

PRESS RELEASE

Brussels, 10th March 2021

CELCAA: TRADE IN AGRIFOOD AND COMMODITIES IS PART OF A RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEM

'Trade in agri-food and commodities is part of a resilient and sustainable food system', CELCAA stressed in a high level on-line Conference organised on 10th March 2021. The theme of the Conference was 'EU Trade Policy- What ambitions for the EU agri-food trade' and participants discussed the impact on the EU agri-food trade of the Farm to Fork Strategy and the recent Trade Communication 'An open, sustainable and assertive Trade Policy'. The Conference, officially opened by Executive Vice-President Mr. Vladis Dombrovskis, featured the interventions of Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Janusz Wojciechowski; current AGRI FISH Council Chair, Maria do Céu Antunes; FAO Chief Economist, Maximo Torero Cullen; Director at DG Trade Rupert Schlegelmilch, as well as representatives of dairy, wine and meat trade sectors. CELCAA stressed the preponderant role of the EU in global trade in agri-food products, called for increased collaboration with third countries towards more sustainability, and to resist from protectionism calls.

The Conference, that gathered more than 180 participants on-line, featured two panels for discussion: The First on 'EU in global trade today and ambition for the future' and second on 'A trade policy that promotes sustainable agriculture systems'. The Conference was organised at a time where the Commission is collecting feedback on its recent EU trade policy review and when some of the 27 actions of the Farm to Fork Strategy are being implemented. Representatives of the trade sectors in wine, dairy and meat explained the role of trade in promoting economic sustainability of European food system; the environmental sustainability linked to the right allocation of resources and new outlets for products that would not necessarily be sold on the EU market, and called for the current scope of the promotion policy to remain untouched. All trade speakers demonstrated that the EU has a crucial role to play in agri-food trade globally, helping to raise standards on sustainability in a collaborative way. They restated that the first objective of the EU trade policy is to deliver economic benefits as a way to fuel economic growth and jobs for EU companies, citizens and regions.

It was also the opportunity for DG TRADE to inform stakeholders that the EU and the US would lift the retaliation measures impacting agri-food products and trade in the context of the WTO aircraft dispute the same day 10th March 2021 at midnight; news that was very much welcomed by all participants.

Executive Vice-President Dombrovskis, opening the conference, declared *'Agri-food trade is an EU success story we should be proud of: our net surplus in this sector has grown substantially, reaching over €60 billion in 2019. But we cannot afford to stand still. In the next decade, 85% of global growth will take place outside the EU. Our proposal for a new EU trade strategy is balanced and sustainable, and will help our agri-food exporters to take advantage of that growth.'*

Commissioner Wojciechowski stressed that *"The transition to sustainable food systems should not only take place in the EU but also in partner countries. This vision is not only European, but rather global in scope. We must join forces with our international partners, both at multilateral and bilateral levels."*

Maria do Céu Antunes mentioned in her speech that *"The EU trade policy is a key area for global economic recovery. As the Presidency of the Council, we will continue to monitor the market situation and the Agri-trade. As the EU has reached high levels of food safety and quality that are the hallmark of agri-food produced in the EU, it is now important to work together towards the objectives of sustainability."*

Concluding the on-line Conference, Marcel van der Vliet, CELCAA president, outlined the main messages of **CELCAA's contribution to the EU Trade Policy Review** and stressed that *'Trade is a vehicle to support the overall sustainability agenda and the promotion of EU's standards and values. The saying goes: 'Tell me what you eat and drink and I tell you who you are'. Let's trade what the 466 m people of Europe are so proud of and by doing so, promote the quality standards that are behind our crops, ingredients and final products'.*

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