

STATEMENT

EU agri-food chain organisations call for continuation of EU-Japan free trade talks

(Brussels, 23 May 2014)

For Copa-Cogeca, FoodDrinkEurope and CELCAA, progress achieved in addressing non-tariff barriers during the first year of negotiations with Japan is overall conclusive. They therefore strongly encourage the EU to continue negotiations for a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with Japan.

Based on their respective analysis of the progress made after one year of negotiations, EU agri-food chain organisations representing European farmers, agri-cooperatives, food and drink industries and agri-food traders have jointly concluded that Japan has to date taken a number of key steps in gradually removing key non-tariff barriers in specific agri-food sectors. While they encourage Japan to make further progress on the regulatory front to secure the continuation of trade talks with the EU, they also call on negotiators to achieve a meaningful outcome with regards to tariff liberalisation.

Changing Japanese eating habits present a major opportunity for EU agri-food products. Improving access for EU agri-food products would not only help EU operators take advantage of this market potential, but also strengthen the EU's position vis-à-vis other major agri-food competitors.

Pekka Pesonen, Secretary General of Copa-Cogeca highlights “that European and Japanese farmers have long since held common views on the role of agriculture in society. We have seen encouraging steps to move towards international standards. But considering the current ban on pork and pig products from Poland, we urge the Japanese authorities to address the principle of regionalisation. Against the backdrop of the on-going negotiations, this would be understood as a promising step forward to tackle non-tariff barriers to trade.”

“The elimination of non-tariff barriers is important for achieving a level playing field for European businesses on the Japanese market” declares Mella Frewen, Director General of FoodDrinkEurope. “We had specific concerns about certain additives that were not recognised in Japan. Today, most seem to have been or are in the process of being accepted, this is good news indeed for our products.”

Speaking under the umbrella of CELCAA, Jean-Luc Meriaux, Secretary General of the European Livestock and Meat Trading Union (UECBV) notes “In 2013, Japan lifted the ban on imports of beef and beef products from two EU Member States, as a first step. The lifting of the 12 year ban was followed by the resumption of the EU beef export to Japan. This decision was science-based and in full compliance with international standards. It's a very positive development and encouraging signal for EU operators in the context of the negotiation of a free trade agreement which aims, amongst other goals, to remove the technical barriers to the trade.”

Background:

Given the importance that the elimination of non-tariff barriers has for achieving a level playing field for European businesses on the Japanese market, the negotiating directives adopted by the Council in November 2012 call for the elimination of EU duties and non-tariff barriers in Japan to go hand-in-hand. They also allow the EU side to suspend negotiations after one year if Japan does not live up to its commitments to remove non-tariff barriers. At its upcoming 23 May 2014 meeting the Trade Policy Council will be analysing for the first time the Commission's "one year review" report and will prepare the ground for a Council decision (Trade Ministers) to be taken for or against the continuation of negotiations with Japan.

For information:

The EU agri-food chain partners generate together a turnover of €2.5 trillion and provide employment to 31.7 million Europeans¹. The opportunities that a Free Trade Agreement with Japan could offer them and other potential beneficiaries of this agreement should be properly recognised in the general economic context.

Japan is the fourth biggest export market for EU agricultural and food products with a total export value 4.7 billion². If EU agri-food producers will not be able to respond to the changing Japanese eating habits because of the existing trade barriers, this market potential will be definitively lost to the benefit of other countries with high agri-food production potential, with whom Japan is willing to negotiate.

In 2012 and 2013 EU food chain organisations' made first joint statements in favour of an FTA with Japan. See:

http://www.fooddrinkeurope.eu/uploads/statements_documents/Joint_statement.pdf
http://www.fooddrinkeurope.eu/uploads/statements_documents/Joint_statement_EU-Japan_Summit_%28agri-food%29_%28FINAL%29.pdf

-ENDS-

For further information:

Copa-Cogeca
Amanda Cheesley
Press Officer
Tel. + 32 2 2872790

amanda.cheesley@copa-cogeca.eu

FoodDrinkEurope
Florence Ranson
Director of Communications
Tel. +32 2 2141111

f.ranson@fooddrinkeurope.eu

CELCAA
Pascale Rouhier
Secretary General
Tel. +32 2 5373711

p.rouhier@celcaa.eu

¹ Regular agricultural workforce of 25.7 million (Eurostat 2010), 4.2 million jobs in food and drink industry (Eurostat 2012) and 1.8 million jobs in wholesale of agricultural and food products (Eurostat 2010)

² Eurostat-COMEXT 2012