

## **Minutes of the Civil Dialogue Group on Animal Products - Sheepmeat and goatmeat and beekeeping on 8.10.2014**

The first meeting of the Civil Dialogue Group on Animal Products - Sheepmeat and goatmeat and beekeeping took place on 8.10.2014.

### **AGENDA:**

#### **1. General points**

##### **a. Approval of the agenda and of the minutes of previous meetings of advisory groups on Sheep and goat meat of May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2014 and on Beekeeping on February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2014**

The agenda was approved with a request of clarification on the timetable.

The meeting was divided in three parts: general points, sheepmeat and goatmeat part and the beekeeping part.

##### **b. Elections**

Mr Henry Burns (Copa-Cogeca) has been elected as chairman of the Civil Dialogue Group on Animal Products for a one-year term. Mr Paul Brand (CELCAA) and Mr Paul Lopez (FOODDRINKEUROPE) have been elected as Vice-chairmen.

##### **c. Functioning of the Civil Dialogue Group on Animal Products**

The Commission representative introduced the new system and reminded that on the basis of the applications received, eligible organizations have been selected. The purpose was to include economic as well as non-economic actors in the process to respond to the requests from the ombudsman.

The main changes introduced by the new system: the Chairman position would be for one year (possibility of renewal for another year) while the vice-chairmen positions are for undetermined period. The Chairman can delegate the chairing of specific meetings to the vice-chairmen in case he is not available. No swapping is allowed.

Rules of procedure and terms of reference have to be adopted. The group is invited to send drafting suggestions to the Commission. Strategic agenda is for 7 years.

The attendance list will be published on the public website.

Producers representatives (sheepmeat and beekeeping) asked for a full day meeting for each subgroup given the distinct expertise required by each of these two sectors. They have asked for an appropriate level of expertise from the Commission side. Knowing the date of the meeting well in advance would be of help. However, the Commission has logistical and interpretation constraints which need to be taken into account.

The Commission representative underlined that it is up to the chairman to decide how many meetings the group can have (half day or full day). However, it would be more appropriate to have two meetings per year, gathering the two sectors together.

The Chairman concluded that a full day meeting for each of the two sectors is the proposal of the group and that there is a need for an appropriate level of expertise from the Commission side.

##### **d. Confirmation of the FWG (beef, pork, goat/sheep, poultry and eggs)**

The Commission explained that the appointment of the participants in the Forecast Groups will be done by the Chairman, in agreement with the Commission.

The Chairman underlined the importance of participating in these meetings.

##### **e. Strategic Agenda**

The Chairman called for contributions from all members of the group. On the basis of the input received and on the consultation of the vice-chairmen, the strategic agenda will be drafted. The deadline was set for end October.

## **2. Points for sheep meat and goat sector**

### **a. Market situation and forecasts of sheep and goat meat**

The Commission gave a presentation on the market [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/civil-dialogue-groups/animal-products\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/civil-dialogue-groups/animal-products_en.htm).

Prices are firm in particular for heavy lambs. EU is less competitive due to high prices, however US is the least competitive of all. New Zealand is still a major supplier but imports have decreased (shortage of meat+imports to China). An increase from Australia has been noticed instead. Value of imports is higher, the quantity is lower. In terms of exports, these increased by 20%, live animal exports are significant due to exports to Libya, Hong Kong, Jordan.

A decline in production and prices stability are expected on short term.

Producers underlined the need to have the relevant level of expertise on the market. Unofficial slaughtering needs to be addressed at a more local, regional level. Monitoring production costs is necessary. Light lamb needs promotion support. Figures on developments in consumption were requested. Unofficial slaughter and the high level in Spain might be a result of the taxation system. The drop in production in Spain is forecasted on the basis of profitability of the holdings, the new CAP will have an impact.

The animal welfare and the environmental organizations raised the point on the high number of unofficial slaughter and its impact on animal welfare and human health and hygiene. EU exports a high number of live animals and should switch to exporting meat and carcasses. There are concerns when it comes to the transport conditions.

