



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Directorate B – Sustainability
The Director (acting)

Brussels,
AGRI Dir B/VM/(2023)7943590

MINUTES

Meeting of the Civil Dialog Group Environment & Climate Change

on Thursday 6th July 2023

Chair: AGRI.B2 Head of Unit

All organisations were represented except : EFNCP , ELO, ERPA, EUSTAFOR, EMB Eurocommerce, Fertilisers Europe, Freshfel Europe, Slow food and WWF.

1. Approval of the agenda

The chairperson welcomed the members of the Civil Dialogue Group (CDG) to the second meeting of this group. The agenda was approved by the group. No AOB was raised. Members were reminded by the chair to send the two slides for introducing their organisation.

2. Nature of the meeting

Non-public.

3. List of points discussed

Point 2. CAP 2023-2027: focus on environmental and climate elements

a. Dissemination of data and information on the content of CAP Strategic Plans at MS and EU level

The Commission representative (DG AGRI) presented the point on data dissemination and information of the CAP Strategic Plans (CSP) at MS and EU level. This presentation included examples of main web pages where all this information can be consulted. All links to the relevant pages can be found in the presentation shared on CIRCABC.

Questions and replies:

FEFANA states that more specific information on environmental and climate elements would be appreciated. The Commission representative indicates that information on specific result indicators related to environmental and climate objectives is already available and that information on specific topics is under preparation. Once this information is ready, it will be included in the indicated web pages following a thematic structure.

Birdlife thanks for the information provided and is wondering whether it would be possible to also add information when CSP are amended. The Commission representative explains that the data portal focuses on the presentation of data directly available from the CSP. If an amendment also affects numbers and indicator values, the updated numbers will be displayed in the portal after the approval of the amendment of the CSP by the Commission. The Chairperson underlines that MS are responsible for the publication of the last updated version of their own CSP. Moreover, the Commission representative indicates that the dashboard of interventions will be soon published including information on the very last updated version of each CSP.

COPA indicates that there is a significant weakness in the system as in case that one single parameter would be wrong, all system could fail. COPA asks whether the new values and milestones will be available in the data portal. The Commission representative informs that the data portal is directly linked to SFC and will always display the most recent information on the CSP. However, if there are mistakes of data in the CSP, the data portal would show the same erroneous information.

Point 3. Proposal for the Directive on soil

a. Presentation of the proposal for the Directive on soil

Proposal for the Directive on soil

The Commission representative (DG ENV) gave a presentation on the new proposal for a Directive on Soil Monitoring and Resilience (slides shown are shared on CIRCABC) which has been just adopted on 5 July, and now the dialogue starts on this proposal. Many soil degradations are already identified by EEA and JRC and show a bad condition of the EU soils; this puts in danger the achievement of objectives like climate mitigation and adaptation and reverting biodiversity loss, prevention and mitigation of disasters, and long-term food security. So there is a need to further act even if there are already in place environmental legislations and some policies like the CAP. Before designing new actions, the Directive will put in place an EU monitoring system based on a list of indicators in a comprehensive way (all soil degradation aspects will be covered). Existing national systems will continue, but there is an intention to upgrade them and to have outcomes in a harmonized way. The proposal includes a timeline for the implementation and existing EU survey LUCAS will continue to support MS monitoring. MS will have the duties to define convenient measures respecting sustainable soil management principles in collaboration with stakeholders to prevent further degradation and address the unhealthy soils. Existing tools like in the CAP can be still used and extended.

Many stakeholders (COPA, COGECA, CEJA, IFOAM, and IMBA) welcome the new proposal, since they see it as a good opportunity to address some challenges such as soil sealing, soil contamination as well to develop more knowledge to improve soil preservation, especially at farm level. Some comments were also expressed (see below point d).

b. Overview of possible actions under the CAP

The Commission representative (DG AGRI) gives an overview on the potential of the current CAP to address specific soils concerns (slides shown are shared on CIRCABC). The green architecture of the CAP already offers some opportunities, depending on MS strategic choices. Some mapping exercise has started. First results based on specific

GAEC on soils and intervention under Eco-scheme and AECM are promising. Further analyses are still needed.

c. Practical examples presented by CDG Members

The representative of CEJA (slides shown are shared on CIRCABC) takes the opportunity to refer to a CEJA position paper issued in January 2022, expressing the need to preserve the soil functions especially for production and to limit as much as possible the land take (big challenge to have access to the land in some regions)

The representative of IFOAM (slides shown are shared on CIRCABC) puts emphasis on organic farming (OF), stating that this holistic approach is in line with the new proposal. Different soil aspects are considered via OF for their improvement, soil biodiversity, soil organic matter, soil water retention capacity and soil erosion protection. The new proposal will constitute a good leverage to support farmers towards organic farming practices.

