



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Directorate E – Markets  
The Director

Brussels,  
AGRI.E/PB/(2022)9640990

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CDG HORTICULTURE, OLIVES AND SPIRITS» FRUIT & VEGETABLES**

**Centre de Conférences Albert Borschette CCAB  
Rue Froissart 36 1040 – Etterbeek Room 1D**

**and online, via the Interactio platform**

**on Friday 11 November 2022 from 09:30 to 17:00**

Chair: AGRI.E2

BEUC, CEJA, EFFAT, EFNCP, CELCAA, EPHA, BirdLife Europe and TomatoEurope were not represented.

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

The Chair explained the changes in the agenda. As announced before the meeting, in the absence of colleagues in charge of the file, the point on the revision of the Directive on the sustainable use of pesticides was removed from the agenda, but participants can share their views on this topic during the discussion on the market situation.

**2. Nature of the meeting**

Non-public meeting.

**3. List of points discussed**

**1. Update on the implementation of the CAP 2023-2027: state of play of approval of national strategic plans and overview of measures for the fruit and vegetable sector**

The Commission services presented the state of play of the MSs' CAP Strategic Plans as regards fruit and vegetables' sectoral interventions under Regulation (EU) 2021/2015. Three MSs (Estonia, Luxembourg and Malta) did not apply for sectoral interventions in the fruit and vegetables sector, due to the fact that there are no recognised producer organisations in fruits and vegetables in those countries. 24 Member States applied for sectoral interventions in the fruit and vegetables sector (Belgium presented 2 CAP Strategic Plans, one for Flanders and one for Wallonia). 12 plans containing sectoral interventions in the fruit and vegetables sector were already approved by the Commission (Denmark, Ireland, Spain, France, Croatia, Hungary, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Finland and Sweden). The Commission expects to approve the remaining strategic plans by the end of the year. The Commission services presented also which types of interventions are claimed per Member States, including the forecasted budget available for fruit and vegetables' operational programmes.

Participants indicated that the CAP support system for the fruit and vegetables sector based on producer organisations (PO) has proven to work well and should be kept. They also indicated that the environmental requirements for PO seem excessive and criticised the proposal for pesticides reduction (SUR) in light of the Ukrainian war.

## 2. Green Deal and Farm to Fork Strategy – update on the ongoing initiatives

### a. Revision of the school scheme

The Commission services presented an update of the process for the review of the EU School Fruit, Vegetables and Milk scheme. It focused on the results of the Eurobarometer and the public consultation, the ongoing evaluation activities, and the upcoming stakeholder conference on 24th November.

Participants expressed their support to the scheme and, in light of the review, they stressed the need to focus its scope to EU-origin products, to increase the budget of the scheme and to enhance the role of educational measures.

### b. Revision of the marketing standards for fruit and vegetables

The Commission services presented an update of the process for the review of the EU marketing standards for fruit and vegetables. Regulation 543/2011 is the current regulation containing marketing standards for fruit and vegetables. It was never aligned to the Lisbon Treaty, and needs to be separated in an implementing act (controls) and a delegated act (the standards themselves). In addition, some alignment to recently updated UNECE specific marketing standards are needed, regarding citrus and strawberries. The standards for bananas and dried grapes that are in separate regulations are also being merged with the new texts. Based on experience and requests for interpretation of the existing text, some revisions are proposed to clarify and adapt the text. Finally, within the framework of the Farm to Fork Strategy, the existing rules are being analysed so as to introduce more sustainability wherever possible. As regards fruit and vegetables, the angle is mainly to reduce possible food waste. As regards juices and jams that are also in DG AGRI's portfolio of marketing standards, the Farm to Fork Communication announced that the Commission would look at encouraging reformulation of products high in fat, salt and sugar, so the Directives on juices and jams are being reviewed to see if the sugar content of the products concerned could be reduced. On all these texts, the Commission cannot go into more detail until the actual proposals are adopted but views from the sector are very welcome. As regards the process, the Farm to Fork Communication was adopted in May 2020. A roadmap for the revision of the marketing standards was published in early 2021 with a first feedback period. A public consultation took place during the summer 2021, as well as a consultation of Member States. Based on these inputs, an Impact Assessment has been drafted, which received internal green light in September 2022 and the legislative proposals are following in due course. Adoption of a package is foreseen for first quarter 2023, which will be followed by another opportunity for stakeholders to express their views.

Different participants had the following comments:

- Edible sprouts and fourth gamma products should be excluded from marketing standards. In addition, origin labelling on these products has a significant cost while the information is not necessary useful to the consumers.
- It is too demanding to require that the information particulars are available through all stages of the products. It should be limited to tracing via pallets.
- On origin labelling, the FIC legislation is sufficient to fulfil the consumers' need for information and transparency.
- Origin labelling should be maintained as much as possible, because transparency should be ensured, including on fourth gamma products. Consumers are used to

seeing this information, the system should not be changed. Origin labelling is also encouraged on a voluntary basis, e.g. on truffles.

