

FINAL MINUTES

Meeting of the Civil Dialogue Group on Animal products

Sheep and goat meat/Beekeeping

4 November 2020

(Videoconference)

Chair: Mr Cormac Healy

Organisations present: All Organisations were present, except AnimalhealthEurope, BEUC, BirdLife Europe, Eurogroup for Animals, EFFAT, EMB, EPHA, ERPA

1. Approval of the agenda

The agenda as circulated was approved.

2. Nature of the meeting

Virtual meeting, non-public.

3. List of points discussed

Market Situation – Sheep & Goat meat

A rather positive market situation for sheep meat was noted. Overall production is down approx. 2% (with noticeable decreases in ES, FR, PT & IT, and increases in IE & NL), exports are slightly up and imports down from last year. With less meat on the market, producer prices have seen an increase for both heavy and light lambs. Despite the improved prices in 2020, producer representatives highlighted that continued margin pressure is leading to a fall in flock size and producer numbers. The fall in the goat herd and in slaughtering (-10%) was also noted, particularly in EL (-20%). China, Hong Kong, and the USA remain the main global importers and contributors noted the need of having greater access for EU sheep meat to these markets. COM highlighted the outlook for next year is one of stable production and prices if trade distortions due to Brexit will not occur. Industry representatives (CELCAA) stressed the extremely poor global market situation for skins and wool, resulting in some operators having to destroy product, leading to a cost rather than a revenue.

Farm-to-Fork (F2F) – both sectors

DG AGRI Deputy Director General Michael Scannell gave an update on the Farm-to-Fork (F2F) strategy and Green Deal, highlighting last developments of the summit, AGRI and ENVI Council, plus EP plenary in recent weeks. COM referenced Council conclusions on F2F which are broadly supportive of the F2F communication and will see a significant work programme of legislative proposals over the period to 2023, with MSs stressing the need for impact assessments to accompany all proposals. Many measures will be relevant to the sheep & goat meat and the honey sectors – emission reduction targets (55% by 2030), reduced fertilizer, pesticide, and antibiotic usage, labelling and animal welfare. The External Dimension is critical to ensure that

the EU's efforts on sustainability are not undermined by imports or lower ambitions in other parts of the world.

Responding to a questions on the role of extensive grazing systems as part of the new eco-scheme proposals under the CAP, COM indicated that the eco-schemes provision is new for Pillar 1 and that delegated acts could introduce more detail on what constitutes an eco-scheme. EEB raised concerns about live exports and intensification of production in the context of the overall good sustainability image of the sector. FWA pointed to the aspects that the F2F policy could bring in relation to labelling of honey.

EU-UK trade negotiations – both sectors

DG AGRI Head of Unit (Animal Products) Brigitte Misonne presented an update on the EU-UK trade negotiations. The relevance of the UK market and the outcome of the negotiations to both the sheep meat and honey sectors was noted. Negotiations are now in the endgame. The importance of the UK as a major importer of honey was noted, as a purchaser of high value honey from the EU27 but also as importer of cheap honey from China. On sheep meat, a question was raised about the EU tariff rate for sheep meat that would applied for imports from the UK in the event of a no-trade deal scenario – COM responded by giving the reference to the current most favoured nation rate of 12.8% +2122 €/t.

BeeLife study – how pesticides used in livestock farming threaten bees

BeeLife presented their study “how pesticides used in livestock farming threatens bees”, based on work carried out in recent years in France. The main aim of the presentation was to raise awareness among the livestock sector about pharmaceutical products used in the sheep sector and their impact on bees.

FTA negotiations with NZ & Australia

DG AGRI Commission representatives for New Zealand and Australia gave a short oral overview of ongoing negotiations. For New Zealand, the last round in June 2020 was mentioned, highlighting the second market offer where Member States were consulted in advance. Due to a leak about the offer in advance of the round, negotiations were damaged, and pressure rose. With NZ elections not completed, the next round is scheduled for week commencing 23rd November, but market access will not be discussed. For Australia, the 8th round of negotiations took place in September 2020 and in the first week in December, the 9th round will follow. While Australia is focused on the agri-sector, the EU is interested in agreements for industrial sectors. In the ensuing short discussion, regarding a question about the timeline for both FTAs, no news can be given for the moment.