The representative of COPA-COGECA presents the Soil 4 life project implemented in Italy in inclusive manner with research institutes, NGO and farmers. FAO guidelines were revisited to develop more concrete guidance and communications on the spot. The process is dynamic and the awareness on the soil has increased among stakeholders involved, more than 8.000 farmers receive a newsletter on the project.

d. Exchange of views

Exchanges of view took place in two rounds and mainly focused on the new proposal on Soil Monitoring and Resilience based on the presentation, delivered by the Commission representative (DG ENV).

As regards land take, COPA considers that soil sealing remains an issue for the future since significant amount of land is lost every year and therefore this topic should be addressed. CEJA points out on the necessity to deal with this concern and see some opportunity based on the new proposal of the directive. Moreover, COGECA is concerned about the impact assessment and misses an analysis of the cascade effect of all initiatives linked to the Green Deal. Land abandonment and land use change (e.g. for energy production) are a pressure for good agricultural land and forest land.

As regard soil monitoring, COGECA raises some questions on the monitoring modalities considering the 5 years frequency for some parameters too short (e.g. in relation with soil evolution) and for others too long (e.g. soil sealing), and on the sampling level and implementation cost (who will be in charge of the cost?). FESASS questions whether there exists a particular type of monitoring on the contamination of soil.

COGECA challenges the healthy soil definition which is underpinned on the fact that all descriptors should be in green light in relation to their associated criteria (no flexibility). No compliance with one indicator is too exclusive and therefore an index should be recommended, weighting the effect of multi indicators. CEJA also agrees on this challenge for farmers and that they cannot reach all parameters for 100% while carrying out agricultural activities.

EEB considers that there is need for additional financial support towards monitoring and also points out that an index to assess the criteria associated to indicators should be used, there are already existing methods.

As regards the timeline to achieve the target, COGECA considers that sufficient time is needed for implementation on the new practices. CEETAR considers that the objective to have all soils healthy by 2050 is too ambitious and not realistic, and by principle the responsibility on the soil preservation should be shared by multi stakeholders but not only by soil manager. IFOAM would welcome a clear target for the improvement of soil, e.g. for humus content, which could be measured.

As regards flexibility, COPA requests to have more tailored approaches, for indicators as well as for practices to be defined. AEEU underlines the need to have more targeted indicators towards climatic conditions and the necessity to develop the advisory system.

As regards the new healthy soil certificate concept, CEETAR and COGECA question the added value of a healthy soil certification compared with other certification (this will generate new cost for farmers without any concrete return). IFOAM thinks that the role of soil healthy certificate is not clear and what will be the link with carbon removal certificate.

IBMA considers the use of biological alternatives as a very good contribution to improve soils.

More specific questions are raised:

COPA has doubt on the carbon storage capacity of soil while there is humus increase, some CO₂ emission take place due to mineralisation.

COGECA notes that due to private company's involvement (to deal with soil management), new name "regenerative agriculture" is emerging, what is the real definition of this concept? Moreover, the crucial role of cooperatives for the implementation has to be taken into account.

AREFLH raises the issue on the reciprocity at global level. While EU will set some rules on soil, no equivalent rules will set up in third countries. This raise an issue for citizen concerns when products are imported.

The Commission representative (DG ENV) replies:

As regards land take, a dedicated Art 11 has been proposed as an obligation to monitor the land take and soil sealing and to mitigate the land take effect on the environment and to minimize and compensate as much as possible the loss of the capacity of soil for ecosystem services. In the soil strategy, there is a call for MS to set up their targets to reduce land take. The impact assessment supporting the proposal explicitly takes into account the existing initiatives, including the latest environmental ones, and their expected combined effect on soil.

As regards the monitoring, MS has an obligation to set up the monitoring, there is an associated cost estimated at 50 million/year but incommensurately small compared to the cost of non-action (more than 50 billion/year) - some EU funding can be foreseen for this purpose. Based on the Staff Working Document, there is a list of available EU funding in relation with the soil issue; also, following what committed in the Soil Strategy, private funding for healthy soils will be raised by a conference in preparation.

Every 5 years has been recognized by experts as the most appropriate frequency to update the survey, but for land take indicator the measurement update will take place

every year. As it can be found in the Annex I of the proposal, soil contamination monitoring is mandatory only for heavy metals, while MS are free to choose other priority substances. As regards the Soil Health index, in case the one-out-all-out indicator proposed does not satisfactorily show the improvements realized, the individual indicators can show in detail the actual improvement, supported by data analysis. The indicators have been chosen to measure only what is influenced by soil management, and not intrinsic characteristics, and criteria for health are the **minimal** level before critically losing ecosystem services (not an optimal level). Furthermore, the elaboration of any index other than the one-out-all-out approach of the law proposal raises some concerns and difficulties on the coefficient to be used (e.g. how to weight erosion vs. contamination), but ENV remains open to consider existing experience.

