

“Better integration of agri-food trade interests needed in current EU policy dossiers”—CELCAA releases seven essential recommendations for agri-food traders and policymakers to think about ahead of the European elections.

CELCAA – The European Liaison Committee for Agricultural and Agri-Food Trade has launched its Sector Vision and Policy Recommendations, with the focus on “How to achieve sustainable agri-food trade.” The launch marks the occasion to present the thought process the organization has embarked on since December 2022 and to reflect on the essential role of agri-food trade in sustainable food systems and how to improve the sustainability of agri-food trade operations. The document consists of a broader analysis of the current state of play of the agri-food trade sector and seven essential focus areas that agri-food traders wish to strengthen to create more sustainable agri-food trade operations. A first preview was given at a launch event in mid-November, at which the Head of Cabinet of DG Trade’s Commissioner Dombrovskis, Michael Hager, presented a first stocktake of the impact of the Green Deal on current trade policies.

CELCAA flags in its recommendations the overall need for better integration of agri-food trade interests in current policy dossiers and better cohesion of policies affecting agri-food traders. This need should also be reflected in the structural organization of the European Commission through the creation of a designated contact point. The emergence of files such as the EU Deforestation Regulation and Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence, amongst others mean that the challenges for agri-food traders have shifted from classic trade barriers to tracking, tracing and reporting requirements. This will require stronger experience exchange with the sector, as agri-food traders are ultimately the actors in the supply chain which will implement these requirements. “It will be essential to therefore better explain how agri-food trade is conducted and which practical challenges we have to fulfill in our daily operations,” says Marcel van der Vliet, current president of CECLAA and Sales/Procurement Manager at Van Drie Group in the Netherlands.

Furthermore, CELCAA calls for a move away from policies limiting unsustainable operations, to seek ‘enablers’ for a sustainable transition, with a focus on circular agri-food trade, digital tools facilitating smart and sustainable operations, and a new perspective on food and nutrition security. CELCAA that concepts such as “equivalence” in sustainability need to pave a more equal playing field for international trading operations. This is a key lesson of the impact of the Green Deal on current trade policies, which are being challenged at a multilateral level.

The recommendations are the result of an intensive thought process amongst CELCAA members on “trade and sustainability,” which was launched in December 2022 and has been accompanied by exchanges with scientists, multilateral bodies such as the FAO, WTO, and UNCTAD, as well as with policymakers at the European level. The first practical ‘reality check’ was conducted on the ground in a calf-husbandry facility during CELCAA’s AGM earlier in 2023, to which also other agri-food stakeholders were invited.

The recommendations were previewed at CELCAA’s event “How to Achieve Sustainable Agri-Food Trade,” on November 15, 2023. Speaking at the event, Michael Hager, Head of Cabinet of Commissioner Dombrovskis, flagged, “that it will be important to think ahead for the next 5 years and to better understand our trading partners needs in the important sustainability dossiers.”

CELCAA will continue to develop perspectives on “how to achieve sustainable agri-food trade” and prioritize, in particular, its work on the “enablers” of a sustainable transition in the upcoming year. CELCAA Secretary General Nelli Hajdu underlines: “We hope that our work will help to create a better understanding about the contribution of agri-food trade to sustainable food systems, as well as its increasing importance for food security but also in mitigating the effects of climate change.”



The recommendations in long and short version are available via the CELCAA website:

<https://celcaa.eu/position-papers/>

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