



# The Agri-food Promotion Policy Review

**Online conference 12-13 July 2021**

This conference was part of a comprehensive consultation process on the impact of different policy options being considered as part of the review. Held online<sup>1</sup>, it was attended by 393 registered participants on Day 1, and 298 participants on Day 2. It was followed by an online audience of 2047 on 12 July and 1824 on 13 July. Participants included a broad range of stakeholders, including producers, trade and business representatives, NGOs, researchers and private citizens.

The conference focused on how the EU Promotion Policy can enhance the competitiveness of the EU agricultural sector, while also aligning with EU policy priorities, notably the EU Green Deal, the Farm to Fork Strategy, and Europe's Beating Cancer Plan.

Specifically, stakeholders were asked to examine three possible policy options:

**Option 1:** Build on success of current policy in supporting the agri-food sector's competitiveness while using the annual work programmes to also contribute to political priorities as was done for 2021.

**Option 2:** Focus the policy scope: In EU, promotion in support of sustainable agricultural production and consumption, in line with Farm to Fork Strategy and Europe's Beating Cancer Plan, nudging consumers to healthier diets. On non-EU markets, focus on F2F's international dimension and EU agri-food sector's competitiveness.

**Option 3:** Review conditionality / eligibility: introduce new requirements and eligibility criteria that incentivise applicants to demonstrate support for the Farm to Fork Strategy or that exclude applications from certain sectors.

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<sup>1</sup> [The Agri-food Promotion Policy Review | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/agri-food/policies/promotion/policy-review)



## DAY 1

12 July 2021

### 14.30 – 14.40 CONFERENCE WELCOME

The conference was launched by Master of Ceremonies **Jennifer Baker**, noting that the days ahead would build upon the online public consultation that had already been carried out. She reiterated the aim of the conference, to know how each of the three policy options set out in the roadmap<sup>2</sup> would enhance the agri-food sector's competitiveness and sustainability and what environmental, social, and economic impact the options would have for each stakeholder.

Baker directed audience members to view the 3D gallery, the Slido application for submitting questions to the panels, and introduced the day's moderator, **David Keating**.

### 14.40 – 15.00 OPENING SESSION

Mr **Janusz Wojciechowski**, the EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, was the first to speak.

I'd like to remind you of the context of current policy review. It needs to be considered in the context of the EU Green Deal and Farm to Fork Strategy, which pave the way to a more sustainable agriculture, from producer to consumer.

We aim to boost the economy, improve health, quality of life, and care for nature. We also aim to ensure nobody is left behind. Our farmers and the agri-food sector are in a volatile global environment. Enhancing the competitiveness of EU products is of utmost importance.

The promotion policy must support this strategy and those who have already made the transition to sustainability practices, and enable others to do so, creating additional opportunities for all.

The expectations and demands of citizens are evolving and driving changes in the food market. There are growing demands for environmental, social and economically sustainable products. 70% of Europeans say the EU should be more proactive in promoting food sustainability worldwide, and 89% believe companies should take action to raise global sustainability standards.

The high added value of the promotion policy has been demonstrated. However we must also embrace the need to address some of our most urgent social challenges. This involves supporting the transition to a sustainable food system, and facilitating a shift in consumption patterns.

We cannot say any of these tasks will be easy, but all of them are necessary. The transition to a more sustainable food system is not something we can postpone any longer.

When we talk about food we are talking about culture, heritage, safety, and the landscape that provides it, the farmers that grow the food and the people with whom we share it. If we don't lose sight of these things, we can successfully shape the promotion policy.

He was followed by Mr **Jože Podgoršek**, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food, Slovenian Presidency of the Council.

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<sup>2</sup> [EU farm and food products – review of policy on promotion inside and outside the EU \(europa.eu\)](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-operations/infographic-117396.pdf)

Food has always played an important role in our history, behaviour, and culture. Food is our strongest link to nature. And food production depends on biodiversity and a healthy ecosystem. We need to provide safe, high-quality, affordable food products, that are sustainable, while remaining competitive.

We need to look from multiple angles, taking into account the EU Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy, and the impacts of the pandemic and the global economy on farmers and supply chains.

Can't forget how huge a trade partner the EU is on a world level. Beside improving quality, this policy also plays key role in future regulations.

We can also play a leading role in promoting awareness among consumers. Well-informed consumers will make smart decisions. I'm fully convinced that consumers will make purchase decisions based on being better informed. During pandemic saw how quick consumer habits can change. This goes for diet, as well.

The EU is diverse in terms of groups of people, customs and culture, and food products are part of that. This means we have unique qualities, ways of eating, that is part of our diversity. The promotion policy needs to take that into account.

## 15.00 – 15.25 PRESENTATION OF THE PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Ms **Giulia Martino** of Ecorys, presented the initial results of the online public consultation on the review of the agri-food promotion policy.

From 31 March to 23 June 2021, the consultation gathered 7528 responses from civil society organisations, businesses, public authorities and private citizens. The overwhelming majority of responses (4793) came from French citizens, where NGOs who advocate stopping co-funding promotion of animal products encouraged participation and provided tutorials for respondents. However, their response profile was not dissimilar to citizens from other EU Member States.

There is strong support from citizens and NGOs to introduce new eligibility criteria, excluding products such as those which are not produced sustainably, those that do not contribute to a plant-based diet, and alcoholic beverages.

However there is strong support to maintain status quo among business and public authorities. Businesses likewise are strongly against excluding any product from the promotion policy.

There is a consensus among all respondents for raising awareness on sustainable and healthy products inside the EU. Citizens are more in favour of the promotion targeting EU countries, while businesses want to see products promoted outside of the EU.

191 organisations indicated experience with promotion policy, and more than half wished to see the current management model changed, simplifying the administrative burden and the cost for beneficiaries.