Market situation – Honey

COM presented the latest data and figures on the EU honey market situation. COPA-COGECA representatives welcomed the increase in number of beehives and beekeepers but cautioned about overall decreasing numbers in sales and prices. The impact of higher imports makes it increasingly important to properly communicate to consumers the real origin of honey, through effective labelling rules. Some surprise was expressed regarding the overtaking of Ukraine over China as the first exporter to EU, in the context of the quantity of honey produced in Ukraine and the low prices. The sector called to further look into the shift between Chinese and Ukraine exports to the EU. Producers also expressed hope of increased transparency and clarity on honey labelling within the F2F context, with some cautions raised around dangers of a reopening of the Honey Directive. COM was asked about the possibility to present data on the share of honey produced organic and under Protected Denomination of Origin (PDO).

FOODDRINKEUROPE stated that market experience does point to some price increases for honey. FOODDRINKEUROPE raised concerns about the figures presented by the COM in relation to quantity of honey produced by beehive. Many stakeholders urged the need for better and more data of EU intra-trade of honey, prices, consumption per-capita of honey, etc. COM noted the challenges in collecting data for the sector, less complete price reporting compared to other products, dependence on Member States' data from Apiculture programmes. COM is however open to idea to present data on EU intra-trade. COM highlighted the accuracy of import data from Eurostat. In relation to honey labelling the Commission regards the current provisions sufficient to allow consumers to make an informed choice, however F2F will look into food labelling provisions in general.

In response to a question on financing the promotion of honey within the EU agri-promotion scheme, COM via the chat function indicated that honey is eligible under the promotion policy. The list of eligible products is established in Annex 1 to the Treaty (except tobacco) and in the Annex to Regulation (EU) No 1144/2014. No ring fencing of a specific budget for honey is envisaged, however. More information on funding opportunities at <https://ec.europa.eu/chafea/agri/en/funding-opportunities>.

Laboratory analysis on detection of extraneous sugar

JRC and DG SANTE gave a comprehensive presentation on latest information on methods for detection of extraneous sugar. COPA-COGECA questioned at what point honey can be considered adulterated, taking account of recent reports where different testing methods applied to the same sample provided different results. Also, the need for a large reference database representing the composition of authentic honey, even those with unusual composition, was raised. COM highlighted the need to build up an EU database, which has to be updated annually for specific harvests. JRC highlighted the challenges to the creation of a large reference database, which is resource intensive and requires collaboration with all stakeholders along the honey supply chain. COM underlined that Member States are responsible to conduct controls at borders. COPA-COGECA asked COM to prepare a list of national laboratories with competence in detecting food adulterations. COM stated that Member States are aware of these issues, but Commission cannot oblige them, only to encourage collaboration.

EIP: Bee health and sustainable beekeeping

DG AGRI gave a presentation on EIP Focus Group "Bee Health and sustainable beekeeping". No relevant comments were presented by participants.

4. Conclusions/recommendations/opinions

The sheep & goat meat market situation has experienced a more positive year, with improved prices. Outlook for next year is one of stable production and prices. The next wave of COVID-19 restrictions and their impact on the HORECA sector must be monitored closely. The depression in the global skins market is a problem. EU sheep meat is still struggling to get access to the key global import markets of USA and Hong Kong. Price pressure and producer margins remain a key concern for the honey sector. Imports remain a major focus, as do labelling concerns and the need for authenticity controls. Both sectors are vulnerable to the outcomes of the Brexit negotiations. F2F policy will bring a major work programme of legislative proposals that will have major relevance for the sheep & goat meat and honey sectors.

5. Next steps

For the next meeting, more detail on the global skins market and price evolution should be explored. Many stakeholders urged the need for better and more data on intra-EU trade of honey, prices, and consumption per-capita of honey.

6. Next meeting

The next meeting will take place in the first quarter of 2021.

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

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04/11/2020**

MEMBER ORGANISATION	NUMBER OF PERSONS
AnimalhealthEurope (formerly known as IFAH-Europe)	----
Bee Life-European Beekeeping Coordination (Bee Life)	1
Bureau Européen des Unions des Consommateurs (BEUC)	----
European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism (EFNCP)	1
EuroCommerce	2
Eurogroup for Animals	----
European agri-cooperatives (COGECA)	8
European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC)	1
European Council of Young Farmers (CEJA)	1
European Environmental Bureau (EEB)	2
European farmers (COPA)	8
European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions (EFFAT)	----
European Liaison Committee for Agriculture and agri-food trade (CELCAA)	6
European Milk Board (EMB)	----
European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)	----
European Rural Poultry Association (ERPA)	----
Fédération Européenne pour la Santé Animale et la Sécurité Sanitaire (FESASS)	1
FoodDrinkEurope	4
International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements EU Regional Group (IFOAM EU Group)	1
Stichting BirdLife Europe (BirdLife Europe)	----
Ad-hoc experts	2