

## **FINAL MINUTES**

### **Meeting of the Civil Dialogue Group “Environment & Climate change”**

**Date: 9 July 2021**

Chair: **Mr Zeno Piatti-Fünfkirchen** (ELO - European Landowners' Organization)

Organisations present: All Organisations were present, except Animal Health Europe, CEFS, EBB and WWF.

#### **1. Approval of the agenda**

The agenda was approved, after the proposal from the chairman to discuss the changes about the chairmanship of the Civil Dialogue Groups, starting in September.

#### **2. Nature of the meeting**

The meeting was non-public.

#### **3. List of points discussed**

##### **3.1 PRESENTATION AND EXCHANGE OF THE HORIZON 2020 PROJECT "UNISECO - UNDERSTANDING AND IMPROVING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF AGRO-ECOLOGICAL FARMING SYSTEMS IN THE EU" (30 MIN) – (GERALD SCHWARZ, THÜNEN-INSTITUTE OF FARM ECONOMICS, PROJECT COORDINATOR)**

The presentation was made available by the commission services.

COPA welcomed the study and highlighted the importance of Farm Advisory Services (FAS), the focus on AECM and the importance of an inclusive dialogue, which considers the entire food chain and reflects the economy, environment, employment and vitality in rural areas.

EEB highlighted the importance of using science, pointing out the lack of recognition about the environment and climate crisis, and giving the example of the lack of understanding of animal production systems. EEB asked if the project considered the reduction of livestock numbers while keeping rural fabric and rural landscapes.

Jasper LUND-LARSEN welcomed the reference of lifelong learning but was missing the reference of trade unions and the social dimension in the just transition.

BirdLife supported the comment from EEB and asked if the project considered the importance of finding economic models that work within the ecological boundaries.

COPA agreed on the importance to consider different economic models and of taking them into account when developing agro-ecological practices. BirdLife pointed out the importance of balancing the different aspects of sustainability, since prioritising one aspect above others would be self-defeating.

Nelly GABENS tried to intervene but had a bad connection.

Claire ETINEAU welcomed the presentation and expressed the wish of having been able to see the other countries and case studies that could not be presented anymore. Also, it was pointed out that “quality of life” includes both safety and quality of employment.

EURAF asked if the project looked at the environmental indicators which can be used at the farm level and scaled up to regions. EURAF also asked if the proposed Result and Impact Indicators could be used to give any indication of the effectiveness of specific measures and incentives.

Gerald SCHWARZ replied that the livestock sector was considered in several case studies including the Swedish case study, and it was important to consider the diversification of livestock systems into mixed farming systems. Dietary changes should be considered in parallel since larger scale transitions to agroecological farming also require changes to diets and food consumption.

On labour issues, he replied that trade unions can play an important role on multi-actor platforms. Safety was considered when assessing “quality of life”. These issues were generally improved through increased knowledge transfer.

The presenter mentioned Agroecology as a way of production that aligns environmental and economic considerations, adding that while there is often a trade-off between the two dimensions, there are possibilities to reduce inputs with cost benefits. He also referred to the advantages of short value chains and local markets, as means to improve products added value for farmers, but market saturation can limit the scope.

The discussions were cut short due to time restrictions, but the presenter was happy to continue the discussions through email exchanges.

### **3.2 PRESENTATION AND EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON THE NATURE RESTORATION TARGETS - IMPACT ASSESSMENT (30 MIN) – WEJCHERT JAKUB (ENV), DG ENV, UNIT D.2**

The presentation was made available by the commission services.

EURAF pointed out that High Nature Value Farming (HNVF) was not mentioned in the presentation, nor in the Biodiversity Strategy 2030 and Strategic Plan Regulation. He then wondered if HNVF had been abandoned as a cross-EU indicator and if it would be replaced but the MAES-based monitoring mentioned.

COPA asked how provisional services were to be considered, namely food provision, and how climate change was to be assessed. COPA also asked if the Impact Assessment would consider the targets impacts on rural areas and rural economies.

IFOAM requested more details on how to achieve biodiversity targets in agriculture and asked if there would be synergies with the exceed carbon farming initiative. This point was supported by BirdLife, who also considered the presented baseline too low, and therefore should be revised to be meaningful.

Patrick MAJCEN had questions both on finance and definitions, wondering what was considered as the natural state of an agricultural ecosystem. The importance agricultural ecosystems considerations were also voiced by Barbara di ROLLO and Claire ETINEAU, who referred to its inclusion in urban planning decisions.

Jakub WEJCHERT replied that there was no time to lose, even if the discussions over data and definitions are still ongoing. However, those discussions were not starting from scratch and there were connections with other discussions and DGs, namely DG CLIMA, with the aim of having the same nomenclature. For instance, soils and soil organic carbon could be an indicator. Other targets require more data.

HNVF was considered within the target related to grasslands.

He clarified that the Impact Assessment would consider economic aspects, particularly opportunity costs. It was not the natural state which was to be considered but the actual good condition (structural and functional) of the agricultural ecosystem. The estimates were based on MS data.

Jakub WEJCHERT confirmed that the overarching target was ambitious and highlighted the importance of it also being measurable. Nonetheless, the process needed to start immediately.