15.30 – 16.30 SESSION 1: ENABLING THE TRANSITION TO SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS: The role of the agri-food promotion policy. This session looked into the question of how the EU agri-food promotion policy can support the transition to a more sustainable EU food system in the context of the Farm to Fork Strategy.

Keynote speaker Mr **Sébastien Treyer**, Executive Director of the Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDRI), discussed how the EU agri-food promotion policy can support the transition to a more sustainable EU food system, in the context of the Farm to Fork strategy. He drew from a future study carried out by IDDRI, *Ten Years For Agroecology*<sup>3</sup>.

In 2050, our plates will have changed, containing much more fruit & vegetables, more vegetable protein. We will produce better plant-based feed for animals with lower impact on the environment. This means a better diet and higher biodiversity, and lower greenhouse gas emissions. The EU can go from a net importer of calories to a net exporter.

We see reducing ultraprocessed foods that are high in salt and sugar. We need to know how to support more virtuous animal systems, and food systems where we show there is real sustainability and quality. Beyond Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Geographical Indication (GI) schemes, we need to make a link between the product and how it is made, show traceability.

The implications for export market are an essential challenge for the promotion policy. Promotion is going to be essential. We should try to accompany all this change with a move upmarket. We can do that by looking at quality, safety, environmental standards, nutritional value. In animal products, there is space for export of beef and dairy not consumed in Europe, as long as they are quality products.

The three main challenges are to get on board actors who are not involved and not used to working with the promotion policy, e.g. the fruit and pulses sector; to foster continuing improvement of quality schemes; and in sectors that historically have benefited a great deal from the promotion policy, we need to help them towards more sustainability with more ambitious nutritional, health and environmental benefits.

First to react was **Mella Frewen**, Director General, Food Drink Europe. We believe the future promotion policy must build on past successes. We support the call for sustainable production and consumption, Options 1 and 2. Yet sustainability must be considered alongside competitiveness. If companies are not competitive, they cannot be sustainable.

We have six asks: first, we think the promotion policy should be inclusive for all agri-food products. Second, there should be no discrimination based on production methods. Third, that a wider range of products is promoted. Fourth, the policy must be market-driven. Fifth, we need a strong budget, distributed fairly. And sixth, the promotion policy must be a tool to strengthen EU leadership at global level, inspiring other countries to join efforts to create sustainable food systems.

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<sup>3</sup> [Ten Years for Agroecology in Europe | IDDRI](#)

Ms **Deirdre Ryan**, Director of Quality Assurance and Origin Green <sup>4</sup>at Bord Bia, said it was great to see emphasis on sustainability and raising awareness.

We believe promotion policy should build on current successes, in line with Option 1. A policy that discriminates against any one sector goes against what's been done to date by farmers driving up quality and sustainability in food production.

We risk losing opportunities to capitalise on unique selling points in EU farming – that we have invested heavily in quality, safety, etc. We need to think about the impact on people, farm communities have done a big part, excluding them and seeing them as part of the problem is wrong.

Dairy and meat have a role to play in a sustainable diet. We need the policy to be inclusive, to include all types of food and drink. We have to balance environmental, social and economic goals.

Ms **Sophie Bertrand**, Scientific Project Manager, European Milk Forum, raised three points.

Dairy is key for the transition to a sustainable system in Europe: it plays vital role in the rural economy in all regions of Europe, and is the second biggest agri-food sector, with 2 million employed directly on farms and in dairy processing. Forty per cent of agricultural land can only be used by ruminants.

There is continuous improvement and ambition in sector, to goals set by government, our goal is to get consumers to know the agricultural sector reduced its pollution incidents by 23%, and 68% of the sector has reduced its impact on the environment and plans to do more.

The EU dairy sector listens and takes into account consumer expectations, consumers are looking for good environmental products, and high quality, taste, and safety, polls conducted show that consumers trust the dairy sector.

**The moderator asked how the promotion policy support the transition to sustainability in the absence of legislative framework.**

Treyer replied that we need to be able to continue developing standards, and be clear at the EU scale by what we mean about standards. The image the EU has of high food safety standards must not be jeopardised by a lack of credibility in sustainability standards. [He also mentioned the important role of the new CAP, in particular of eco-schemes, in supporting this transition.](#)

Frewen added that a lot can be done without legislation, citing the code of conduct<sup>5</sup> that many producers in the food chain have signed up to. The best way I think is to allow 300,000 food companies to try to get this together themselves, to give us a chance, see if it works, then there is always the threat of legislation down the line. Ryan and Bertrand emphasised the willingness of farmers and producers to strive toward sustainability targets, and the importance of supporting them in these efforts.

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<sup>4</sup> [Sustainable Farming Origin Green - Bord Bia | Irish Food Board](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Code of Conduct \(europa.eu\)](#)

**The moderator asked how the promotion policy can help farmers transition to sustainable production models.**

Bertrand highlighted two points: that farmers need recognition from society, and need support to demonstrate what they have done to citizens. And secondly, the promotion policy can help all farmers in recognising synergies between plant and animal farming systems, without opposition.

Treyer underscored the importance of making the promotion policy transparent so that farmers can see how they will benefit, and reiterated the need to connect the consumer with the producer.

**The moderator cited the EU organic label as a scheme contributing substantially to EU-wide sustainability systems. Were there other options?**

Frewen felt it was not the only system making a contribution to sustainable production, noting there are many ways of growing agricultural materials, and downstream converting them into foodstuffs. Conventional farming is working to become more sustainable. This makes sense from an environmental and a social point of view.

Ryan added that there is no silver bullet, variety of programmes and metrics. The Organic scheme has a focus on fertilisers and pesticides, but it is not the only way of driving change.

Bertrand admitted that the organic scheme is a good one, but noted there are many other different local schemes, dairy producers are very diverse all over Europe, working to local conditions, with many local programmes to make systems sustainable.

Treyer identified the organic scheme as a good example of transparency and traceability, noting we must build trust into the transition, to show farmers really are changing practices to something more sustainable.