As regards the flexibility, the proposed directive offers significant discretion to Member States to design their interventions and concerning the indicators, some criteria need to be set at MS level. This is not a one size fits all approach. Moreover, based on Art. 10, the interventions need to be gradually implemented over time. The target to achieve healthy soils by 2050 (which has a precise meaning following annex I) is not a legally binding target, this is an aspirational target to indicate the direction. Furthermore, in the proposal MS are called to support farmers and other soil managers by providing information – including on available funding for healthy soils-, advice and support.

As regards the soil health certificate, the idea is to valorise existing data on the soil, without costs for soil managers (MS will provide the system): consumers and the market are expected to provide additional value to the land and to the products with soil health certificate; the soil removal carbon certificate is complementary and synergetic since the soil health certificate covers all aspect of soil health including soil organic carbon.

For specific issues, as regards humus, indeed there are CO₂ emissions from soil, but we consider **net** sequestration which is the result of C sequestration minus C release. As regard regenerative agriculture, there is no specific definition for this concept at EU level. As regards the scope of the directive, only EU soils are concerned, but this could be a good example for further discussion with third countries.

Point 4. AOB

No AOB were raised.

4. Next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for **14 November 2023**, and it is envisaged to organize a hybrid meeting (confirmation still pending).

5. List of participants

See Annex.

(e-signed)

Michael PIELKE

List of participants– Minutes
Meeting of the Civil Dialog Group Environment & Climate Change
6th July 2023

ORGANISATION
AEEU - AGROECOLOGY EUROPE
ANIMALHEALTHEUROPE
AREFLH - ASSEMBLÉE DES RÉGIONS EUROPÉENNES FRUITIÈRES LÉGUMIÈRES ET HORTICOLES
BEE LIFE - EUROPEAN BEEKEEPING ORGANISATION
BIRDLIFE EUROPE
CEETAR - CONFÉDÉRATION EUROPÉENNE DES ENTREPRENEURS DE TRAVAUX TECHNIQUES AGRICOLES
CEFIC - EUROPEAN CHEMICAL INDUSTRY COUNCIL
CEJA - CONSEIL EUROPÉEN DES JEUNES AGRICULTEURS / EUROPEAN COUNCIL OF YOUNG FARMERS
CELCAA - EUROPEAN LIAISON COMMITTEE FOR THE AGRICULTURAL AND AGRI-FOOD TRADE
CEPF - CONFEDERATION OF EUROPEAN FOREST OWNERS
CEPM - EUROPEAN CONFEDERATION OF MAIZE PRODUCERS
COGECA - EUROPEAN AGRI-COOPERATIVES / GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF AGRICULTURAL CO-OPERATIVES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
COPA - "EUROPEAN FARMERS / COMMITTEE OF PROFESSIONAL AGRICULTURAL ORGANISATIONS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
EEB - EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENTAL BUREAU
EFFAT - EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS IN THE FOOD, AGRICULTURE AND TOURISM SECTORS - TR NEEDED
EFOW - EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF ORIGIN WINES
ELARD - EUROPEAN LEADER ASSOCIATION FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT
EFA - EUROGROUP FOR ANIMALS
EUROMONTANA
EURAF - EUROPEAN AGROFORESTRY FEDERATION

EAPF - EUROPEAN ALLIANCE FOR PLANT-BASED FOODS
ECVC - EUROPEAN COORDINATION VIA CAMPESINA
ERCA - EUROPEAN RURAL COMMUNITY ALLIANCE
FEFAC - EUROPEAN FEED MANUFACTURERS FEDERATION / FÉDÉRATION EUROPÉENNE DES FABRICANTS D'ALIMENTS COMPOSÉS
FEFANA - EU ASSOCIATION OF SPECIALITY FEED INGREDIENTS AND THEIR MIXTURES
FESASS - FÉDÉRATION EUROPÉENNE POUR LA SANTÉ ANIMALE ET LA SÉCURITÉ SANITAIRE
FOODDRINKEUROPE
FOEE - FRIENDS OF THE EARTH
GREENPEACE EUROPEAN UNION
IBMA - INTERNATIONAL BIOCONTROL MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION
IFOAM - INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE MOVEMENTS EUROPEAN REGIONAL GROUP
ORIGINEU - ORGANISATION POUR UN RÉSEAU INTERNATIONAL D'INDICATIONS GÉOGRAPHIQUES
PFP - PRIMARY FOOD PROCESSORS
USSE - UNION OF FOREST OWNERS OF SOUTHERN EUROPE
OBSERVERS
COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS*COMITE DESREGIONS
EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE*COMITE ECONOMIQUE ET SOCIAL EUROPEEN