



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Directorate G. Markets and Observatories  
G.2. Wine, spirits and horticultural products

Brussels,  
AGRI.DDG3.G.2/JG/mp (2019) 5222270

## MINUTES

*Meeting of the « WORKING GROUP ON "TOMATOES" OF THE CIVIL DIALOGUE  
GROUP ON "HORTICULTURE, OLIVES AND SPIRITS"»*

*Date: 17 June 2019*

Chair: Mr João Onofre, Unit AGRI-G-2

Delegations present: All Organisations were present.

### 1. Approval of the agenda

### 2. Nature of the meeting

The meeting was non-public.

### 3. List of points discussed

#### **Balance winter campaign 2018/2019**

EU prices along the winter campaign were generally moderate. The market situation deteriorated dramatically in May due to the overlapping of the end of season in Italy and Spain with the entry into production of France and the Netherlands, as well as the low consumption caused by fresh temperatures in May. However, prices recovered in June with better weather and increased demand.

The Netherlands registered very low prices all along the campaign. This Member State experienced overproduction in certain periods. The recent installation of artificial lightening in greenhouses stopped this campaign.

The winter campaign in France started with good prices in March. Then the fresh spring weather strongly affected consumption and prices until June.

In Italy, the adverse winter weather and some outbreaks of pests such as the tomato moth *Tuta absoluta* damaged around 25% of production. Prices dropped dramatically in May due to cheap imports.

Prices in Spain were generally low and fluctuating. The ongoing shift from cheap round tomatoes to valuable specialities did not meet expectations because of the high labour costs of the latter. The campaign ended earlier than usual as a result of prevailing cheap prices.

The EU continues to be the main destination for exports from Morocco, i.e. 82% of their exports amounting to around 450 000 tonnes. Exports to Russia have decreased because this country is developing self-sufficiency and is starting importing tomatoes from Turkey again.

### **Forecast summer campaign 2019**

A slight increase in the EU production of tomatoes for processing is forecasted for 2019, i.e. a 6.7% rise compared to 2018. Hungary is recovering their production volumes before 1989.

The world production of tomatoes for processing is expected to increase by 8.7%, compared to 2018. It is likely that China's production will stabilise after recent adjustments. On the other hand, a dramatic and steady growth in Ukraine is confirmed (12%), and Russia is developing self-sufficiency.

### **Trade Analysis**

The gap between EU imports and EU exports continues to widen, i.e. 628 000 tonnes vs 117 000 tonnes, respectively. The exchanges within the EU's internal market (2.6 million tonnes) largely prevail over EU's exports to third countries.

EU imports from Morocco increased by 12% in 2018 compared to 2017. That year, Turkey was the second EU supplier with around 100 000 tonnes.

Some experts were concerned about the Brexit, in particular about the UK import requirements in the event of no-deal.

### **Plant health issues: *Tuta absoluta***

*Tuta absoluta* is a devastating pest of tomato originating from South America. It was recently introduced in the Mediterranean basin and certain EU Member States. This moth attacks mainly tomato plants but also potato, aubergine, cucumber, pepper and tobacco.

Chemical control of *Tuta absoluta* has strong limitations. Methods of biological control such as sex pheromone traps and predators, as well as the placing of fine meshes in glasshouses are found to be effective.

### **Plant health issues: Tomato brown rugose fruit virus (TOBRFV)**

TOBRFV is an emerging virus firstly identified on tomato plants in Israel. Recent outbreaks have occurred in Jordan, Turkey, Mexico and the US. In the EU, the virus is under eradication in Germany and Italy.

TOBRFV is transmitted by contact and propagation material. Tomato and pepper are the main hosts. Control measures are very limited and rely on elimination of infected material and hygiene measures. Some experts proposed emergency measures including

testing of imported tomatoes and peppers, diagnostic protocols and an implementation plan of the measures.

#### **Promotion project: Cultivating the taste of Europe (CuTE)**

This project brings together an EU association and 5 national associations from France, Greece, Poland and Spain. The goal is increasing awareness of the specific features of the production methods and the characteristics of EU fruit and vegetables.

The project will be developed in 5 Member States (France, Germany, Greece, Poland and Spain), during 3 years (2019-2021). It will cover 11 specific fruit and vegetables.

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

#### **5. Next steps**

#### **6. Next meeting**

The next meeting will be channelled through the upcoming European Market Observatory on Fruit and Vegetables (date to be confirmed).

#### **7. List of participants**

João ONOFRE  
Head of Unit