**The moderator asked how we can help farmers promote sustainable animal production if we follow option 3, which excludes certain products?**

Bertrand admitted that choosing Option 3 would have big effect on action of livestock farmers. They are motivated to improve conditions but need recognition. This option offers no recognition of the work done, and would slow down their evolution and progress.

Ryan said it would be a challenge, of 900 farmers polled, 85% feel scapegoated for climate change. Emission reductions that need to be made are huge in agriculture, Option 3 would give no recognition for this, to ask for all this action and not have the confidence to stand behind it and promote it, would damage motivation and practice.

**The moderator asked how citizens' views will be balanced against business, and communicated an audience member's doubts about representativeness of the public consultation.**

Frewen noted that when policy has become reality, citizens would input with their purses and their pockets, in what they buy. What people say and how people act in supermarkets are not always in line. The EU Green Deal is a strategy for growth, I don't know how you can cross off products if the goal is not to leave anyone behind.

Ryan said as long as the process is consistent with what it sets out to achieve, transparent about what and why, and has science and expertise to back it up, we have to have faith that voices get heard and communications are transparent, leaving nobody behind.

Bertrand: I would define what sustainability is for food systems – science doesn't know, and citizens even less so.

Treyer added that it is important to continue the conversation with the business sector, farmers, but also civil society, and if possible, citizens. They have a lot of commonalities in what they think is a sustainable system.

16.30 – 17.30 SESSION 2: SUPPORTING MORE PLANT-BASED AND HEALTHY DIETS THROUGH THE AGRI-FOOD PROMOTION POLICY. This session looked into the [question: How can the EU agri-food promotion policy support the shift to more plant-based, healthy dietary practices, in the context of the beating cancer plan?](#)

Keynote speaker Dr **João Breda**, Senior Adviser, Division of Country Health Policies and Systems, WHO, explored how the EU agri-food promotion policy can support the shift to more plant-based, healthy dietary practices, in the context of Europe's Beating Cancer Plan.

If you look at the top 10 risk factors for cause of death in the EU, more than half are related to diet. Over time, tobacco as a risk factor has declined, and diet is catching up very quickly. As we make progress in reducing tobacco use, improving diet becomes more important.

Obesity was a major risk factor in hospitalisation with COVID. In fact, the pandemic has challenged our food systems. It has made more difficult to implement WHO recommendations such as access to fresh food, increased mobility, and decreased screen time.

Through the promotion policy, we can really develop and improve food systems that are better for our citizens, that are not just for the environment but also for our health. (Speech truncated due to technical issues)

Prof. **Tim Lang**, Emeritus Professor of Food Policy, Centre for Food Policy, City University of London, described massive growth of evidence in the last 30 years of the need to change the diet of Europe, and the wider rich world. He made three main points.

Firstly, we need a paradigm shift. We can see the damage to health, environment and land. The Farm to Fork Strategy is making great moves, it is a multicriteria, multisector, multilevel approach, and has to be.

Secondly, strong leadership is needed. In Britain there are 16 ministries dealing with food. The Farm to Fork Strategy is simpler but must be translated.

Thirdly is consumer engagement. The EU is a leading force in rational labelling, [informing consumers through labelling is important but not enough](#). Tim mentioned carbon measured diets rather than [products](#) but noted we don't have sustainable diet labelling, we need this for diets, not products. Everyone in public policy knows we have to do more than little bits. We must use the full range of levers to incentivise shift in diet.



Prof. **Klaus G. Grunert**, Department of Management - MAPP - Research on Value Creation in the Food Sector, Aarhus University, outlined how to support a more plant-based diet through policy.

[Professor Grunert cautioned against overestimating what can be achieved with the promotion policy, an instrument that is not suited for obtaining drastic changes in consumer behaviour. We have several decades of experience in telling people to eat healthier, with limited effect. Promotion policy has proved effective in increasing awareness for instance of labelling schemes and encouraging increased consumption of fresh fruits & vegetables.](#)

They can achieve some of the less drastic changes, shifting from one meat to another, for example, [and may support consumers choosing the more sustainably produced product.](#)

Most people think the transition requires new technologies and products, consumers can be sceptical of these, promotion can help speed up adoption in consumers. Finally, sustainability needs to be reflected in the criteria for promotion funding.

Ms **Simona Rubbi**, International relations manager at research and marketing group CSO Italy, and President of the Civil Dialogue Group Promotion, outlined possible policy instruments.

Labelling is one way of ensuring sustainability, though it has to be carefully adjusted to needs of each product. What is sustainable in one place might not be sustainable elsewhere. We need to be careful labelling does not lead to distortions of competition. Also, fruit and vegetable produce is typically sold in bulk without packaging, it would be ironic to add packaging to get this message across.

All production methods should be given a chance to prove their sustainability credentials. We must give a voice to all producers who are making efforts to reduce their environmental impact.

The EU School Fruit Scheme has made a contribution to educating children about sustainable production. We have to invest as much as possible in the next years to get people to understand what is at stake, how food is produced, and change habits accordingly.

**The moderator asked how the revised promotion policy will fit with future front of pack labelling rules and the sustainable food systems?**

Lang said this is something I have been calling for 20 years and we still don't have labelling for carbon or sustainability. We have to be very clear, we know that changing consumer behaviour is not easy, but we must go through the fastest change, for water, climate, the ecosystem, and human health, we have got to go through the fastest change we've ever done. It is looking likely from climate science that crises will force changes more radically and faster than anyone thought likely 10 years ago.

Grunert added that ecological labelling is important, but we shouldn't expect miracles. Two major hurdles – label may recommend a choice people might not want to make for other reasons and that people don't look, people are in a hurry and engaged in other things. Awareness of such labels can be supported by promotional activities.

