



Brussels,  
agri.e.3(2023)4768419

## MINUTES

### *Meeting of the Civil Dialog Group on Agricultural Market Fruit and vegetables*

**Wednesday 12 April 2023**

Chair: AGRI.E2

Following organisations were represented: CEJA; CEPM; COGECA; COPA; ECVC; EUROLIVEPOMACE; EUROSEEDS; FOODDRINKEUROPE; FRESHFEL EUROPE; IFOAM; TOMATOEUROPE.

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

The Chair explained the changes in the agenda: the point on the outcome of the European Citizen's panel on food waste was removed and an AOB on tariff suspension for tomato paste was included at the request of TomatoEurope.

Freshfel took the floor to request an AOB on marketing standards, in particular the labelling of origin for single ingredient 4<sup>th</sup> game products.

Freshfel criticised the fact that contact data of Commission staff has been removed from the "who is who" directory. This is perceived as going against the principle of transparency that is requested to stakeholders and would create additional administrative burden on the heads of unit which is the only contact still available in "who is who".

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

Non-public meeting.

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

##### **1. Green Deal and Farm to Fork Strategy**

##### **a. Revision of the Packaging and packaging waste directive – fruit and vegetables aspects**

The Commission services presented the COM proposal for a new Regulation on packaging and packaging waste with a specific focus on fruits and vegetables. In particular, the targets for reusable packaging of food the ban of "Single use packaging for

less than 1.5 kg fresh fruit and vegetables, unless there is a demonstrated need to avoid water loss or turgidity loss, microbiological hazards or physical shocks” have been discussed and clarified.

Stakeholders expressed concerns about potential adverse impacts on quality and availability of fruits and vegetables of the measures proposed. The Commission services stressed that the new Regulation will ensure that food security and safety are not jeopardized and that it does not increase food waste.

b. Revision of the Directive on sustainable use of pesticides

The Commission services presented an update on the ongoing inter-institutional negotiation of the sustainable use of plant protection products Regulation proposal adopted on 22 June 2022. Participants expressed concerns on issues such as reciprocity, how the current harmonised risk indicator 1 on the use and risk of pesticides could be potentially improved to take better account of low-risk products and products used in organic farming, the coherence between the policy objectives of the proposal and the reality faced by producers including on competitiveness aspects, difficulties in accessing alternatives to chemical pesticides and need for more research in this area, potential implications of prohibiting or restricting pesticide use in sensitive areas (including for seed production), the need for farmers to be financially compensated for the actions they take and the importance of them having access to good advisors and the challenges producers expect to achieve the 2030 50% pesticide use and risk reduction targets included in the proposal.

c. “Integrated pest management Toolbox” pilot project

The Commission services also presented the Pilot Project “IPM toolbox”, which was published<sup>1</sup> end of February 2023. The outcomes are two-fold:

(1) A public database of IPM practices<sup>2</sup>. The database identifies on one hand more than 1300 “best IPM practices” developed by academic or technical institutes and on the other hand 273 “crop-specific guidelines” developed by national authorities in implementation of the Directive on sustainable use of pesticides (SUD)

(2) A report assessing the efficiency of IPM approaches and identifying the drivers and barriers of IPM uptake by farmers, accompanied by case studies and country fiches<sup>3</sup>. The report shows that advice and technical support is key for the development of IPM by farmers. In that respect and in reply to questions from the audience, the Commission services reminded that the CAP requires that advice is made available to farmers through the Farm Advisory Services, which can also be financially supported.

---

<sup>1</sup> [https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/news/using-less-chemical-pesticides-european-commission-publishes-toolbox-good-practices-2023-02-28\\_en](https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/news/using-less-chemical-pesticides-european-commission-publishes-toolbox-good-practices-2023-02-28_en)

<sup>2</sup> <https://datam.jrc.ec.europa.eu/datam/mashup/IPM/index.html>

<sup>3</sup> [https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/cap-overview/cmef/sustainability/ipm-toolbox-farmers\\_en](https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/cap-overview/cmef/sustainability/ipm-toolbox-farmers_en)

## 2. Synthesis of the evaluations of the implementation of the operational programmes in the fruit and vegetables sector for 2013-2018

