

Minutes of the Civil Dialogue Group on Animal Products – Sheep and goat meat and beekeeping on 24th November 2015

Morning session : sheep meat and goat sector

1. Approval of the minutes and the agenda of the Civil Dialogue Group of June

2. CAP simplification : young farmers payments and voluntary coupled support + sector's presentation

3. Sheep meat and goat meat market situation and Forecasts:

a. Current situation and Forecasts

b. Production costs

4. Simplification of the carcass classification system (including price reporting) - state of play

5. Information by the Commission services on the position with regard to the bluetongue virus in the EU

6. AOB

1. Approval of the minutes and the agenda of the Civil Dialogue Group of June

The agenda and the minutes of the last CDG were approved with no comments.

2. CAP simplification : young farmers payments and voluntary coupled support + sector's presentation

The Commission representative introduced this point. End of November, the Commission is supposed to adopt the draft regulation on coupled support, consult the Parliament and the Council, with a possible entry into force of the regulation end of January. This proposal foresees modulated unit rates, the transfer of funds between the measures, provisions on notification. The modulated unit rates mean that member states can differentiate the support taking into account the economic size of the operator with the objective of fixing the amount per head without this leading to increasing production. The transfer of funds refers to the possibility of transferring funds between the measures for the sake of more effective use of the resources dedicated to VCS. All these should be already applicable as from CY 2016.

The amendment of the Young Farmers' scheme refers to the possibility for member states to derogate from the provision on joint control of young and non-young farmers in the case of legal bodies from claim year 2016-2017. This means that member states could choose to grant the Young Farmers' payment under pillar I to legal bodies solely controlled by young farmers. The amendment gives flexibility with view of increasing the effectiveness and the outreach of the scheme depending on the

national context, the administrative burden that may be involved and the possibility of aligning pillar I and pillar II access conditions for young farmers

Discussion

Copa asked about a possible evaluation of the voluntary coupled support, also in countries which do not use it. A question was asked about the possibility to transfer funds from Pillar 2 to Pillar 1.

The Commission representative replied that we are in an early stage of implementation of voluntary coupled support. If an evaluation of the voluntary coupled support scheme is foreseen, that can start the earliest from the beginning of 2017, when comprehensive data about the 1st claim year (CY 2015) becomes available. VCS transfers shall be neutral to the Member State level envelope for voluntary coupled support; the transfer of funds between pillars is beyond the scope of this amendment.

Challenges and solutions for the EU sheep sector

Copa and Cogeca (Charles Sercombe, the Chairman of Copa and Cogeca Working Party on Sheep) delivered a presentation which can be found at <https://circabc.europa.eu/>.

BirdLife mentioned the need for much wider recognition of extensive systems (also when it comes to voluntary coupled support) and the need for the policy to recognise the value of sheep in providing food but also non-food products and environmental benefits.

Celcaa/UECBV thanked Copa and Cogeca for their presentation. There is a decline in the sheep sector and this has to be tackled. Transparency, young farmers, supply chain, promotion are essential issues to be dealt with. The European market is the primary market, the food industry is targeting 500 million consumers. The reflection group provides a unique opportunity to incorporate the views of the industry.

Copa underlined that there are opportunities out there from which the sheep sector can benefit. Dialogue is essential to build the bridge between farmers and environmental organisations.

The Chair underlined that this presentation would be available to everybody. Through the reflection group on sheep, there will be an opportunity to bring forward measures to improve incomes in the sector.

The Commission introduced the reflection group on sheep. The objective of the forum would be to address issues affecting the economy of the sheep sector. Three meetings will take place, with a second meeting to be scheduled for mid-February, and other one in June.

3. Sheep meat and goat meat market situation and Forecasts:

a. Current situation and Forecasts

b. Production costs

The Commission representative delivered a presentation which can be found at <https://circabc.europa.eu/>.

- Between January and August, sheep meat production has been up by ~1%, while goat meat production has been decreased by -3.3% (in t) and -4.4% (in heads);
- The Commission is working on a method to calculate costs and remainders, this being difficult because of different definition of production systems and different costs. Asked for advice to monitor remainders;
- Slaughtering have increased;
- Heavy lamb prices are below prices in previous years, a certain stabilisation has been seen since summer with a slight tendency for prices to move upwards. Light lamb prices are above prices for previous years;
- Imports have increased by +2.8% compared to last year because of more imports from New Zealand (favourable exchange rate) even though other countries have reduced their exports to the EU. New Zealand quota is filled up to 69% and its main destination is UK.
- Exports have decreased by -20% because of less exports to Hong Kong, Libya. Exports to Jordan and Lebanon have increased. The problems with the Chinese market lead to greater availability of lamb and surplus is sent to the EU.
- In terms of forecast, production is expected to increase, per capita consumption will remain at low but stable level.