**The moderator asked: With an annual budget of around EUR 180 million for promotion inside and outside the EU, can the EU promotion policy really nudge EU consumers towards more plant-based diets?**

Rubbi admitted that EUR 180 million over three years inside and outside the EU is not a great deal, especially compared to commercial budgets. We also need to take into account the impact of COVID-19 and the reduction in the Commission budget due to Brexit. EU supermarkets spend 10 times what the Commission does on promotion.

It's extremely important that the promotion policy be strengthened, the budget guaranteed accordingly, so we can work on consumers' behalf and let them make informed choices. The reduction in the cost of treating diet-related illnesses can offset the cost of prevention.

Lang agreed that big commercial interests can dominate the messaging, and the immediate environment when the consumer chooses food. He noted social media influencers can be on the payroll of a food company without admission. We need a good Commissioner who gets that ordinary citizens are shaped by the local market, not just advertising.

**The moderator asked if public money can ever compete with private advertisers.**

Grunert said it is clear the amount of money the EU has is limited. We need better understanding of how promotional activities can change behaviour. The role of classical advertising in changing behaviour is limited.

**The moderator asked how will the Commission create a level playing field for plant-based products?**

Rubbi said the Commission is doing a lot of work in that direction. We're at a crucial juncture in regards of fruit vegetable production. There is a major review going on in the use of pesticides and phytopharmaceuticals. EU producers for the last 25 years have been committed to making this transition, which is having a major effect on environmental impact. So producers are very attuned to needs of the environment.

**The moderator asked whether the promotion policy should include contentious products such as meat.**

I've spent too long in my life in this debate of meat vs plant-based diets, said Lang. Essentially there is nothing wrong with meat, but the scale, the amount and how it is produced matters. It is not about pitting meats against plants, and just sloganizing plant-based diets won't do it.

We shouldn't accept the status quo by quoting cultural differences. Plant-based diet is a nice phrase, but you can have a high-fat plant-based diet. A lot of vegetarian eating not necessarily healthy.

A good diet for Europe is one that uses land appropriately – in mountainous areas producing meat for example, and on high-grade land, horticulture. Plant-based doesn't just means it's terrific and EU should promote it. It depends on how it is produced, and that's where the EU is powerful and important, and can demand information flows from producer to consumer.

We've got to do it much faster than anything done in the EU ever, and do it very carefully and cleverly.

#### 17:30 - 18:15 CLOSING REMARKS DAY 1

The day ended with a statement from Ms **Nathalie Sauze-Vandevyver**, Director, Quality, Research & Innovation, Outreach, DG Agriculture and Rural Development. She noted the level of consensus on supporting a transition of the agri-food system toward sustainable production methods, but diverging views on how to achieve these goals.

The review has evaluated the existing policy and found it contributes to our objectives of raising awareness of the quality and high standards of EU produce, particularly in third country markets. The promotion activities represent clear added value. We have concluded that it is possible to increase consistency with other EU policies. On that basis we have published a roadmap with three options.

Firstly, to increase competitiveness, strengthen consistency, and simplify the policy to maximise its impact. Second is to broaden the scope of policy, with an internal market focus on sustainable consumption and getting consumers to adopt more healthy diets. And thirdly to review the criteria, which would require producers to show they are supporting sustainability, possibly excluding certain products.

The impact assessment we're working on now, based on various information we've gathered, will determine the economic, social and environmental impact of the three options, and the capacity of these to achieve the aims of promotion policy. We can't do this without your participation so thank you.

## DAY 2

13 July 2021

### 9.00 – 9.05 CONFERENCE WELCOME

Master of Ceremonies **Jennifer Baker** welcomed speakers and audience members, and reminded them of the conference goal, to assist a comprehensive review of the promotion policy, to collect the opinions of citizens and wide range of stakeholders. She introduced the day's moderator, **Jack Parrock**.

### 9.05 – 10.00 OPENING SESSION DAY 2

Mr **Herbert Dorfmann MEP**, co-rapporteur on Farm to Fork strategy, opened the proceedings.

We need to promote the EU brand, inside and outside of the EU. We need to advertise the products we have, but also ones we want to have. The Farm to Fork Strategy is important here as it will choose what products we want to have tomorrow.

As far as EU exports are concerned, these are primarily high value processed products like cheese and wine. It's not for us to tell people what they should be drinking and eating. From tomatoes to wine to cheese to meat, all those can be produced sustainable, just as they can be produced unsustainably.

I don't think we should discriminate against certain products. There is a danger of an attack on wine, that is absurd, there is no other agri-food product where the EU has such a leading position. Calling this product into doubt, saying you can't promote it because it has to be drunk with moderation, that's nothing to do with the promotion policy. The same goes for meat and dairy products. We have meat and dairy which is highly sustainable, covering millions of hectares of permanent pasture – what will we do with this if we end meat and dairy? Ploughing up permanent pastures, would that be a sustainable thing to do?

I think one needs to see things in comprehensive way. There needs to be a debate among legislators, EU Parliament, and Member States.

Ms **Anja Hazekamp MEP**, co-rapporteur on Farm to Fork strategy, had fallen ill and was unable to join.

Mr **Paolo De Castro MEP**, Committee on International Trade, stated that the EU Parliament will never be able to support a move which weakens the promotion policy.

Our producers and farmers already comply with highest food standards worldwide on safety, quality and production processes. They must be incentivised to make further leaps in quality, to improve their environmental impact so all EU citizens can benefit.

The promotion policy doesn't aim to change lifestyles or behaviour, but promote awareness and knowledge of what lies behind a piece of cheese, a slice of salami, a glass of wine. No product can be considered sustainable or not sustainable. Only the production method can decide that.

A review of this policy must be centred on Option 2, the improvement and boosting of the competitiveness of agri-food products. The decades-long increase in agri-food exports has tailed off recently due to Brexit and the pandemic. Any kind of discrimination of certain sectors would put them in a disadvantaged position in the EU and third markets, and make it difficult to innovate.