The Commission services presented the synthesis of evaluation reports from Member States regarding their national strategies for sustainable 2013-2018 operational programmes in the fruit and vegetables sector. In general, Member States recognised that the contribution and efficiency of operational programs toward the objectives of producer organizations under the CAP are positive. Overall operational programmes clearly contribute to 1) improving attractiveness of producer organisations, 2) promoting the concentration of supply, 3) promoting the placing on the market of the products, 4) ensuring that the production of producer organisations is adjusted to demand and 5) boosting the commercial value of producer organisations products. In general, marketing by producer organisations accounts for about half of the value of the country's total production of fruit and vegetable, and the value of marketed production of producer organisations reveals a clear upward trend beginning in 2014 and this trend is also observed for 2021. In general, contribution and efficiency of operational programmes toward the objectives of producer organisations under the CAP were assessed as positive. Participants expressed their support to the F&V scheme.

## 3. CAP 2023-2027: state of play of the adoption of applicable secondary legislation for sectoral interventions in the fruit and vegetable sector

The Commission services gave an overview of recent changes in the fruit and vegetables legislative framework. Participants expressed their support for recent changes that enable for the smooth implementation of operational programs

## 4. Product Environmental Footprint for fresh fruit and vegetables

Freshfel Europe presented the state of play of its Environmental Footprint Initiative which started in March 2021. The project-driven by the sector representativeness of Freshfel Europe is led by the expertise of 15 experts from the membership of the Association with leading companies and associations of the fresh produce sector. This collaborative effort aims at avoiding the duplication of resources and preventing the fragmentation of solutions as it could lead to confusion and added costs.

The project is designed within the guidelines of the European PEFCR (Product Environmental Footprint Category Rules), as a fresh produce “shadow-PEFCR” based on the pre-existing HortiFootprint PEF. It is developed with the support of Wageningen University for the methodology and the identification of digital partners for the tool of data management for the individual operator’s footprint.

The initiative is setting up a transparent methodology to calculate the product environmental footprint, to foster trust in product sustainability, to enable product comparison, to identify hotspots mitigating them in products life cycle assessment. PEFCR is grounded on the most relevant impacts (80%) of products life cycle, based on 16 impact categories, such as water and land usage, resource usage, toxicity ,ozone depletion or climate impact.

Freshfel Europe highlighted that PEFCR is not only a tool to facilitate sustainability reporting obligations and B2B or B2C environmental information but should also assist operators of the sector in the substantiation of pertinent operational decisions ( logistic, energy , packaging, PPP, claims,...) as well as future access to finance, being public or private.

## 5. Fruit and vegetables market situation

### a. Overview of latest market developments for fruit and vegetables

The Commission services presented the market situation in the fruit and vegetables sector with the latest available data concerning prices, inflation and trade flows. The Commission services highlighted the challenging market situation for the agricultural sectors due to: i) sector's margin under pressure due to from one side high input costs (although on a decreasing trend) and, on the other side, slowdown in consumption as a result of high inflation; ii) winter vegetables production also affected by high input costs as well as weather events making the supply more volatile and pricier. The sector representatives pointed out the issue of availability and affordability of seasonal workers as well as difficulties in complying with technical requirements for the promotion programs very much needed in the current context of slowdown of consumption.

### b. EU Trade relationship with neighbouring countries

#### - **Ukraine and Moldova: temporary trade liberalisation of fruit and vegetables products**

The Commission services gave an overview of trade relations with Ukraine. The Autonomous Trade Measures for Ukraine granting all Ukrainian products a unilateral one-year duty-free and quota-free access to the EU market, entered into force on 4 June 2022. On 23 February 2023 the Commission presented a proposal extending the ATMs for Ukraine for another year, until 5 June 2024. The proposal is currently being discussed by the co-legislators. To take into account the concerns of certain sectors regarding increased imports of certain agricultural products from Ukraine the Commission proposal features an expedited and reinforced safeguard clause. The Commission services noted that overall imports of fruits and vegetable from Ukraine to the EU had decreased in 2022, with a few exceptions (frozen berries, apple juice etc).