Discussion

Celcaa/UECBV underlined that even if exports of fresh sheep meat from New Zealand are down, the problem is that they send all the high value cuts during the festive periods of Christmas and Easter (the impact can be seen one month before and one after) when EU sheep producers can make a return from the market. The graph shows doubling figures for fresh sheep meat from New Zealand. When a large part of the meat under quota is sent over a narrow period of time (festive periods), there is a disruptive impact on EU trade. Quotas have been already allocated and are not being disputed.

Copa reminded the Commission that the agreement between EU and New Zealand was for frozen carcasses, now they have changed to fresh carcass cuts. In the text of the agreement, it is stipulated that if one of the parties changes the pattern, the other party should be informed and a discussion is needed.

Cogeca underlined that bureaucracy is an important issue and questioned if regulation costs in New Zealand and Australia have been analysed.

The Commission representative replied that quota for New Zealand does not distinguish between fresh and frozen. Has taken note of the impact it has on the industry to maximise benefits in the festive period. New Zealand will not focus so much on China as they have been doing in the past. There is a need to better differentiate the product in our own market, educate consumer and give more value.

The Chairman concluded this point by underlining the need to look at the low farm incomes in the Sheep Sector. DG AGRI should pass the message forward to DG Trade on the impact which New Zealand's high value cuts are having on the EU market during festive periods. He also underlined the strategy by supermarkets to remove EU sheep from the shelf.

4. Simplification of the carcass classification system (including price reporting) - state of play

The Commission representative delivered a presentation which can be found at <https://circabc.europa.eu/>.

According to the Lisbon Treaty, legislation needs to be split in delegated and implementing acts. The application of Union scales is maintained but the sheep carcass classification is voluntary. New rules foresee that, in future, classification may be done by automated grading machines. Price reporting will no longer be necessary for classified carcasses, but remains in place for fresh and chilled carcasses. Next meeting of the expert group will take place in December.

Discussion

Copa underlined their support for simplification provided that transparency is ensured. Expressed serious concerns on the removal of price reporting which goes contrary to the transparency objective. Data is badly needed. There are no accurate guidelines for producers to have accurate prices. We should aim at more transparency and have mandatory price reporting to be in line with the rules for pork and beef. The responsible unit in the Commission should listen to the industry and market units. This was supported by Cogeca.

The Commission replied that up to seven member states apply carcass classification but only UK, France and Spain will continue carcass classification. Prices for classified carcasses would not be representative.

The Chairman concluded by underlining that we should move forward on price reporting and not backwards.

5. Information by the Commission services on the position with regard to the bluetongue virus in the EU

The Commission representative delivered a presentation which can be found at <https://circabc.europa.eu/>.

The distribution of outbreaks reflects the territory which used to be infected in previous years. Croatia is the only country where a vaccination campaign has taken place. In Central France, there has been a reoccurrence of BTV8 which was present in previous decade. All measures have been applied: surveillance, movement restrictions and vaccinations. The Commission is not aware of any scientific development which deserves immediate change in legislation. EFSA may be asked to review aspects of the disease and disease control to understand if there have been any developments.

Fessas asked questions about the distribution of the disease in France, if the French authorities are obliged to perform further scientific research or this will be done together with the Commission and if the different serotypes require different treatment.

The Commission underlined that there is compulsory vaccination in the Spanish part of the Iberian peninsula where the serotypes are present and Croatia but on the rest of the territory, there is no such obligation. The Commission will double check the map with the spreading of disease. The French authorities do all possible investigations to better understand what serotypes are circulating, if there is a mutation or if there is something new. The EU Reference laboratory for bluetongue helps the French authorities.

Afternoon session : beekeeping

1. Situation and management of the Honey Market

**Market situation and impact related to the negotiations with third countries (Ukraine)
(written contribution)**

2. State of play of "pyrrolizidine alkaloids" and heavy metals in honey and potential future actions of the Commission and Member States (poss.)