Changes to lifestyles and consumption patterns need to be based on better education. I have serious doubts the promotion policy could be the most appropriate instrument. The promotion policy is a communication policy, aimed to improve the resilience of the agri-food sector.

We must strengthen the EU and be a leader on the world market. Only a focus on sustainability will help us achieve this, and influence what happens on the global stage, which works to our interests, values and strategic advantage.

**The moderator asked what measures MEPs could put in place to ensure no discrimination takes place.**

Dorfmann: I think we have to look at sustainability as a whole, and not speak of single products. We can't say something is plant-based and is therefore good. One of the most important tools are Geographic Indications, which tell consumers how a meat or vegetable product is produced. Maybe in those we need to look at adding sustainability.

**The moderator asked how to shift the agri-food sector to more sustainable production.**

De Castro said there's no doubt we would like to be more sustainable, the point is to have a fair way of achieving that for all. We can't put trade policy at risk, we must encourage competitiveness to conquer new markets. Through the common agricultural policy we encourage farmers to farm more sustainably, let's not mix up two policies.

**The moderator asked which of the three policy options Dorfmann supported.**

If we're going to select promotion programmes, and we need to, sustainability of production can become an important tool, but that does not mean to exclude certain products. A piece of cheese produced from permanent pasture emits less CO<sub>2</sub> than a plant-based substitute produced from soya from Brazil. We need to be more scientific and a bit less ideological.

**The moderator asked why the meat sector was under suspicion when other sectors such as transport are more polluting.**

De Castro: Some sectors are more sustainable than others, I acknowledge that. The question today is if the review of the promotion policy can help us to push one sector or another.

We are talking about an important policy, which could become the third pillar of agri-food policy. The world needs more food from Europe, more high-quality products. We need to boost competitiveness, and become stronger.

We can push for other things, like higher animal welfare standards, but we also have to keep things separate. Healthcare needs to be done in awareness campaigns.

Dorfmann added: It's clear we need a shift in consumption, in nutritional behaviour in the EU. If there is a demand from consumers to have higher quality food, and if they are able and willing to pay more, we should support this with our promotion policy. Our farmers are not interested in producing cheap, low quality products.

Our consumption of meat in the EU is too high, there no doubt about this, we can substitute part of the animal protein today with plant-based protein, but this does not mean we shouldn't have high quality meat in the EU.

At the end of the day, we need to have a balance between economic and environmental sustainability. More and more this economic sustainability depends on environmental sustainability, so the two things are strongly connected. Without a competitive and economically sustainable EU agri-food sector at home, our products cannot become the standard-bearer of the EU food sustainability system globally.

**The moderator asked: is the promotion policy a business-oriented policy, or does it aim to drive sustainability?**

De Castro: I agree they are different policies. Here we are talking about promotion policy: how do we make our producers stronger and more competitive on global market? Obviously the EU Green Deal and Farm to Fork Strategy push production systems to be more sustainable, but to achieve this we must work with our producers, not against them. We wouldn't want these policies to translate into an increase in imports.

**The moderator asked what citizens care about when it comes to promoting agri-foods.**

Dorfmann: I am very much in favour of boosting European labels such as Geographical Indication, and Organic. Really this impacts on consumers, citizens, and therefore reflect what we are going to promote and how.

Consumers need to understand sustainability, high quality, has a cost, and this cost needs to be paid in part via taxes and in part by the consumer. Consumers have extremely important role to play in the path to sustainability. They make a decision in every trip to the supermarket.

**The moderator asked: how do you aim to ensure policy coherences between the promotion policy, Farm to Fork Strategy, and Europe's Beating Cancer Plan to meet sustainability and health targets?**

De Castro said: I think they are complementary, each of them has to do the job for which they were created. Ultimately the aim has to be to strengthen our business, social and economic sustainability, I don't see any clash between the demands of those policies.

We have to produce healthy products at an affordable price. We have to raise quality standards not just for products made in the EU, but those coming into Europe.

**The moderator asked how we define sustainability.**

Dorfmann: This is very good question. Sustainability is a horizontal approach, which touches a lot of different fields. It's about the use of chemicals, pesticides, fertilisers, it's a question of how to protect soil, animal welfare, of social protection, it's much broader than simply saying it's sustainable if it doesn't use pesticides.

Sustainable production needs to happen everywhere. Organic farming can give an important contribution, we want to achieve 25% organic farming in the EU, but we need to look at the other 75%. This I think is where Member States are doing a good job, the new CAP Strategic Plans can be a real opportunity, Member States can decide the suitability of combining organic with best management.

The Geographic Indication label could evolve beyond indicating that a product is coming from a specific region, and also contain an element of sustainability.

### **The moderator asked: how we ensure there is no sustainability leak?**

De Castro: the new common agricultural policy negotiated over the past three years has been given clear direction to encourage more sustainable agriculture, more animal welfare, and better labelling, to better inform consumers about these standards that are so high in the EU.

We have to avoid Geographic Indication competing with Organic labels. We want to continue pushing organic, but let's be careful. We have a deficit of organic, we import from rest of the world. We need to strike the right balance, and ensure companies remain competitive.

Other countries will be making the same choices as the EU, so we must be aware of that. Brexit and COVID hit us hard, we need to strike back with a strong promotion policy. If we want to reduce chemical use in production, we can only do that by focussing on innovation.

## 10.00 – 11.00 SESSION 3: ENHANCING COMPETITIVENESS OF THE EU AGRI-FOOD SECTOR IN THE INTERNAL MARKET THROUGH THE PROMOTION POLICY

Keynote speaker Prof. **Alessandro Banterle**, Department of Environmental Science and Policy, University of Milan, introduced the session on Enhancing EU agricultural sector's competitiveness by raising awareness of EU quality schemes and of the specific features of EU agri-food products in the internal market.

