



Brussels,
AGRI.G.1/PE/mi 11204046

MINUTES

Meeting of the CDG on International Aspects of Agriculture

17 October 2023

Chair: AGRI G1

All the organisations were present, except: EAPA - European Animal Protein Association, EEB - European Environmental Bureau, EFOR - European Federation of Origin Wines, EMB - European Milk Board, EU COFEL – FruitVegetablesEurope, EURO COOP - European Community of Consumers Cooperative, Euroseeds, FERM - Federation of European Rice Millers, IBMA - International Biocontrol Manufacturers Association.

1. Approval of the agenda and of the minutes of previous meeting

The agenda was approved.

2. Nature of the meeting

The meeting was non-public via Interactio for external attendees and in Borschette building (CCAB room 1D) for the European Commission staff. Initially foreseen as hybrid, it was turned into a full online event at the very last-minute, due to the measures taken to address the security issues that affected the city of Brussels the day before the event.

3. List of points discussed

1. Welcome of participants

2. EU agri-food trade developments

AGRI presented most recent **agri-food trade developments** from 2023 compared to 2022, with a focus on the recent study on trade diversification. The analysis shows that the EU's total agri-food trade is **well diversified**, with numerous trade partners, while some dependency remains on certain commodities. Overall, the EU position as the world's top exporter and one of the top importers of agri-food products allows for

balanced and **favourable trade relations** with third countries. Questions of CDG members revolved around **data sources** from the study, some specifics of the study (e.g., clarification of **numbers** or **commodities**) and **next steps** based on the study.

3. Food Security

INTPA F3 gave short updates on the state of play of global **food security**. Rather than a single, isolated issue, the global food system is endangered due to a multitude of challenges, including the **degradation of natural resources, soil health issues, and climate change**. Questions were asked on the role of agro-ecology and agro-forestry in the EU agenda, including in relation to the EU's role in lobbying for upholding these agricultural approaches vis-à-vis the FAO. Criticism was raised on EU FTAs, believed to provoke poverty while not addressing food security (since they allegedly only cover 15% of world trade).

4. Food System Summit Stocktaking

SANTE A4 presented results from the last Food System Summit Stocktaking, in which 155 countries (including the EU) signed and agreed to **apply action for food system transformation**. In a non-negotiating document, six main areas were identified, such as including more women and & children, higher investments in technology, and establish a food system governance. Furthermore, the UN stressed the **lack of youth involvement** and plans on developing a stakeholder framework. Overall, the **EU supported FAOs food system approaches** as it aligns with the farm to fork strategy as well as the Green Deal.

5. Follow up of EU-AU Ministerial Conference & update post Africa Climate week and COP process

The Conference was overall successful in finding consensus regarding the reform of the rural transformation agenda. Participants acknowledged that **community involvement, capacity building of farmers, or the establishment of an advisory platform** are **beneficial prevention mechanisms against food insecurity**. Regarding the Africa Climate week, discussions revolved around African countries that shall not follow the green revolution model of Europe or Asia from many years ago, as agricultural measures must be applied to specific country contexts. A goal of the next COP (13th of November until 12th of December) will be the **creation of a roadmap** that corresponds on the topic of next year's workshop and the next 3.5 years of work as parties did not come to an agreement until now.

6. Presentations by CDG members

Stakeholder presentations were arranged for discussing their priorities related to international aspects of agriculture.

a. OPTA Europe

The Organic Processing and Trade Association was created in 2020, representing leading organic processing and trade companies in 12 EU countries with Switzerland and the US as partners. Main challenges for organic traders remain existing **tariffs, technical barriers to trade** and **different organic standards** around the globe (more than 50). The priorities in regards of IAA are **raising trade ambitions for organics** and **provide & enhance tools** to support organic traders (e.g., clear information on organic standards & requirements for each destination market).

b. ELO

The European Landowner's Organization represents 67 members in the areas of farming, forestry or nature conservation. ELO stressed the importance of **increased productivity for maintaining resilient food systems**. They support the concept of 'open strategic autonomy' to keep the EU's global trade influence

to push forward the sustainability agenda. Discussions showed that **land access might have been a neglected factor in regards of productivity**, especially in Europe, where land is characterised by multi-purpose use on scarce surfaces.

c. SACAR

The Joint Secretariat for Agricultural Trade Associations is a non-profit organization specialized in **food safety, trade and sustainability**. SACAR stressed the need to be updated and assisted regarding EU measures for food system transitions – especially for long shelf-life products such as edible nuts & processed fruit. Additionally, SACAR made an **intervention on international sugar trade**. The speaker emphasised the importance of sugar in ongoing trade negotiations (Mercosur, Mexico, Australia, etc.) and expressed concern on monitoring properly the functioning of import/export flows and of the Ukraine duty-free-quota-free Autonomous Trade Measure.

d. EuroCommerce

EuroCommerce represents the EU Retail and Wholesale sector which consists of 26 million employees and generates about 10% of EU's GDP. The speaker highlighted the importance of free trade and a diverse set of import sources **as a fundamental driver to competitiveness and innovation**. Additionally, he commended that the European agricultural sector has overcome major challenges (empty shelves in supermarkets, e.g.) in the past years; he, however, also raised the matter of '**mirror clauses**', considered as a **negative protectionist element**, not needed as WTO SPS standards already allow to refuse entry of food where residue limits are exceeded.