3. Varroasis

a. Solutions to improve the availability of veterinary medicines for varroasis

b. How to promote centralized authorization for veterinary medicinal products in the context of varroasis

c. Veterinary prescription problem when applying the waterfall

d. Need for new research projects on varroasis

4. Adulteration of honey: inventory - database project on honey (Apimondia)

5. Adulteration of honey: Coordinated control plan

6. Information on delegated and implementing acts on national programs on beekeeping - hives censuses

7. State of the situation regarding *Aethina tumida* (new homes) type of measures taken by individual Member States

8. Implementation of new bees tests - file sulfoxaflor (written contribution)

9. File neonicotinoids (written contributions)

a. EFS A report on neonicotinoids used in other formulations than seed coatings

b. balance the public inquiry launched by EFSA and review the suspension of three neonicotinoids

10. Project Information developed by the platform grouping EC PA and various nature conservation associations

11.AOB

1. Honey market situation and management

Market situation and impact of negotiations with third countries (Ukraine)

(Written contribution)

A Commission representative gave a presentation on the market situation. She detailed the number of hives per Member State and changes to these values. From 2014 to 2016, Spain had the highest number of hives with some 2.46 million, followed by France with 1.6 million and Greece with 1.5 million. There was no direct correlation between the number of hives and honey production. Germany had the highest number of beekeepers in 2014-2016, followed by France, Poland and Italy. The FAO's figures on global production per region and country were the same as those presented during the previous meeting. In 2013, China produced 28% of global honey and the EU produced 12.3%. In 2014, 43% of world exports stemmed from Asia and 3.5% from the EU. China was the main exporter, followed by Mexico and Argentina. The EU mainly exported to Saudi Arabia, Switzerland and the USA. Germany was the main exporter in the EU, followed by Spain and France. As for global imports, the EU imported 39% and North America 38.3%. The EU mainly imported from China and Chinese imports had increased from 57,200 tonnes in 2011 to 82,100 tonnes in 2014. Great Britain, Belgium and Spain were the main importers of honey from China. In 2014, the EU average unit value for imported honey from China was 1.39 €/kg. Market prices were only available for Spain.

The Free Trade Agreement between the EU and Ukraine would enter into force on 1.1.2016. This FTA set aside a duty free quota of 5,000 tonnes for Ukraine, which would be subject to a linear increase from 5,000 to 6,000 tonnes by 2021. This quota would be managed on a first come, first served basis. Honey imports from Ukraine outside of this quota would be subject to an import duty of 17.3%. Since April 2014, Ukraine had benefitted from autonomous trade measures, which would expire by the end of 2015. These autonomous trade measures were the same as the trade concessions granted under the DCFTA.

Copa mentioned that it was good to differentiate price data depending on the packaging and it was also beneficial to have data on pollen prices. There was a clear steady rise in China's production and exports. It may also be useful to have an idea about trade between the Member States to better comprehend imports into the EU.

The Commission replied that it had not been possible to include more data beforehand as these data were not accurate. The Commission would nonetheless try to include more price data from other countries. Apiculture programmes only required market data for honey and not for other products. There were no scheduled negotiations for a free trade agreement with Mexico.

2. Pyrrolizidine alkaloids and heavy metals in honey and potential future action to be taken by the Commission and Member States

The Commission presented this point and provided information on the scientific risk assessment from EFSA and on the outcome of the survey ordered by EFSA on pyrrolizidine alkaloids in food. It was indicated that the Commission shall consider in 2016 regulatory measures as regards the presence of pyrrolizidine alkaloids in honey, tea, herbal infusions and food supplements.

The Commission informed also that recently a maximum level of 0.10 mg/kg has been established for lead in honey (Commission Regulation 2015/1005 as regards maximum levels of lead in certain foodstuffs).

3. Varroasis

a. Solutions to improve the availability of veterinary medicines for varroasis

b. How to promote centralized authorization for veterinary medicinal products in the context of varroasis

c. Veterinary prescription problem when applying the so-called "cascade"

d. Need for new research projects on varroasis

4. Adulteration of honey: inventory - database project on honey (Apimondia)

5. Adulteration of honey: Coordinated control plan

6. Information on delegated and implementing acts on national programs on beekeeping - hives censuses

7. State of the situation regarding *Aethina tumida* (new outbreaks) type of measures taken by individual Member States

8. Implementation of new bees tests - file sulfoxaflor (written contribution)

9. File neonicotinoids (written contributions)

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Market situation and impact of negotiations with third countries (Ukraine)

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2. Pyrrolizidine alkaloids and heavy metals in honey and potential future action to be taken by the Commission and Member States

The Commission presented this point and went over the scientific report on the occurrence of Pyrrolizidine alkaloids in food. The Commission also detailed Regulation 2015/1005 as regards maximum levels of lead in certain foodstuffs.

