

Joint Statement from the Agri-Food Sector on the Revision of the Promotion Policy and the Draft 2022 Annual Work Programme

In the context of the revision of the EU Promotion Policy and the ongoing discussions on the draft 2022 Annual Work Programme, the undersigned agri-food sector organisations, which are members of the Civil Dialogue Group on Promotion and Quality, would like to share their common vision on those two important files for the sector:

Revision of the EU Promotion Policy

The EU Promotion Policy was created with the aim to ensure the competitiveness of EU agricultural products as stated in Article 2 of Regulation (EU) 1144/2014. This policy has successfully delivered on this objective, as it has been underlined by both the Commission evaluation and EU producers.

In the context of the Farm to Fork Strategy and rising environmental pressure, the intention now is to revise the Promotion Policy to enhance its contribution to sustainability while maintaining its strong support for EU agriculture and food product competitiveness.

The EU agri-food sectors believe that it is absolutely possible for the Promotion Policy to remain a key tool to ensure the competitiveness of the EU agricultural and food products while also further contributing to enhancing sustainability. However, it should be stressed that the promotion policy is first and foremost an agri-food competitiveness policy.

In addition, if we are to ensure that this policy's contribution to sustainability is optimised while it remains a strong tool to ensure competitiveness, the following elements should absolutely be taken into account:

- No products or sectors should be excluded: all farm, food and drink products can be part of balanced diets and contribute to sustainability. Excluding specific sectors or products would discourage their producers who have already invested a lot in enhancing the sustainability of their production from going even further.

- All sustainable agricultural practices should be equally supported in order to maximise the Promotion Policy contribution to sustainability. There are many sustainable practices - organic farming is only one of them.

- The future EU Promotion Policy deserves an adequate budget. Given the strategic importance of this policy for the agri-food sector, it is absolutely necessary to ensure that enough funding is made available in this context, aligned with market realities and realistic growth prospects. This is even more important in the COVID-19 and post Brexit context we find ourselves in. Third countries have understood the importance of such policies and are strongly investing in their own promotion policies.

We hope that the Commission will include these essential elements in the revision of this crucial EU policy to ensure a strong EU agriculture for a more sustainable food system.

The 2022 Annual Work Programme (AWP)

Concerning the 2022 AWP, the agri-food organisations listed below would like to share the following position based on the information currently available in the Commission draft:

- The increase of the budget for multi and simple programmes (including the budget for market disturbances) is welcome. However, the budget is only being increased from

183.9 Mio € to 185.9 Mio €, still well below the 200 Mio € set for the AWP 2020. Post-COVID uncertainties, the Brexit reality, and international competitiveness are points of concern which show that the required financial resources to support agri-food business in the internal market as well as on the international market are necessary now more than ever. Serious consideration should be given to allocating a higher budget than what is currently intended.

- The draft AWP provides an even larger budget for the internal organic market with an increase from 6 to 14 Mio € for simple and from 17 to 18 Mio € for multi programmes. We would like to call for a budget allocation that strikes a balance between actions on organic and the sections for generic sustainability promotion and quality, because economic, environmental and social sustainability is much broader than organic farming alone. Moreover, the promotion policy should remain demand-driven and operators should be able to respond to the opportunities offered by the market. This will allow better support for the various sustainable practices and thus maximise the benefits and the contribution of the Promotion Policy. It will also be fairer to all the producers who, despite not being certified as organic, are making considerable efforts to increase the sustainability of their production. For the international market, considering the lack of interest from organic producers due to the market reality, we support the Commission's decision to set out a section dedicated to both organic and sustainability together.

- Regarding the section entitled "proper diet", we would like to ask for some precisions on which products are eligible here. If this dedicated budget line is set to stimulate the consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables as per the 2021 AWP we believe that it should be renamed "fresh fruit and vegetables". If other products will also be eligible here, we advise finding another title for this budget line. Indeed, the wording "proper diet" is not associated with a concrete definition and instead reflects an individual or personal attitude.

We hope the Commission and the Member States will take into account these essential considerations when taking their decision on the 2022 AWP.

Conclusion

The EU Promotion Policy is an essential tool for the EU agri-food sector, particularly in the context of Brexit and the COVID-19 crisis. If it is adequately designed, it can truly support the sector to maintain its competitiveness in an increasingly globalised environment while supporting a shift to a more sustainable food system. However, to ensure this objective, it is crucial to leave no one behind and support producers' efforts toward more sustainability in an extremely competitive environment.

On behalf of the following organisations:



AREFLH

The Assembly of European Fruit, Vegetable and Horticultural Regions



AVEC

Association of Poultry Processors and Poultry Trade in the EU countries



CEJA

European Council of Young Farmers



CELCAA

European Liaison Committee for Agricultural and Agri-Food Trade



CLITRAVI

Liaison Centre for the Meat Processing Industry in the European Union



COPA-COGECA

The united voice of farmers and their cooperatives in the European Union



EDA

European Dairy Association



EFFAB

European Forum of Farm Animal Breeders



EFOW

European Federation of Origin Wines



ELO

European Landowners' Organization



EUROPATAT

European Potato Trade Association



FOODDRINK EUROPE

Organisation of Europe's food and drink industry



FRESHFEL

European Fresh Produce Association



ORIGIN

The Organization for an International Geographical Indications Network



UECBV

European Livestock and Meat Trades Union