

A banner image for the 'Collaboration Platform on Agriculture'. It features a central photograph of two people shaking hands, with one person wearing a plaid shirt and the other a dark jacket. The background is a collage of colorful geometric shapes in shades of blue, green, and purple. The text 'COLLABORATION PLATFORM ON AGRICULTURE' is overlaid in white, bold, uppercase letters.

COLLABORATION PLATFORM ON AGRICULTURE

USDA-DG AGRI Virtual Event on Agricultural Market Disturbances and Supporting Producers in Crisis

On Monday 22 May 2023, DG AGRI and USDA officials, led by Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle, Director Strategy & Policy analysis DG AGRI, and Spiro Stefanou, Administrator Economic Research Service (ERS), exchanged on experiences and issues of possible common interest in the areas of “agricultural market disturbances and supporting producers in crisis”.

Subjects covered preparedness, such as an overview of USDA ERS’ role in informing agricultural policy and an EU presentation on the Expert group on the “European Food Security Crisis Preparedness and Response Mechanism (EFSCM)”. The sides discussed monitoring food supply and food security and mapping risks and vulnerabilities of the food supply chain. The talks also covered managing risks and the tools available in US policy and the CAP as well as future needs.

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle opened the session by referring to the conversation earlier in the year where the USDA Secretary and the EU Commissioner agreed on the opportunity for their respective services to exchange experiences on risk management and preparedness. This is indeed a topical issue for agriculture where volatility has grown bigger, driven by climate change, geo-political events, the pandemic and other elements.

Spiro Stefanou gave an overview of ERS and its role in informing agricultural policy. He highlighted the specific features of farming that make it a sector apart in the economy and stressed that the connection to the land so specific to agriculture is gaining new dimensions and highlighted the importance and cost of resilience. He then presented the main tasks and output (reports, briefings and analysis) of the ERS, including the efforts made both to source new data, e.g. water resources and to make data more easily accessible and usable. He illustrated how the ERS helps inform the solution of policy problems giving the example of the recent infant formula crisis. He presented the main elements of the Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS) and the ERS annual International Food Security Assessment.

DG AGRI officials presented the European Food Security Crisis Preparedness and Response Mechanism (EFSCM) and the work of the expert group that created and operates it. The EFSCM was set up when the Covid pandemic showed that food security could not be taken as granted in the EU with the purpose to accelerate information flows among Commission services, Member States and stakeholder representatives. The EFSCM provides monitoring, alerts and qualitative assessments. Participants discussed the results of a related study using input from

all food chain actors in the EU, mapping risks and vulnerabilities of the EU food supply chain.

Finally, some tools for managing risk, available as a possibility in the CAP Strategic Plans were presented.

On risk management, Spiro Stefanou referred to his earlier presentation on the importance of timely data and analysis to how to respond to emerging trends and crisis while EU officials described the EU approach to managing risks, tools available in the CAP following the recent CAP reform, implementation decisions by Member States and some first lessons learnt. In the ensuing discussion both sides agreed the interests in developing new products/policies that address the risk management needs of less well served producers or commodities and extending the coverage to other crops/holdings.

After a lively and informative discussion, both parties noted their mutual interest of deepening current cooperation and extending it in particular on the following areas: 1) risk management – along with the Risk Management Agency; 2) data governance and availability and 3) using data to better explain the issues in food production to policy makers and all stakeholders including consumers, particularly important as on both sides of the Atlantic, increasingly urbanised populations become less familiar with agricultural production issues.