

CELCAA comment on the roadmap on Contingency plan for ensuring food supply and food security

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CELCAA is the European association of the trade in agri-food products, covering the trade in arable crops, agro-supply, grains and sugar, dairy and dairy products, meat and meat products, wine, fruit and vegetables, egg and egg products, general produces etc.

Trade and global supply chains have proven their resilience and ability to ensure the provision of diversified, high-quality and safe food and food and feed ingredients during the Covid-19 pandemic. CELCAA therefore welcomes the initiative mentioned in the Farm to Fork Strategy to develop an EU crisis response mechanism to prepare and respond to critical events that could threaten the EU food security in the future. In that context, CELCAA is pleased to contribute to the consultation on the roadmap on 'Contingency plan for ensuring food supply and food security'.

The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) provides this well-accepted definition of a state of food security: "*Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.*" The FAO lists five components of food security: food availability; access to food; utilization of food; stability; malnutrition. From a supply chain perspective, CELCAA will discuss the components 'food availability' and 'stability' that should be addressed in the Contingency plan.

Need of more harmonization at EU level

The Covid-19 pandemic has shown that the integrity of the EU single market can be put at risk due to unilateral actions from Member States. Agri-food supply & value chains transcend national borders and operate at minimal at EU level. More harmonization of contingency planning is needed at EU level. Member States' actions should be coordinated so as to avoid any fragmentation of the EU single market.

Tackling food supply and food security at EU level is therefore a good step forward. Considering the role of the European Union as a global actor, we also suggest that the Commission continues to work in parallel at a multilateral level on this issue.

Scope of the contingency plan

CELCAA strongly supports that the scope of the contingency plan should be on food security considered at large. Agro- and feed supply to farmers and industry should be included in the concept as key elements guaranteeing food security along the value chain.

CELCAA supports the contingency plan covering workforce and transport issues. On food safety, CELCAA stressed that the EU has a food safety regime in place that has proved its efficiency. The Regulation on Food and Feed Controls, through the TRACES system, provides for coordination between Member States and Commission in case of food safety issues. CELCAA would also integrate food safety into the scope of the plan, with a view to promoting the take-up of digital processes such as e-certificates and others as a tool to facilitate the movement of agri-food and agri-supply - thus contributing to food security.

CELCAA aisbl

10 rue de Tamines

1060 Brussels- BE

T/F : 02 537 37 11

p.rouhier@celcaa.eu – www.celcaa.eu

Transparency register : 546282614966-51

Recognition of trade as a key component of food security in the EU

The contingency forum should recognise that trade in agri-food products plays a crucial role in ensuring agro-food supply and stability. Imports provide agro-supply to farmers, supply of seasonal products in Europe and contribute to more diversity of choice and affordable prices for farmers, industry and consumers. In 2018, imports into the EU for agri-food & commodities include products used for animal feed (oilcakes and soybeans) representing 10.8% of total EU agri-food imports in 2018¹; and products that are not produced in the EU, such as coffee, nuts or tropical fruits. Trade obviously meets the demand for diversified food for consumers; and supply for farmers and industry.

As stressed by FAO, stability of supply is one of the components of food security. Trade helps the stability of the supply, as the essential role of the trade is to balance demand and offer. Therefore, CELCAA would like to emphasize the important role of agricultural trade. We believe that the Commission should reiterate that food security is the result of the combination of local, national-regional and international supply.

CELCAA would like to highlight that EU is the biggest exporting trading partner, representing 151.2 EUR billion in 2019 and demonstrating its crucial role in supporting the long term sustainability of the European agriculture. In parallel, the EU is second largest importing trading bloc worldwide, representing 119.3 EUR billion in 2019², crucial for the EU food security and agro-supply.

Food security versus self-sufficiency

The contingency plan should clearly define concepts, and avoid misperceptions that could lead to wrong policy decisions. Food security is not equivalent to self-sufficiency. No country in the world is self-sufficient. When it comes to improving food security, the main criteria to focus on should rather be: income and income distribution, availability of food, affordability and stability of access to food. A well-functioning agricultural trade is the necessary tool to guarantee the availability affordability and access of food, while supporting income generation to farmers exporting to the EU and to EU farmers exporting to international markets.

CELCAA strongly supports an open, ambitious and fair trade policy, as open trade creates opportunities to import food in times of shortage, and export in times of abundance.

Understanding of issues and information flows

The plan on contingency for food supply and food security should promote the common understanding of issues and support sharing critical information. The market observatories should be used as a useful tool to collect timely information on the markets and trends.

Non-binding agreements

As experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic, unilateral actions adopted by some Member States led to massive disruptions and impacted the functioning of the EU agri-food supply chain, critical for the EU food security. CELCAA, at the time, welcomed the swift reaction of the Commission, through the Communication '*Guidelines for border management measures to protect health and ensure the availability of goods and essential services*'³. CELCAA also welcomed the implementing Regulation of 30th March 2020, authorizing electronic copy of the

¹ European Commission, DG AGRI, Agri-Food Trade in 2019, https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/food-farming-fisheries/news/documents/agri-food-trade-2018_en.pdf

² Source : DG AGRI 'Monitoring EU agri-food trade: Developments in 2019' https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/food-farming-fisheries/trade/documents/monitoring-agri-food-trade_dec2019_en.pdf

³ Covid-19 Guidelines for border management measures to protect health and ensure the availability of goods and essential services 2020/C 86 I/01, 13.03.2020

original certificate and allowing remote official controls via distance communication⁴. The application of these guidelines by Member States helped prevent major agro-food shortages in the EU and also facilitated exports to many regions.

Based on this experience, CELCAA would recommend the following measures be part of the official guidelines and recommendations of the forum for coordination between Member States and Commission:

- Introduction of Green Lanes at internal & external borders prioritizing the movement of agri-food products for priority passing; proper implementation by Member States shall be monitored;
- Notification to the trans-European transport network in case internal border controls are introduced;
- Clear rules, protocols and safety equipment for workers operating transports to and from plants;
- Up to 15 minutes for health checks and screening of transport workers in internal land borders;
- Usual road restrictions should be temporarily suspended for the road freight transport;
- Transport workers irrespective of their nationality and place of residence should be allowed to cross internal borders;
- Electronic certificates should be used;
- SANTE Directorate General should maintain coordination with the EU authorities on official food and feed controls and vigilance on fraudulent practices Continued information flow with logistics platform & operators;
- Creation of ad hoc fund to perform R&D to support EFSA so that proper communication to consumers and EU citizens can be based on sciences and sound facts.

Forum

CELCAA welcomes the Commission announcement in the roadmap that along with representation of the Commission and Member States, stakeholders will be invited as observers to contribute to the discussion and shape the EU preparedness and response mechanism. The Forum should ensure that the new Contingency Plan is correctly implemented by all EU member states.

CELCAA looks forward to the future discussion and stands ready to contribute positively to the discussions.

ENDS

Contact

Pascale Rouhier
Secretary General

CELCAA aisbl

European Liaison Committee for the Agricultural and Agri-food Trade

10, rue de Tamines

1060 Brussels- BE

T/F : + 32 2 537 37 11

p.rouhier@celcaa.eu

⁴ Commission Implementing Regulation of 30.03.2020 C2020(2049) on temporary measures to contain risks to human, animal and plant health and animal welfare during certain serious disruptions of Member States' controls systems due to Covid-19.