The EU Green Deal sets a roadmap for increasing sustainability. The Farm to Fork Strategy has 27 concrete actions to transform the system by 2030. The idea is to sell products that meet these demands and increase market share of companies and sectors, internally and externally.

Domestic products are exposed to foreign competition, we need to boost the preference of consumers for national products. The most significant imports are seafood and meat, and for vegetables, oilseeds and fruit and nuts.

EU food quality schemes represent a tool to increase EU competitiveness and to enhance the preference of consumers for national production. There are 4 schemes – Protected Geographical Indication, Protected Designation of Origin, Traditional Speciality Guaranteed, and Organic.

The promotion policy will allocate EUR 182.9 million to promote EU agri-food products inside and outside the EU. There are three options, all with pros and cons. Option 1 allows all products to benefit from promotion policy, but is not specifically focussed on the transition to sustainability.

Option 2 focuses on policy scope, where the policy is aligned with the Farm to Fork Strategy and can be extended to new quality. However, some food categories may be penalised because they have not started sustainable production processes yet.

Option 3 centres on eligibility. The advantage is the budget is allocated to supply chains aligned with the Farm to Fork Strategy, the strongest focus of resources. But some supply chains, such as meat products, will be significantly penalised. The question now is which is the best option.

**The moderator announced the results of an audience poll on participation at the Conference: 29% hail from trade and business organisations, and citizens account for 5%, with civic groups and public authorities in between.**

Mr **Claude Vermot-Desroches**, President, EUOrigIn, highlighted the role of consumer labels. We campaign for promotion of Geographical Indications. These products are inextricably linked with the economies of those territories. Without the labels, these regions wouldn't be as vibrant as they are today. This is a certified procedure, carried out by an external organisation. Biodiversity is linked with the product, without these labels, we would have lost a lot of biodiversity in our countries. There is a certain limitation on pesticide use, in certain cases non-GMOs must be used as well.

I really want to highlight how important the promotion policy has been to support GI label, and how this has helped local economies. In the social dimension, many products are family-produced, using local knowledge passed down through generations. These labels have a whole production method behind them that links to social and environmental impact.

Geographical Indications should be more promoted than they currently are. EU consumers know only a few of the GIs that exist, even though they are all compatible with the Farm to Fork Strategy. People want to reinvent wheel, but we have these GI labels, we should focus more on them. So rather than excluding certain products, we need to continue and build on what we've done.

**The moderator announces the results of an audience poll: they feel that cheap foreign imports pose the greatest threat to the EU agri-food market.**

Ms **Ondina Afonso**, Head of Quality & Research Department, Chair of Producer's Club, SONAE MC, spoke in support of Option 2.

It is a potential disadvantage to some producers, here there is a challenge for the Commission. The future promotion policy should be comprehensive, recognising and supporting farmer's efforts to be more sustainable.

We have a support structure that brings together farmers and retailers, supports the sustainability of producers, boosts innovation and competitiveness, creates added value products with high quality standards, and offers the best of Portugal to our clients.



We are developing training sessions to raise the topic of sustainability and how to make that transition. In line with the Farm to Fork Strategy, we have 11 principles should be cemented by end of 2023, including biodiversity, soils, reformulation of products, carbon sequestration.

We are paving a way with all our producers in a comprehensive way, each of them has different needs and practices.

Ms **Birthe Steenberg**, Secretary General, AVEC, listed four keywords: sustainability, consumption, imports, and competitiveness.

The EU livestock sector is the most sustainable in the world already. One kilo of animal protein produced in the EU emits far less emissions than other places in world. Farmers have done a good job to minimise impact on the climate.

There is a lot of debate on how to reduce meat and dairy consumption. In appropriate portions, meat and dairy are part of a healthy diet. We are going to eat meat, whether imported or not, and we import a lot. With trade negotiations, agri-food products are very often used as trade-offs. We sell cars, and get meat. Should we import more meat and produce less? That's the question.

EU meat producers are not competitive on price, but we are on quality. We have the highest standards of food safety, environmental protection, animal welfare. So should the meat EU consumers buy come from other countries with lower standards? I vote to promote EU products to EU consumers.

No product should be excluded, not wine, not meat, If consumers choose these, they should be from the EU where impact is the lowest.

Ms **Marian Blom**, Board Vice President, IFOAM, had five remarks.

First, in the long run the only competitive system is a sustainable system. Second, it's necessary for any policy to align with those in the EU, which shows my preference for Option 2. The promotion policy should be aligned with the EU Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy.

We need to focus all this energy on transition of the EU food system. I think it's a good thing organic is given a special position. Prof. Lang expressed clearly that the promotion policy should not focus on products, but farming systems and healthy lives. Organic is such a farming system.

Finally, a suggestion for improvement: there are some things to be improved in the promotion scheme. The co-financing rate is quite low, preparation time is low, companies do not get much in return, and do not get to promote their own brand, instead you are asking them to work for benefit of whole sector. You have to plan everything years in advance. That is an area for improvement.

I would say Option 2 is a good suggestion, could be mixture of adding criteria, so Option 3 is not a no-go, I would support mix of both.

**The moderator asked Prof. Banterle if the promotion policy should be inclusive.**

Banterle responded: In 2021 we saw half the budget had to go to organic farming, to certain extent Option 1 is already in line with what is laid down in the Farm to Fork Strategy. If the promotion

policy is inclusive, open to all producers, this can boost their competitiveness. Otherwise the risk is you offer an advantage to certain products on others, which has knock on effect on imports.

**The moderator asked: can we encourage more GI labels?**

Vermot-Desroches replied: GI labels are not a solution to production problems. The whole territory has to be involved in a GI. It is not a business opportunity, but does promote the spirit of sustainability.

**The moderator asked Steenberg if she felt the EU should promote chicken over beef, as its environmental impact is lower.**

Steenberg: No I don't. My members would agree, no sectors should be left out. EU consumers still want to enjoy beef once in a while. We know the EU's beef is better than imported beef, so I don't think we should go that way. We should reduce consumption of meat a little bit. But people in other places who want to eat more should have option to eat good quality beef from the EU.