The Commission services also gave an overview of the trade relations with Moldova. The Autonomous Trade Measures (ATMs) granting Moldova a one-year period further trade-liberalisation measures, through additional tariff-rate quotas for the seven fruit and vegetable products that can be exported to the EU under the EU-Moldova Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement duty-free (plums, table grapes, apples, tomatoes, garlic, cherries and grape juice) entered into force on 23 July 2022 and will apply till 24 July 2023. Trade figures indicate that, under the DCFTA, in recent years actual fruit and vegetables imports from Moldova exceeded the import quota only in the case of plums, while the quota for table grapes was almost completely used and the quota for apples partially used; for the other products, historically there were no or limited imports. Imports under the current ATMs Regulation follows the same trend. Overall, the ATMs for Moldova have so far not had any significant impact on the EU market.

#### - **Egypt: apples exports and citrus imports**

COPA-COGECA explained that the EU imports of citrus from Egypt has tripled in the last years because of the lower environmental and labour requirements in Egypt. COPA-COGECA asked for reciprocity measures to ensure "global transition", otherwise production will increase in countries with lower standards and decrease in the EU. COPA-COGECA warned that this is a global problem, affecting not only oranges from Egypt but also other products from other third countries, which is affecting the EU

competitiveness. COPA-COGECA also stressed the strong decrease of exports of EU apples to Egypt in 2022 due to bureaucratic costs and restrictions imposed by Egypt, so only big companies are in a position to continue exporting to Egypt. This is creating more difficulties in the EU apple sector, already affected by the loss of the Russian market.

Assomela, member of Fresfel, presented a state of play for the exports of European apples to Egypt which has significantly grown in the last 10 years. However, since more than a year, exports were challenged by the economic crisis impacting Egypt: devaluation of the currency, high inflation, shortage of foreign currency and backlog in ports. A system of letter of credit introduced in 2022 impacted the 2022/23 EU export season, losing more than 100.000 T compared to previous seasons. During the last season exports plummeted by 43% in volume and 21% in value. By the end of 2022, the IMF agreed on a 3 billion USD plan to rescue the Egyptian economy but its implementation is slow and market uncertainties still prevail.

The Commission services thanked the representatives of COPA/COGECA and Freshfel for their presentations and acknowledged concerns about growing imports, which extend to a range of fruits and vegetables coming from countries outside of the EU. The main issue seems to be the perceived unfair competition from countries that have lower production costs than the EU while not having to follow the same strict rules as EU producers. These rules can be broken down into product standards (characteristics of the products that are placed on the EU market) and production standards (relating to the way in which production takes place). Product standards are non-negotiable: all imports must fulfil the same high standards as products from the EU itself and import controls are crucial in verifying compliance. In 2022 the EU increased the control rate for oranges from Egypt to a rate of 20% of reinforced checks, which are at the expenses of business operators. As regards production standards, the EU is using its trade policy to promote sustainable development through: (i) EU trade agreements, (ii) special incentives for developing countries, and (iii) trade and development policy. Modern EU trade agreements contain rules on trade and sustainable development. If the agreement between Egypt and the EU is renegotiated at some point in the future, this will be a topic for discussion.

The Commission services are well aware of the continued difficulties in exporting apples (and other fruits and vegetables) to Egypt. When Egypt introduced the requirement to use Letters of Credit in early 2022, the Commission services took contact with the Egyptian authorities on various occasions and urged them to immediately remove this measure. Following an agreement between Egypt and the IMF on an economic support programme, the Letter of Credit as a requirement was cancelled on 29 December 2022. Remaining problems are mainly related to the macroeconomic situation in Egypt, which is characterised by high inflation, currency devaluation and the lack of foreign currency to pay for imports. The Commission will continue to address these issues with our Egyptian counterparts.

c. EU Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures applied to citrus imports - update by the Commission

The Commission services presented the phytosanitary measures applied to the import of citrus fruits, which are one of the most regulated commodities, and provided an overview

of the past and future audits to Member States in relation to import controls and to third countries in relation to citrus.

The Commission services explained that the non-compliances due to pests are regularly monitored and discussed with Member States. The Commission also explained that the audits to Member States on imports are part of a series which aims to audit most of them and informed that there is an audit planned in Brazil on citrus, following the non-compliances due to pests notified last years.