3. Varroosis

a. Situation in the various member States

The Commission gave a presentation on this topic. Varroosis was everywhere and no country and/or apiary was free from the disease, with the exception of a few rare small areas, i.e. a handful of islands. Varroosis was a significant pest that damaged apiaries. Good beekeeping practices were vital. There were both chemical and non-chemical ways to effectively fight the Varroa mite, as well as beekeepers also use unauthorised methods. The viruses carried by the Varroa mite were crucial.

The recent EU Epilobee project used harmonised sampling to see better the state of play. Systematic evaluations of the infestation had been carried out by counting mites on 300 living honeybees at the first visit (indicative of parasitic pressure but not necessarily a clinical case). In addition 54000 samples have been collected for further analysis.

However, certain limitations remained, such as the definition of a clinical case of varroosis on which no scientific agreement exists.

Preliminary results revealed that clinical cases of varroosis were present in nearly all of the MS, except Lithuania and Latvia (2013-14).

A compilation of the data on parasitic pressure and statistical analyses to compare parasitic pressure and mortality were pending. The definition of a clinical case was being revisited and fine-tuned by the EU reference laboratory with the national reference labs of the Member States, before being approved. A leaflet for beekeepers was also being produced, which would be available in all languages in 2016.

In all, the project confirmed previous data. A good control of the Varroa mite could affect winter mortality (protection), and good beekeeping practices reduced both the clinical prevalence and parasitic pressure. By the time clinical symptoms presented themselves, it was already too late.

The Commission representative also provided information on varroosis-free areas in Europe, and MS expenditure on varroosis under apiculture programmes.

Copa mentioned that the results of the study were already known in the field. Insufficient treatment options were available, which necessitated amending the EU regulation on the authorisation of veterinary medicinal products.

Beelife mentioned that another varroosis-free area existed in Europe.

The Commission said that despite of no new breakthrough from the collected information, it is positive to be able to scientifically confirm anecdotal field data. The Commission was also willing to receive more information on varroosis-free areas and an application was possible.

b. Solutions to improve the availability of veterinary medicines to combat varroosis

c. How to promote centralised authorisations for veterinary medicinal products to combat varroosis

d. Veterinary prescription problems when applying the cascade use principle

A Commission representative gave a presentation on its 2014 proposal for a regulation on veterinary medicinal products, that is pending in Council and Parliament. Generally speaking, there was a lack of authorised veterinary medicines in the European Union, especially for minor species and minor uses, which posed risks to animal health and welfare, and public health. This could also have economic consequences on farming and legal implications for veterinarians.

The objectives of this revision were to increase the availability of veterinary medicinal products, reduce the administrative burden, stimulate competitiveness and innovation, improve the functioning of the internal market, and address the public health risk of antimicrobial resistance.

In order to increase the availability of veterinary medicines, the proposal contained provisions to reward innovation by extending the protection of the products from 13 years to 18 years for bees. In addition, it would be possible for a veterinarian to treat bees with a product authorised in a third

country member of the International Cooperation on Harmonisation of Technical Requirements for Registration of Veterinary Medicinal Products (VICH). The Commission representative also explained how the rules on MRLs applied under the cascade use principle.

Copa mentioned that there should be a centralised approval for veterinary medicines. In addition, veterinarians are not familiar with bees, which is a real problem in emergencies. There were no more active substances to counter varroosis.

Cogeca said that the cascade principle worked for mammals, but was not suited to bees.

FoodDrinkEurope asked whether it would be possible to harmonise the cascade use principle across all Member States, as there were certain problems posed by imports.

The Commission replied that the proposal plans to allow the applicants to choose the procedure to follow, as limiting it to a centralised procedure would restrict the possible pathways leading to authorised product and would diminish the chances to arrive there and would also increase the administrative burden.

e. Need for new research projects on varroosis

A Commission representative gave a presentation on various completed and on-going projects, and the outlook for varroosis. The presentation can be found on DG AGRI's website.

Copa mentioned that there were several completed projects, yet results from the field were never presented. Beekeepers has never even heard of these projects. Copa wondered whether it would be possible to establish more partnerships.

Cogeca mentioned that it was very urgent to launch now research projects on *Aethina tumida*.

The Commission answered that new projects would now have a better impact on the field, seeing as consortia had been established. These consortia were obliged to include researchers and field operators.

4. Adulteration of honey: inventory – database project on honey (Apimondia)

Copa presented the work carried out during the Apimondia congress on the adulteration of honey. A working group had been set up and had established an action plan. Copa also informed the members about a questionnaire that had been sent to the participants.

