strategic Plan Regulation, and on the main forest-related interventions in those plans.

Responding to COGECA, DG AGRI explained that eco-schemes are in principle designed for agriculture, but that nevertheless agroforestry was among the planned interventions for some member states.

DG AGRI also identified the higher degree of flexibility, higher support rates, and the state aid reform as important elements to increase the attractiveness of forestry measures.

3.5 EIP-AGRI and ENRD Networks

DG AGRI gave a PPT presentation (available of CIRCABC) on the EIP-AGRI Network, in particular on forest-related events, activities, publications, and communication activities.

The ENRD Contact Point representative gave a PPT presentation (available on CIRCABC) with an update on ongoing and planned ENRD activities on forestry, including on the thematic group activities on carbon farming.

3.6 New Biodiversity governance setup

DG ENV presented the new biodiversity governance setup aimed at better monitoring deliverables set by the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. Monitoring mechanisms include the biodiversity action tracker, and the biodiversity targets dashboard. Central element in this setup is the EU Biodiversity Platform (EUBP) which will have its first meeting on 26/27 April 2022.

4. Next meeting

Next meeting is scheduled for 14 October 2022 (tbc).

5. List of participants

See annex

e-signed
Pierre BASCOU

List of participants– Minutes
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ORGANISATION
Confédération Européenne des Entrepreneurs de Travaux Techniques Agricoles, Ruraux et Forestiers/ European Organisation of Agricultural, Rural and Forestry Contractors (CEETTAR)
Confédération Européenne des Propriétaires Forestiers (CEPF)
Confederation of European Paper Industries (CEPI)
European agri-cooperatives (COGECA)
European Agroforestry Federation (EURAF)
European Confederation of Woodworking Industries (CEI-Bois)
European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC)
European Council of Young farmers (CEJA)
European Environmental Bureau (EEB)
European farmers (COPA)
European Landowners' Organization asbl (ELO asbl)
European State Forest Association (EUSTAFOR)
Federation Europeenne des Communes Forestieres (FECOF)
Stichting BirdLife Europe (BirdLife Europe)
UNION DE SELVICULTORES DEL SUR DE EUROPA, AEIE (USSE)
Union of European Foresters (UEF)