The Commission replied that:

- MS have responsibilities when it comes to sheep slaughtering. Took note of the comments about difficulties small producers have, the legislation is there, it is clear;
- Took note on the need for data on production costs;
- EU exports live animals because there is a market, there is a demand which fits the needs of the countries to which we export. The EU has a legislation on animal transport, the MS have to ensure that it is respected;
- The selection procedure for the promotion programmes is ongoing;

### **c. Removal of the spinal cord - the situation and possible solutions**

The Commission introduced the topic. The SRM falls under Regulation (EC) No 999/2001<sup>1</sup>. There is no intention to revise the list. The best scientific evidence is EFSA's opinion from 2010 which is still valid.

#### Discussion:

Producers underlined the difficult situation and the loss of value with the removal of the spinal cord and the distortion of competition. There are high costs, bureaucracy can be avoided. Exporting partners question EU sheep meat because of the obligation to remove the SRM when the disease is no longer present.

The Commission underlined that if sufficient countries ask for a revision, EFSA will be asked to come up with an opinion. The systems for the aging of sheep for the removal of SRM are a MS competence, EU fixes the age limit at 12 months. In France, spinal cord removal is possible without carcass splitting. Official supervision during the process should take place to ensure the spinal cord removal. It took note of the concerns raised. Commission is planning to ask EFSA to look again at small ruminant TSE risks using a new model. This will take some time to carry out.

The Chairman concluded that this process has an impact on the industry and that costs are high.

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<sup>1</sup> Regulation (EC) No 999/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 May 2001 laying down rules for the prevention, control and eradication of certain transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (OJ L 147, 31.5.2001, p. 1)

## **d. AOB**

### **CAP**

The Commission gave an introduction into the subject by mentioning the new coupled support provisions. The sheep and goat sectors are eligible. The purpose of the coupled support is to maintain current level of production, not to increase it. It is available for sectors/regions/types of farming in certain difficulties, sectors important from an economic, social, environmental point of view. Further criteria are specified in the delegated act 639/2013. By 1<sup>st</sup> of August, MS have to inform the Commission how much of the national envelope (5, 8 or 10%) will be allocated to coupled support.

A question from the producers on the countries which have requested coupled support for sheep was asked. Would it be possible to ask for it in 2016?

The Commission replied that it is premature to indicate a list of countries having opted for coupled support for sheep. There is a possibility to have a review of the measure with effect from 2017, but it has to be notified by 1st August 2016.

### **Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD)**

The Commission gave a presentation on the outbreak of FMD in North Africa (amongst others, Tunisia and Algeria are affected). Morocco is free of FMD but started vaccination at the border with Algeria ([http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/civil-dialogue-groups/animal-products\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/civil-dialogue-groups/animal-products_en.htm)).

Producers asked about controls on wool which comes from that region.

Wool has to arrive already treated, some relaxation of the rules can be performed but wool should not come in contact with farms. Controls have to be reinforced.

### **Welfare of sheep**

The Commission gave a presentation on the state of play of the Scientific opinion requested to EFSA on the welfare of sheep for milk, meat and wool production ([http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/civil-dialogue-groups/animal-products\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/civil-dialogue-groups/animal-products_en.htm)). The scientific opinion was meant to identify the main welfare problems and risk factors in the different farming systems for sheep. A public consultation on the draft opinion was to be conducted end October-beginning of November. Furthermore the Commission informed about the multi-stakeholders meeting, including on animal welfare, to be organised by IWTO on 1<sup>st</sup> December.

#### Discussion:

Questions on the scope of the opinion, if it covers transport and slaughtering without stunning as well, if it takes into account the tagging problems were asked.

The environmentalists raised the issue of comparison between the systems, especially with intensive farming.

The Commission replied that there is an EFSA opinion from 2011 on animal transport. A scientific opinion was requested to EFSA for monitoring procedures which covers slaughtering without stunning. Tagging is one of the risk potential factors for welfare of sheep that could have been considered by the experts group of EFSA; the list of main risk factors, as identified by the EFSA Panel, would be available in the final opinion to be adopted in December 2014. On the question concerning the different farming systems, the Commission referred to the fact that shepherding was used as criteria to define the model for describing the different farming systems. The Commission also highlighted that the purpose of the mandate is not to compare among the systems but simply to identify the main potential problems for each individual system. As policies are science-based, the outcome of final opinion is important.