- The nuts and dried fruit sector should remain out of the marketing standards, including for origin labelling. Quality and laboratory checks are already done on imports in the EU to verify compliance with residues and phytosanitary rules. Adding controls of conformity with marketing standards would create additional administrative burden.
- As regards jams, the current text of the Directive works well and provides consumers for the greatest possible choice already.
- Removing marketing standards creates issues. When the legislation was revised years ago to reduce from more than thirty to ten specific marketing standards for fruit and vegetables, Member States then legislated regarding the EU standards that had disappeared, creating single market disruptions. In addition, retailers had adopted their own specific standards. This is not efficient for the sector.
- The sector is also concerned about the lack of uniform rules as regards the use of packaging for fruit and vegetables.
- The processed fruit and vegetables face a high competition from products such as drinks advertising that they contain fruit or vegetable and the actual content is minimal. The marketing of products containing minimal levels of fruit and vegetables should be regulated to prevent these products from using images of fruit or vegetables and luring the consumers on false claims of health.

### 3. AOB

Under AOB **PAN-Europe presented three peer-reviewed studies** that PAN-Europe did in South-Tyrol **on the contamination by pesticides of non-targeted areas** in agricultural area. The links to the studies can be found here:

- Pesticide drift mitigation measures appear to reduce contamination of non-agricultural areas, but hazards to humans and the environment remain - Science of the Total Environment, 2022 (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2022.158814>).
- Year-round pesticide contamination of public sites near intensively managed agricultural areas in South Tyrol - Environmental Sciences Europe, 2021 (<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12302-020-00446-y>).
- Pesticide contamination and associated risk factors at public playgrounds near intensively managed apple and wine orchards - Environmental Sciences Europe, 2019 (<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12302-019-0206-0>).

Participants expressed their views on the presentation and questioned the representativeness of the studies. PAN-Europe replied to the comments and offered to further discuss bilaterally with the members of the CDG.

In reply to some of the comments raised by participants, the Chair reminded that all the members of the CDG have the right to express their opinions. The Chair explained that the point was added to the agenda after it had already been circulated to members, when the colleagues in charge of the Sustainable Use Regulation (SUR) informed DG AGRI that they could not be present. The Chair recognised that this additional point should also have been announced to participants at the beginning of the meeting.

Within the same AOB point **COPA-COGECA presented their views regarding SUR**. It indicated that the impact assessment should be revised to take into account the effects

of the war in Ukraine, that chemical products should not be banned unless there is a substitute product and that there is an increased risk of plant diseases.

#### 4. Presentation of Eurostat's latest survey on fruit and vegetable consumption and exchange of views on latest consumption trends

DG Eurostat informed about the coverage of fruit and vegetable consumption in EU wide sample surveys. The two existing data sources, namely the European Health Interview Survey (EHIS) and the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) rolling module on health only collect self-reported data (that is data collected via interviews with selected respondents). EHIS, having a 6-year periodicity (next wave in 2025), includes variables on the frequency of eating fruit and vegetable, respectively as well as on the number of portions a day. EHIS results are available on the Eurostat website<sup>(1)</sup>. Since 2022, EU-SILC includes a rolling module on health having a 3-year periodicity. This module also includes variables about the frequency of eating fruit and vegetable, respectively. Both EHIS and EU-SILC microdata is available to research entities and the procedure for being granted access to microdata is described on the Eurostat website <sup>(2)</sup>.

#### 5. Overview of the fruit and vegetable market situation in the EU and tour de table

The Commission services presented the market situation in the fruit and vegetables sector with the latest available data concerning prices and trade flows. The Commission services highlighted the challenging market situation for the sector (and all agricultural sector). The main points highlighted: i) raising input cost which is affecting the outputs and production for both energy intensive processing industries and energy intensive crops (especially greenhouses); ii) sector's margins are under pressure given also the slowdown in consumption due to high inflations and iii) update on international trade flows including recent trade temporary liberalisation with Moldova and Ukraine. The sector concurred with the analysis of the Commission complementing it inter-alia with the following points: i) decrease in consumption (highlighted for Spain and Italy), ii) increasing labour cost as of 2023 (highlighted for BE), iii) reduction in output and workforce in greenhouses (highlighted for NL), iv) consumer preference for discount supermarkets rather than organic food outlets as consumers look for ways to save money in the current inflationary environment.

Participants expressed their concerns regarding inflation which has a strong impact on the fruit and vegetables consumption. The decrease in purchasing power is affecting fresh fruit and vegetable purchases, and especially the organic segment. Participants also indicated that the increase in input costs is having a negative impact on farmers.