## 6. AOB

### a. ToBRFV EU measures on tomato and pepper plant reproductive material

The Commission services explained that the first decision to prevent the introduction and spread and the EU territory of ToBRFV was taken in 2019, revised in 2020 and will expire on 31 May 2023. The Commission services have prepared a new proposal taking into account evidence from research, MS reports and audit findings. It has been discussed with Member States in the relevant committee and will be voted soon.

Euroseeds noted that the current ToBRFV Emergency Measures on tomato and pepper plant reproductive material will come to an end on the 31 May 2023. There is need for the Commission to take into account the wide developments that have taken place since 2019 when the first Emergency Measures were enacted in particular new scientific data. Euroseeds highlighted the impact the current emergency measures had on trade. In addition, Euroseeds highlighted that if the Commission decide to make the Emergency Measures even more stringent, the impact will be huge on the seed sector and the rest of the value chain since over 80% of tomato and pepper seeds on the EU market are imported from third countries, processed in the EU before they are placed on the EU market and/or exported. A practically unworkable regulation on ToBRFV can lead to reduced availability of seeds for the EU market and can lead to unnecessary price increase for the consumer on such products. In addition, Euroseeds requested the Commission to adhere to International Plant Protection Convention Standards including the SPM 1 on the extension of an Emergency measure. Examples include ISPM 1-1.8 technical justification supported by a new Pest Risk Analysis and ISPM1-1.4 minimal impact on the international movement of seeds among others.

### b. Tariff suspension for CN2002903100

TomatoEurope raised concerns regarding the tariff quota request for 23.3 thousand tonnes of tomato paste (product identification code CN2002903100) which has recently been published on the EC tariff quota website mentioning that tomato processing industry can supply the indicated volumes of the mentioned product, provided, of course, that the orders are placed in due time and that a fair price is paid. The Commission explained the rationale of the suspensions and quota exercise, the process and the next steps. In particular, it was explained that the request is currently under examination and invited the sector to also voice their concerned with producing MS whose delegates participate to the decision-making process for these kinds of requests.

### c. Marketing standards

Freshfel stressed that the obligation to indicate the origin of the product for single ingredient 4<sup>th</sup> game products would increase production costs because it would require to

adapt equipment and would lead to more packaging. Freshfel is of the opinion that indicating the name of the processor is enough to guarantee traceability.

Freshel also requested to remove the obligation of conformity certificate on marketing standards for exports because most of exports go to UK where the conformity certificate is not required.

The Commission services indicated that the indication of country of origin is an important element to allow consumer to make informed decisions. Furthermore this is not a new provision, it was already included in the current regulation but in some countries it seems it was not applied. The provision is not about traceability but about transparency for consumers and there will be enough time for MS and operators to adapt to this provision. Regarding the conformity certificate, a from the end of April there will be a feedback mechanism on the proposal where this concern can be raised and assessed by the Commission services before the adoption.

#### **4. Conclusions/recommendations/opinions**

#### **5. Next meeting**

The next CDG Agricultural Markets “Fruit and Vegetables” will take place on 8 September.

#### **6. List of participants**

(See annex)

Pierre BASCOU

List of participants– Minutes  
*Meeting of the Civil Dialog Group Agricultural Markets – Fruit & Vegetables*  
**Wednesday 12 April 2023**

<b>ORGANISATION</b>
<b>CEJA</b> - CONSEIL EUROPÉEN DES JEUNES AGRICULTEURS / EUROPEAN COUNCIL OF YOUNG FARMERS
<b>CEPM</b> - EUROPEAN CONFEDERATION OF MAIZE PRODUCERS
<b>COGECA</b> - EUROPEAN AGRI-COOPERATIVES / GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF AGRICULTURAL CO-OPERATIVES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
<b>COPA</b> - "EUROPEAN FARMERS / COMMITTEE OF PROFESSIONAL AGRICULTURAL ORGANISATIONS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
<b>ECVC</b> - EUROPEAN COORDINATION VIA CAMPESINA
<b>EUROLIVEPOMACE</b>
<b>EUROSEEDS</b>
<b>FOODDRINKEUROPE</b>
<b>FRESHFEL EUROPE</b>
<b>IFOAM</b> - INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE MOVEMENTS EUROPEAN REGIONAL GROUP
<b>TOMATOEUROPE</b> - EUROPEAN ORGANISATION OF TOMATO INDUSTRIES