**The moderator asked what consumers expect from the Producer's Club.**

Afonso: For consumers it's so important to know the face of the producer, the person who has made that product. These products are kind of a photo album of thousands of people who make them.

**The moderator asked how the promotion policy can boost competitiveness in healthy way.**

Blom answered: The promotion policy is only part of the system, the whole network, the Farm to Fork Strategy, certified systems like organic and food quality schemes, helps to increase consumer awareness. It would be naive to say only the promotion policy can boost competitiveness, all these things do.

I wonder if the Commission should focus the budget even more, EUR 180 million, divided by 27 Member States over three years, is not much. We would like a bigger budget to help support sustainable farming systems.

11.00 – 11.05 BREAK

**The Master of Ceremonies welcomed the audience back and the moderator introduced the next session.**

11.05 – 12.05 SESSION 4: STRENGTHENING EXPORTS AND THE INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION OF EU AGRI-FOOD PRODUCTS THROUGH THE PROMOTION POLICY. This session looked into the question of how the promotion policy can strengthen the international dimension of the EU agri-food sector in the global markets (support EU agri-food exports and as a global standard-setting bearer) in the context of the EU trade policy review.

Prof. **Alan Matthews**, Professor Emeritus of European Agricultural Policy in the Department of Economics, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy at Trinity College Dublin, explored how the promotion policy can strengthen the international dimension of the EU agri-food sector in the global markets in the context of the EU trade policy review.

A stronger emphasis on increasing exports, market share, and consumption of EU products abroad will focus on countries with high growth potential. In sectors less dependent on exports, for example fruit and vegetables, we would like to reverse this trend.

There is a justification for using taxpayer money to promote products where there is a market failure. The aforementioned evaluation has concluded that the promotion policy has made a positive contribution to increasing exports and sales in export markets, with a high rate of return in US markets.

The 2021 work programme makes it clear we should align with Farm to Fork Strategy. The issue is if promoted products raise unsustainable consumption in the rest of world – meat and cheese, for example. It may be that we increase the EU market share, but the emphasis is likely to increase overall consumption. International trade can lead to change in dietary preferences. This should factor into the eligibility criteria.

Existence of Farm to Fork Strategy carried implication a subset of products should be supported. It's desirable to have more verifiable and objective criteria. Sustainability has many dimensions and trade-offs, it's not as simple to say one thing is sustainable or not. The three options raised to align the promotion policy with the EU Green Deal and Farm to Fork Strategy contain value judgements and are inherently political. A combination of Options 2 and 3 is preferable to me.

**The moderator revealed the results of an audience poll: 60% of respondents have benefited from a co-financed campaign.**

Mr **Frans van Dongen**, Director International Affairs of the Dutch Meat Organisation (COV), told the audience that supporting the Farm to Fork Strategy ambitions will make the EU a frontrunner in sustainability, as we are in quality and food safety.

We have to support our farmers in the transition they have to make, to valorise their products. If not, they don't have the revenue for investing in the sustainable transition. There are different ways of achieving this, the important one is to help export products. We need exports, we cannot sell all cuts on the domestic market.

There is no dilemma between a focus on competitiveness or sustainability. There is a global transition, the Commission stating they want to include sustainability in trade agreements. When we export, we create a market for sustainable products, we set standards and lead the way.

The promotion policy should focus on sustainability, not only products that are fully sustainable, but also those in the process of reaching sustainability.

**The moderator announced the results of an audience poll on the best ways to support agri-food exports: 65% of respondents cite EU co-financed promotion, and 64% say trade agreements and reducing barriers.**

Mr **Miguel Torres**, President and Managing Director, Bodegas Torres, spoke in support of aligning the promotion policy with the Farm to Fork Strategy.

The promotion of agri-food products is very important, and the consequences have been very positive. If we want viticulture to survive in Spain, we going to need millions of euros in investment. With the effects of climate change, the challenges are serious and we need to adapt.

Some brands have already reduced a large amount of their emissions. There should be a special seal to recognise this. We have that at an international level, with the International Wineries for Climate Action, which sets clear targets for greenhouse gas reduction.

Alcohol should be a special thing – enjoyed in moderation and with food. I am for Option 2, I agree with the Farm to Fork Strategy, and promotion measures that makes changes to consumption.

Ms **Micol Bertoni**, head of the trade section of the Italian Cooperatives, said that promotional campaigns were needed to take advantage foreign markets.

We have to say again that farmers have made a lot of work already to reach the highest standards in the world. It's important for us to communicate our added value of quality and safety. Without campaigns we couldn't do this so brilliantly.

We have to compete in global markets, this competition is not always fair, standards are not equal for all of us, we also have trade barriers which limit our exports, and we have free trade agreements that sometimes do not help our activities.

Our main competitors are investing in promotion. The US invested USD 300 million per year to promote their products. Without these campaigns we cannot promote in new, emerging markets with lots of growth. At the same time, if we can't campaign in markets where we are present, we will lose market share.

We prefer Option 1, we have demonstrated promotion policy works, and has done good job, so it should continue.

**The moderator picked up on the topic of unfair global competition. We want to encourage sustainability in other parts of the world, don't we?**

Matthews: Yes, that is a point of coherence between the promotion policy and the Farm to Fork Strategy. We can try to demonstrate that you can produce high quality food in a sustainable manner. By promoting that message to external markets, you can encourage producers and consumers to raise their standards.

**The moderator asked van Dongen how Dutch farmers compete with producers in other countries.**

Van Dongen: In the campaigns we have been running, we have focussed on safety, quality, traceability. We raised all the best practices of Europe, but also focussed on our advanced position in terms of animal welfare, reduced use of antibiotics, and more and more we implement other sustainable elements in our discussions.