#### 6. Exchange of views on the impact of high energy and fertilisers costs on fruit and vegetable production

The Commission services presented the importance of energy and fertilisers costs for EU farmers, and described the successive measures adopted since 2021 concerning energy markets. He finally summarised the communication adopted on 9 November on availability and affordability of fertilisers.

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(1) <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/health/data/database>.

(2) <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/overview>

Participants indicated that crop rotation is essential to ensure availability of nutrients in the soil and should be further developed. They also said that farmers are facing liquidity problems, that State Aid might distort competition and that the European Green Deal (EGD) would reduce production. The Commission services replied that the EGD will be beneficial for the sector as a whole as it intends, among other objectives, to reduce food waste, increase soil fertility and preserve biodiversity.

#### 7. Exchange of views on evolution of market access for EU fruit and vegetables

Freshfel presented the evolution of market access for EU fruit and vegetables, highlighting that the main export decrease were in Russia, Belarus and Egypt. He referred to a recent WTO meeting held in Geneva and the need to ensure that SPS rules do not unnecessarily distort trade. He stressed that gaining access to markets is challenging and requires patience and expertise. Actually, for most of its 145 export destinations, EU countries/exporters have to negotiate protocols, case by case, Member State by Member State, product by product or even often varieties by varieties which has proven to be burdensome and problematic. Even where export protocols do exist, EU exporters still face onerous or undue barriers rendering their provisions moot or restricted to large-scale exports. Many times the process is opaque and rigid, and the number of requirements excessive, which leads to an unfavourable cost-benefit analysis. In order to prevent this, there is no need to reinvent the wheel but to build "sound, safe and fair" trade by properly implementing principles of existing pillars such as WTO, FTA and IPPC.

Then he illustrated his point by providing some examples of trade issues such as the pending protocol for pears and kiwi for Japan or the excessive requirements for citrus; the lack of conditions and process transparency in Peru or the TBT and the letters of credit in Egypt, which create difficulty or even prevent exports. He concluded indicating that it is necessary to make better use of existing mechanisms to gain access to markets.

#### 8. Additional AOB and end of the meeting

Members had requested a point on the state of play of the packaging and packaging waste legislation. The Commission services explained that it had received in September a positive internal opinion on our Impact Assessment and it was currently working on the draft Regulation considering the preferred policy package in the Impact Assessment. The 1994' Directive will become a Regulation. This is due to a strong demand for greater harmonisation. Regarding the main problems identified for review, four topics can be mentioned:

- the growing generation of waste and a high level of avoidable packaging, notably because of the increase of single-use and too much plastics;
- the barriers to packaging circularity with low recycling rates (particularly for plastics) and with confusing packaging labelling for consumers sorting;
- the low levels of uptake of recycled content;
- the fragmented markets that prevent cost-efficient waste management in an internal market.

To meet these challenges, the main objectives of the new Regulation are

- to prevent and reduce packaging waste and foster reuse;

- to make all packaging circular – reusable or recyclable – in an economically viable way by 2030;
- to increase the use of recycled plastics in packaging and prevent cross-contamination.

Concretely, the proposal is based on a combination of EU harmonised measures that will be complemented by actions developed at Member State level. As an example, the key measure to stop the trend of packaging waste generation is imposing on the Member States a reduction target of 5% by 2030, compared to the 2018 reference. Most of this reduction is expected to come from the new measures on reuse, packaging minimisation and a negative list of avoidable packaging, for which certain uses would be banned. In line with these measures on prevention, an obligation will be made to manufacturer to limit empty space in packaging; and restrictions are proposed on the use of unnecessary packaging. This is in line with an effort on packaging minimisation that is strongly expected by consumers. As regards the impact on international trade partners, the measures would apply equally to domestic and imported products. Non-European producers would face the same requirements.

Participants noted that with multiplying national legislations on packaging for fruit and vegetables, the situation has become untenable for the sector. Packaging rules have to be uniform at EU level. Fruit and vegetables are transported across the 27 Member States and when they are packed, the final destination is not always known. The legislation should be transparent and uniform. Fruit and vegetables appear to have been chosen as a “test” product in some countries to regulate on packaging. There is a need for a solid assessment of impact of such legislations and it could be that the conclusion is that plastic is the solution, especially in light of the important price increase of cardboard.

#### **4. Next meeting**

The next CDG HOS – Fruits and Vegetables meeting is scheduled for 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

The final date and time will be confirmed by DG AGRI.

#### **5. List of participants**

See Annex.

Pierre BASCOU

List of participants

**MEETING OF THE CDG HORTICULTURE, OLIVES AND SPIRITS» FRUIT &  
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ORGANISATIONS
European agri-cooperatives (COGECA)
European farmers (COPA)
European Coordination Via Campesina
FoodDrinkEurope
IFOAM Organics Europe
PAN-Europe
Joint Secretariat of Agricultural Trade Associations (SACAR)

ad hoc speaker from FRESHFEL
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