### **Large carnivores**

The Commission gave a presentation on the state of play on the EU platform on large

carnivores [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/civil-dialogue-groups/animal-products\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/civil-dialogue-groups/animal-products_en.htm). On 10<sup>th</sup> June 2014, 8 signing organisations decided to take part in the platform on large carnivores.

### **3. Points on beekeeping**

#### **a. Honey market situation**

- **State of the art concerning the EU honey's trade, import/export and production**
- **Controls at BIP level**
- **Honey exports to third countries - harmonization of export requirements**

The Commission gave a presentation [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/civil-dialogue-groups/animal-products\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/civil-dialogue-groups/animal-products_en.htm). Only 2012 figures for production in the world are available. China considerably increased the production while the other main producing regions have had volatile production. Imports are increasing.

#### Discussion:

Producers underlined the low level of Chinese price of honey coming onto the EU market, below production costs. The impact is even more acute taking into account that this year EU production has been catastrophic due to climatic conditions. An intriguing issue is that the main importer in the EU, Germany, does not import Chinese honey. Controls need to be sped up.

#### **b. Beekeeping national programs 2014-2016.**

The Commission gave a presentation [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/civil-dialogue-groups/animal-products\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/civil-dialogue-groups/animal-products_en.htm).

#### **c. Directive 2014/63/EU amending Directive 2001/110/EC on honey**

The Commission gave a presentation [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/civil-dialogue-groups/animal-products\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/civil-dialogue-groups/animal-products_en.htm). Pollen is considered a natural constituent of honey. The amended directive is applicable starting from 24 June 2015.

A greater involvement of stakeholders when it comes to delegated act has been requested by retailers.

The Commission replied that the Council and the EP are the legislators which decide what powers the Commission has. The animal products committee will be informed about the delegated act.

#### **d. Study Epilobee: mortality of domestic honeybees**

The Commission introduced the subject. EU has decided to co-finance a pilot study on honeybee colony mortality because of the lack of reliable data. Full data sets are available for first winter, 17 MS participated on voluntary basis, 3000 apiaries, 30.000 colonies. Mortality level is better than expected. Spain, Italy, Hungary stay below 10% losses. UK, Belgium, Finland, Estonia, Sweden, Denmark have more than 20% however, total population is small in these countries. Second winter was mild. Most countries will be below. For the first year, the budget was 3.3 million, for the second year, 1.85 million, with 70% co-financing.

The Commission was considering if there should be a continuation of the programme and if yes, how should it be improved? The project did not take into account the pesticides. On the occurrence of small hive beetle (SHB) in Calabria (Italy), PAFF (the regulatory committee) discussed this point. Until now, nobody managed to eradicate it in the world. Bees movements are forbidden from infected areas.

#### Discussion:

Producers underlined the importance of having the further results of the study earlier and not wait for 3-5 years. The sector looks forward to seeing the next results in January. The continuation of the programme would be welcomed, including environmental aspects and pesticides (when would it be foreseen?) would be of help, impact of the veterinary treatments should be covered. Taking into account that 80% of beekeepers practice

transhumance in Calabria region and there is a lot of breeding material exported to all parts of the EU, have any measures been set for the transportation of genetic material ? Austria had a hard winter, there is no surprise that there have been such high losses.

The industry supported the continuation of the study and include other aspects in it.

Beelife: pesticides should be monitored since there are products used in farming which are toxic for bees. Support the continuation of the programme.

The Commission reminded that the intention is to improve the programme not necessarily to stop it and took note of the views expressed. The Commission is reflecting on it since it is also a matter of budget. Regarding the small hive beetle, beekeepers should do their utmost to slow it down, especially be being aware of it, notify immediately to authorities any suspicion and by fully complying with restrictions. Sending equipment is banned. Supply alternatives from and to the Calabrian region need to be found, in case SHB is not eradicated by early 2015.

#### **e. Adulteration of honey**

The Commission gave a presentation [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/civil-dialogue-groups/animal-products\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/civil-dialogue-groups/animal-products_en.htm) and indicated that discussion was ongoing with MS on the opportunity of specific actions for honey, especially as far as the presence of sugar used for replacing honey is concerned,.

##### Discussion:

Producers welcomed this move. They insisted on the limitations of testing methods and stressed the importance of sampling strategies. Fraud evolves rapidly and China publicly claims that it will supply what operators ask for. It is important to target those operators that are moving large quantities below national honey prices.