What we've achieved is very appreciated by foreign clients, we pay attention to new developments, sustainability will be the EU's unique selling proposition in the future.

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**The moderator asked Torres what he needs from a policy perspective to sell outside the EU.**

Torres: In the case of wine, policy should continue to help brands, I am fascinated by this situation today, that's why all the efforts this time now in promotion should consider what we're doing in making this world a bit more sustainable.

**The moderator asked how effective co-financed campaigns are.**

Bertoni replied: it's vital to keep these programmes, otherwise no campaigns could be made. This is absolutely fundamental. With these, producers can try to organise themselves and to implement themselves in countries they wouldn't have targeted before.

Of course this helps the global transition, when you promote a lifestyle, a way of consuming, you're promoting Europe in general. The impact of these programmes is very interesting, especially in the long-term.

It takes time to educate people, without this kind of help, we would not be able to do this today, and this is even more true after COVID-19, where producers do not have the resources they had before to invest in communication.

**The moderator asked van Dongen what his definition of sustainable farming is. Can it include meat production?**

Van Dongen: we know our position and where we come from, and our responsibility to do something about it. I accept that. On climate, we have individual companies in our sector working with farming society to get better insights, where to find solutions. We have to hope, even if we don't succeed.

I cannot provide definition of sustainability. We are working on marketing concepts with a focus on different aspects of sustainability, there is no generic label. Hopefully we get it in the future, but we see different elements, and these can be combined in production that is as sustainable as possible – animal welfare, transport of animals, antibiotic use, labour issues, a sustainable position for the farmer.

**The moderator carried this point forward: what should sustainability be?**

Matthews answered: There are very different values around what we mean by sustainability and there are trade-offs, we should be honest about that. They don't all coincide. That's where you need a political decision on where we put the emphasis, that will be contentious and will change over time.

**The moderator asked how transport emissions can be dealt with.**

Torres: Transport is responsible for 5% of emissions in the wine sector. It is something we consider ways if reducing that, like bottling wine at the destination. We are sending wine to Quebec to be bottled there, and discussing this with Scandinavia. Also in Europe we have standard bottles for burgundy, for example, these essentially could be optimised, we could reduce emissions in the bottle.

**The moderator asked if foreign consumers want sustainable products?**

Bertoni responded: Some consumers are ready to pay added value for our products, some may not be. Some may be more interested in other aspects. We have to promote the products as they are today, as we have the highest standards, and export our products and our vision. The future is positive if we invest in this and are as inclusive as possible.

## 12.05 – 12.30 CONFERENCE CLOSING

Mr **Tassos Haniotis**, Acting Deputy Director General, DG Agriculture and Rural Development, provided a summary of the event.

Over the last two days we have benefited from passionate and rich discussions. Your contributions will help us immensely in the preparation of the future policy proposals. Perhaps the most undisputed conclusion of the open public consultation is that the EU agri-food promotion policy is a valuable and powerful tool, and that it has potential to contribute to EU policy objectives in many different areas. But it was also evident from the responses to the consultation that the mission of this policy must be more clearly defined. It cannot be everything to all people.

In Session 1, on more sustainable EU food systems, it was evident from the discussions that we are facing a climate emergency, and that the way our food systems are organised has a significant impact in how effective our response will be to this emergency. We must reflect further on the role that promotion policy can best play in valuing and incentivising this transition to more environmental sustainability, whilst recognising the enormous efforts already carried out by our farmers and producers.

In Session 2, we discussed how the EU agri-food promotion policy can support the shift to more plant-based, healthy dietary practices. Professor Lang reminded us that it is not about pitting meats against plants, and called for a multi-criteria, multi-sector and multi-level approach. All panel members concurred that the promotion policy is not a public health instrument. Given the budgetary constraints, it cannot really affect consumption patterns.

Earlier today we heard from Members of the European Parliament Paolo De Castro and Herbert Dorfmann how the review of the promotion policy fits in a broader policy context. Without a

competitive and economically sustainable EU agri-food sector at home, our products cannot become the standard-bearer of the EU food sustainability system globally.

Both MEPs recalled that the new CAP will strengthen the farming sectors' transition towards more sustainability through eco-schemes, investments and innovation and that increased sustainability is needed across all agricultural sectors. Both favoured the promotion of sustainability without excluding any sector.

Session 3, on competitiveness in the internal market, discussed how the promotion policy is directly related to the ability to support a strong connection between EU agri-food products and consumers, showcasing how EU products meet the expectations of EU consumers. We witness a growing demand for products that are environmentally, socially and economically sustainable. In order to remain competitive at home, EU agri-food products must respond to a wide and evolving set of consumer expectations. We must ensure that the future promotion policy remains flexible and sufficiently agile to adapt as consumer expectations evolve.

In Session 4, panellists discussed how the promotion policy can strengthen the EU agri-food sector in global markets. EU farmers and EU agri-food value chains are facing a challenging and volatile global economic environment, and are significantly affected by COVID-19 restrictions. The recovery of the sector will be achieved in part also by our ability to strengthen our agri-food exports and upholding our competitive position in global markets.

The promotion policy has been instrumental in supporting the export of EU agri-food products. Do we orientate the policy focus into activities in the EU internal market, implicitly accepting an erosion of the international competitiveness of EU agri-food products? Or do we recognise a dual dimension of the promotion policy, distinguishing the objectives of the policy in the internal market from those pursued in the export markets?

Competitiveness and sustainability are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, only if the agri-food sector becomes more sustainable will we continue to maintain the EU's competitiveness.

Any proposals for a new policy will only come in 2022. The impact assessment will examine the trade-offs, the balance between winners and losers, and the effects of each of the policy options being examined. This conference has been vital to ensuring that different views are put on the table and that we take into account the direct and indirect effects of each option. I remain confident that working together, through an objective and transparent process we can make better policy.