ELO raised a question over data particularly if the commission was looking into improve data collection under art17 (harmonise data collection and methodologies at MS level and improve transparency).

Jakub WEJCHERT confirmed the importance of having national, regional and even local restoration plans that consider ecosystems, including urban ecosystems. He then made the link with the objective to increase tree cover, in both forests and outside forests. Finally, he also confirmed the intention to look into improving data collection under Art17.

### **3.3 PRESENTATION AND EXCHANGE OF VIEW ON THE ZERO POLLUTION ACTION PLAN (30 MIN) – MICHAEL KLINKENBERG, DG ENV, UNIT C.3**

The presentation was made available by the commission services.

COPA asked about climate change implications on the nutrient pollution prevention efforts, particularly how to consider and control the effects on the increasing frequency of extreme weather events (runoffs, droughts).

COPA also proposed to consider thresholds, instead of “zero” when considering nitrates in groundwaters, for instance, as these elements are naturally occurring.

On the question of nutrient pollution, Michael KLINKENBERG replied that the Commission will address nutrient pollution in more detail notably in the upcoming Integrated Nutrient Management Action Plan, taking into account all relevant aspects as far as possible.

Claire ETINEAU asked if ozone was considered in the action plan.

Michael KLINKENBERG said that the Commission was committed to revise EU standards on certain pollutants as announced in the European Green Deal and Zero Pollution Action Plans. An update of the WHO guidelines on air quality was expected this year, and it would likely address ozone. A proposal for revising the Ambient Air Quality Directives is scheduled for the third quarter of 2022.

BirdLife commented on the importance to align the CAP with existing legislation and asked the reason why the presentation did not mention the Strategic Plans. Birdlife also referred to the links between air pollution and the CAP, given the importance of not funding activities that are not consistent with EU laws on air and water quality.

Michael KLINKENBERG confirmed that the Commission is aware of the importance of policy coordination, mentioning the importance of, inter alia, cross compliance.

BEELIFE voiced doubts over the efficiency of relying on cross compliance alone to achieve zero pollution.

BirdLife commented on the previous question related to the unpredictable weather conditions aggravated by climate change, considering it a compelling reason to move towards agro-ecology and away from pesticides and fertilisers.

COPA pointed out the importance of nutrients for plant growth, thus the importance of sustainable use of fertilisers.

### **3.4 PRESENTATION AND EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON THE EVALUATION OF DIRECTIVE 2009/128/EC ON THE SUSTAINABLE USE OF PESTICIDES (SUD) (30 MIN) – ANDREW OWEN-GRIFFITHS, DG SANTE, UNIT F.3**

The presentation was made available by the commission services.

Claire ETINEAU inquired about the state of play of glyphosate use prohibition. Anne VONESCH added that they have analysed the health effects of 89 common pesticides locally and found that the health effects are far greater than what is officially displayed, rising questions over official authorization process.

EEB requested the commission’s views over emergency use requests and BEELIFE asked which leverage the commission had to fight abuse of emergency authorisations. PAN EUROPE asked if the HRI2 calculation took into account quantities used and area sprayed.

Andrew OWEN-GRIFFITHS clarified that it refers to Article 53 of Regulation 1107 and is not considered under the SUD. Still, the commission were aware of the situation and were monitoring it. A new indicator was being considered.

IFOAM was of the opinion that the SUD should prioritise organic farming and asked if the revision would clarify what a chemical pesticide is and consider penalties for MS that abuse the use of synthetic pesticides.

Andrew OWEN-GRIFFITHS confirmed that organic farming practices was considered together with other “best practices” and was already a favourite in the F2F Strategy. However, he clarifies that natural pesticides can also be harmful, and could be even more harmful than synthetic pesticides, giving the example of copper misuse. The objective to increase organic area could even have a potential negative impact on ecosystems.

#### **4 AOB.**

The chairman reminded participants that this meeting was to be the last under the stakeholder’s chairmanship and welcomed the opportunity of being involved with the setting of the agenda and guiding of interesting discussions. He also reiterated the importance of discussing policy proposals and initiatives prior to them being published, and not just be informed about them, and thus wasting expertise.

Niels Peter NOERRING, vice-chair from COPA, was in full agreement with the chair and repeated the idea that the Commission should use the CDG to get input from NGOs and Stakeholder at an early stage of the legislative procedure. He added that it would have been good to discuss the initial points proposed of upcoming proposals.

Celia NYSSSENS, vice-chair from EEB, seconded the chair's comment on the content of CDG meetings, supporting a stronger emphasis on discussing upcoming initiatives rather than merely being informed of published strategies and legislative proposals.

BirdLife mentioned the importance of a balanced representation of interests.

#### **4. 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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MEMBER ORGANISATION	NUMBER OF PERSONS
Beelife	1
BirdLife Europe	2
CEJA	2
CELCAA	2
CEPM	1
COGECA	6
EFFAT	2
EFNCP	1
ELO	3
EURAF	2
ECVC	1
EEB	3
FoodDrinkEurope	2
FEFANA	1
Fertilizers Europe	1
SACAR	1
IBMA	1
IFOAM	2
PAN Europe	1

Slow Food	1
CELCAA	1
External expert	1