The Commission acknowledged that the major difficulty is to identify honey adulterated with certain exogenous sugars due to the complexity in the analytical field plus the cost involved.

#### **f. State of play concerning the EU - Ukraine Free Trade Agreement**

##### **- Customs tariff for honey imports from Ukraine**

The Commission gave a presentation [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/civil-dialogue-groups/animal-products\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/civil-dialogue-groups/animal-products_en.htm). Measures have been adopted on 23 avril 2014. Up to 13 August, 5000 t at 0 duty have been fully utilised.

##### Discussion:

The industry informed that the Ukrainians can produce 70.000 t honey of good quality. 0 duty is helpful for Ukraine. It would be welcome if the measure could be extended. They have increased their exports in July and August because of the new harvest available. Asked the Commission about the measures taken when it comes to the change in the veterinary certificates to third countries.

Producers raised the concern over Ukraine and asked the Commission to remain vigilant (Ukraine may buy from China honey which is not honey but it is blended. Reminded that quality control has to be done and consumers need to know what they buy).

The Commission mentioned that the Ukrainian production has increased but it is not a spectacular increase. Information can be made available on this. The Commission will try to ensure that what is imported as honey is honey. Imports from China into Ukraine and imports from Ukraine into the EU will be monitored. The Commission is waiting for clarifications from the sector in relation to the issues raised by veterinary certificates.

#### **g. Common Agricultural Policy (CAP 2014-2020)**

##### **- Specific focus on measures under the second pillar**

The Commission gave a presentation on greening and one on rural development (including agri-environmental measures) [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/civil-dialogue-groups/animal-products\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/civil-dialogue-groups/animal-products_en.htm).

Beelife underlined the need to pay attention, within the evaluation of the programs, to the effects these programs have on bees in order to foster biodiversity.

The Commission mentioned that it always evaluates the implementation of the programs after the programming period is over. It is up to the MS to identify the need related to environment and they have the flexibility to choose what they want to support. MS have the possibility to apply buffer strips in the greening context.

#### **h. European Commission Policy regarding 'invasive alien species'**

The Commission gave a presentation [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/civil-dialogue-groups/animal-products\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/civil-dialogue-groups/animal-products_en.htm).

If Robinia were to be listed, it would be a matter of management by MS which should take care that invasive species do not extend to other areas. Until now, the Commission has not received a risk assessment on Robinia.

#### Discussion:

Producers mentioned that Robinia is in the EU since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with a reappearance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and in countries like Hungary, Romania, Austria, it plays a very important part in honey production.

The Commission should have a priority to include Vespa in the list of invasive species as it is invading more territories.

The Commission underlined that in case a species is already widely spread, it is not the intention to eradicate the species but to manage it in order to reduce damage and avoid further spread.

#### **j. Latest research projects on bees and pollinators**

The Commission gave a presentation [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/civil-dialogue-groups/animal-products\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/civil-dialogue-groups/animal-products_en.htm).

#### Discussion:

Producers underlined that there is a big problem with the lack of medicines to treat varroosis and that research does not really address this issue. Is there something which can be done in this respect? Is there any research on the environment bees live in? What about the medical use of honey and other beekeeping products?

Beelife mentioned that there is a need for an environmental risk evaluation, which puts the focus on the effects on bees. There is a lot of scientific gap in this respect.

The Commission underlined that EFSA has identified research gaps. Project proposals have to be made according to the call for applications; they need to be eligible and qualitative. Within Horizon 2020, there is no specific call on bees.

The Chairman concluded the meeting by acknowledging the difficulties to address all points which were relevant for both sectors. Therefore, he reiterated the proposal to get the two groups separated and reminded the participants to send their views on what they want to include on the strategic agenda. On 9.10.2014, the Poultry meat sub-group will take place and the chairman delegated the vice-chairman to chair this meeting.

#### **DISCLAIMER:**

**"The opinions expressed in this report represent the points of views of the meeting participants from agriculturally related NGOs at Community level. These opinions cannot, under any circumstances, be attributed to the European Commission. Neither the European Commission nor any person acting on behalf of the Commission is responsible for the use which might be made of the information here above."**