5. Adulteration of honey: coordinated control plan

The Commission presented the state of play of the coordinated control plan. The results would be published within a fortnight.

Copa mentioned that the results should clearly differentiate between geographical origins and adulteration.

FoodDrinkEurope said that they would have preferred to see the results presented during the meeting. The Commission should be careful in dealing with this, as there could be serious

consequences for the sector. The sector needs clear methods on how to prove that honey had been adulterated and this ought to be done at international level and not only at EU level.

Copa advocated more traceability for honey.

The Commission clarified that samples have been collected and tested in the context of official controls, and that appropriate follow up is given by Member States in the case of non-compliances, in accordance with EU and national rules.

6. Information on the delegated and implementing acts on national beekeeping programmes – hives census

The Commission presented the state of play of the delegated and implementing acts. The delegated act added a definition of a beehive and requested establishing a reliable method to determine the number of beehives. It also stipulated that the number of wintering beehives was to be determined between 1st September and 31st December, and that the EU contribution would be allocated according to the number of beehives, with a minimum of €25,000 per beekeeping programme.

The implementing act detailed the method to determine the number of beehives and requested a study on the beekeeping sector (number of beekeepers, total number of beehives managed by beekeepers with more than 150 hives, annual national honey production in kg, range of prices for multi-floral honey at the site of production, range of prices for multi-floral honey in bulk at wholesalers, estimated average yield in kg of honey per beehive and per year, etc.). There should also be performance indicators for each beekeeping measure. The approved programmes would be published on the Commission's website.

National beekeeping programmes had to be submitted by 15th March 2016. The 2017 beekeeping year would begin on 1st August 2016.

Copa commented that it would be beneficial to ask national beekeeping organisations if they were satisfied with cooperation with their Member State.

7. State of play of *Aethina tumida* (new outbreaks) and measures taken by individual Member States

The Commission said that this item had been covered during the previous meeting. Since then, there had been a new outbreak in September and the Commission had reacted quickly with a new decision, 2015/1943, which prolonged all current applicable measures. EFSA's opinion was expected by the end of the year.

Cogeca commented that the methods to fight *Aethina tumida* had been unsuccessful. It would be better to use traps. This parasite was different to the Varroa mite. In addition, beekeepers had not received any compensation for one year.

The Commission agreed that this was a worrying issue that had negative consequences in Italy, and that their objective was to avoid the parasite spreading to the other Italian regions and other countries. The Commission had therefore quickly adopted measures to limit trade. The measures to apply had been selected by the Italian authorities. In the beginning, the objective was to eradicate the

parasite, as there were conducive conditions to do so. Now, it was up to Italy's competent authorities to assess future developments. The EFSA report would provide further information.

8. Implementation of new bee tests – sulfoxaflor (*written contribution*)

9. Neonicotinoids (*written contribution*)

a. EFSA report on neonicotinoids used in other formulations than seed coatings

b. Results of the public inquiry launched by EFSA and the review of the suspension of 3 neonicotinoids

Due to a lack of time, items 8 and 9 were only covered via the written contributions.

10. Information on the platform developed by ECPA and various nature conservation associations

Beelife gave a presentation on this platform and detailed the participating organisations. Dialogue on said platform had begun back in 2013 and ECPA had initiated the preliminary proposal to launch a study at EU level. In April 2014, a conference on bee health was organised by the Commission, during which several stakeholders tabled actions and continued the debate. The objectives of the platform were to exchange ideas and possibly collaborate to seek solutions for bee health; to build evidence-based understanding; and to address the influencing factors (avoiding any overlaps with existing initiatives and seeking complementarity).

There was an initiative to organise a workshop in February 2016 in Brussels, which would address the following topics:

- Striking a balance between agriculture and pollinators
- Beekeeping practices for healthy bees
- Lessons learned and shared (in agriculture, including beekeeping, or in any other fields that could potentially have an impact on the environment)
- Implementing the guidance document on assessing the risks of pesticides for bees
- Fertility in Europe = pollination

The objectives of this workshop would be to foster dialogue between stakeholders and exchange successful practices in the field.

11. AOB

Beelife mentioned that the substances used to treat bluetongue in sheep were not good for beekeeping practices and asked that this matter be treated.

The Chair said that they would need further information on this, as it did not seem to pose a problem, yet it was impossible to discuss the matter now due to insufficient time.

DISCLAIMER:

"The opinions expressed in this report represent the points of views 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 information here above."