7. State of play of discussions within key international organisations

AGRI G1 colleagues gave an **update of ongoing discussions** in international organisations (G7/G20, FAO and OECD). While the member states of the G7 agreed on maintaining **free flowing & robust supply chains** with a **focus on sustainability**, the G20, with its higher number of members, have not agreed on a common agricultural paper yet. The focus in FAO discussion laid on **water scarcity** – next steps ahead are the creation of a technical committee on sustainable livestock & agriculture in 2024 and to better explain EUs deforestation measures to third countries. The OECD published a report on the **reformed CAP** with recommendations such as shifting the **focus on innovations** and give more importance to cross-compliance provisions that are properly monitorable.

8. State of play: FTA/EPA relations

(Acting) Director of and HoUs of AGRI G provided an Update on current **FTA discussions**, highlighting the EU's positive bilateral trade engagement with countries such as the UK, Japan, New Zealand, and Chile. **Autonomous Trade Measures (ATMs)** for Moldova and Ukraine were **extended for one year**. Participants raised concerns about the EU's Deforestation Regulation, particularly its impact on Mercosur states.

9. Update on WTO agricultural negotiations ahead of the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference, February 2024

Current WTO agricultural negotiations revealed the importance of a positive **outcome** regarding the global food security crisis in the 13th Ministerial Conference (MC13). While all members agreed on **giving food security the highest priority**, views on food security differ between members, and therefore also the expected outcomes for the MC13.

10. Questions to CDG members

The session's final segment began with an introduction delivered by AGRI – G1 on the relationship between the WTO and the environment. Two key points emerged: first, the EU needs to do more to **identify environmentally harmful agricultural subsidies**; second, global efforts, like those stemming from the pursuit of the external dimension of the European Green Deal, are crucial for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, with the EU advocating for a **sustainable transition in food systems**, particularly in cooperation with developing countries.

Three questions for participants were raised to enhance lively discussion and get an impression of civil views regarding the work of the Commission, namely:

- How do you assess the EU activities taken so far to promote sustainable agriculture and food systems internationally?
- Could you share the activities of your organisation to promote sustainable agriculture and food systems internationally?
- What should the European Commission do in addition to existing activities?

CELCAA volunteered to give a presentation on agri-food trade perspectives in and outside the EU. They highlighted the importance of agri-food trade in mitigating effects of climate change and conflicts and gave recommendations such as **recognizing diverging sustainability views of trading partners** and to **better coordinate cross-DG initiatives**. Then the floor was given to stakeholders for a spontaneous discussion on the above-mentioned topics.

4. Conclusions/recommendations/opinions

The Chair (DG AGRI G1) thanked all speakers, participants, technicians and interpreters for an extremely rich and interesting discussion.

5. Next steps

Participants are asked to send emails on points to add to the agenda for the next CDG meeting.

6. Next meeting

The next meeting will take place in 2024. The exact date is to be confirmed.

7. List of participants - Annex

(e-signed)

Luis CARAZO JIMENEZ

List of participants– Minutes

*Meeting of the CDG on International Aspects of Agriculture
17 October 2023*

Organisation Full Name	Organisation
AEEU - Agroecology Europe	AEEU
AnimalhealthEurope	AnimalhealthEurope
AREFLH - Assemblée des Régions Européennes Fruitières Légumières et Horticoles	AREFLH
AVEC - Association of Poultry Processors and Poultry Trade in the EU Countries	AVEC
BEUC - Bureau Européen des Unions de Consommateurs	BEUC
CEJA - Conseil Européen des Jeunes Agriculteurs / European Council of Young Farmers	CEJA
CELCAA - European Liaison Committee for the Agricultural and AGRI-Food Trade	CELCAA
CEPM - European Confederation of Maize Producers	CEPM
COGECA - European agri-cooperatives / General Confederation of Agricultural Co-operatives of the European Union	COGECA
COPA - "European farmers / Committee of Professional Agricultural Organisations of the European Union	COPA
EFFAT - European Federation of Trade Unions in the Food, Agriculture and Tourism sectors - TR needed	EFFAT
EFPRA - European Fat Processors & Renderers Association	EFPRA
ELO - European Landowner's Organisation	ELO
EuroCommerce	Eurocommerce
EFA - Eurogroup for Animals	EFA
EUROMALT	EUROMALT
Europatat - European Potato Trade Association	Europatat
EURAF - European Agroforestry Federation	EURAF
ECVC - European Coordination Via Campesina	ECVC
FEFAC - European Feed Manufacturers Federation / Fédération européenne des fabricants d'aliments composés	FEFAC
FESASS - Fédération Européenne pour la Santé Animale et la Sécurité Sanitaire	FESASS

FoodDrinkEurope	FoodDrinkEurope
Freshfel Europe	Freshfel Europe
GEOPA-COPA - European Employers' Group of Professional Agricultural Organisations	GEOPA-COPA
iEthanol - iEthanol, the European Industrial and Beverage Ethanol Association	iEthanol
IFOAM - International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements European Regional Group	IFOAM
OPTA Europe - Organic Processing and Trade Association	OPTA Europe
ORIGINEU - Organisation pour un réseau international d'indications géographiques	oriGIn EU
PFP - Primary Food Processors	PFP
SACAR - Joint Secretariat of Agricultural Trade Associations / Secrétariat des Associations du Commerce Agricole Réunies	SACAR
TPE - Trade Promotion Europe	TPE
WWF - World Wide Fund for Nature	WWF
EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE	EESC
COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS	CoR