

From: [REDACTED] (SANTE)

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To: BUCHER Anne (SANTE); [REDACTED]
(SANTE); [REDACTED] (SANTE); [REDACTED]
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[REDACTED] (SANTE); [REDACTED] (SANTE); JUELICHER
Sabine (SANTE); [REDACTED] (SANTE); [REDACTED]
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[REDACTED] (SANTE); [REDACTED] (SANTE); [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] (SANTE); [REDACTED] (SANTE);
[REDACTED] (SANTE)

Subject: BTO - participation of Commissioner Kyriakides at the
Copa-Cogeca Praesidia on 18 June 2020 (BASIS CAB/195
and 230)

BTO – Participation of Commissioner Kyriakides at the Copa-Cogeca Praesidia on 18 June 2020 to discuss the Farm to Fork Strategy

Participants

Commission: Commissioner Stella Kyriakides, Annukka Ojala, Roberto Reig Rodrigues, (CAB Kyriakides); Bernard Van Goethem, [REDACTED] (DG SANTE)

Copa-Cogeca: about 60-70 members

Commissioner Kyriakides presented the Farm to Fork (F2F) Strategy as per her speaking points. She specifically thanked the efforts of the farming sector in maintaining the supply of safe food to Europe during the COVID crisis.

(Copa) called F2F as an opportunity but also a challenge for farmers which is raising concerns. He highlighted three of their main concerns: 1), Stable funding is a precondition for the farming sector in order to successfully implement the Strategy. 2). F2F has significant social and economic impacts therefore it is imperative that the Commission should carry out impact assessments. 3) They agree with the reduction of the use of plant protection products (PPPs), fertilisers, antibiotics but targets must be set on the basis of science. Farmers' duty is to safeguard food security to feed Europe. Crops must be protected from pests regardless the way of production (conventional or organic). Copa is asking the Commission to involve the farming sector more closely in the discussions. They feel left out even though they have a lot of experience in second pillar measures and the farming sector is most impacted by F2F. They are ready to improve the farming system and are open for a close dialogue.

(Cogeca) stressed that it was important for them to have a first-hand knowledge on F2F and asked for their proposals to be taken into account.

(Copa) acknowledged the importance of giving EU citizens comfort on how their food was produced and how nature was handled by farmers. He asked the Commissioner to confirm that farmers would still be able to compete on the world market with F2F. He referred to the COVID crisis which had proved in his view that long supply chains were more sufficient than the short ones. He also mentioned that farmers had been working on reducing the use of PPPs during the last years and those who are more advanced should not be punished.

(Cogeca) highlighted the importance of the discussion for new generations and expressed great concerns when looking into the future. In her view, the implementation of F2F will weaken the position of EU farmers on the world market. She asked if the Commission was going to do impact assessments before implementing F2F and if the Commission was planning to establish a food security observatory.

(Copa) recalled that during the last 20 years they had been promoting the need to strengthen relationship between producers and consumers. They support F2F but find that its approach is not always coherent. He mentioned as an example that on the one hand F2F promotes a balanced diet but on the other hand it points the finger at meat consumption. He stressed that the European livestock sector is already investing a lot of money in sustainability. In relation to front of pack nutrition labelling, in his view, a balanced diet is incompatible with the colour-coding system that discriminates certain products (e.g. olive oil, cheese, honey). With regard to mandatory origin labelling, they would appreciate a stronger approach as citizens ask for it.

(Cogeca) acknowledged that F2F gave credit to farmers on their key role in the food chain. In her view, responsibility is put on farmers but not many tools are provided to help them. With F2F, the yield will be less. The Commission must be aware that it is the consumers who drive the market. There is a lot of idealism in F2F. She stressed that all imported food should meet the same requirements as applicable in the EU. With regard to the targets on pesticides, fertilisers and antibiotics, the goals should be set individually in each Member State. There are front runners who should be rewarded and not punished.

The **Commissioner** highlighted that the F2F Strategy was ambitious and challenging but it also provided an opportunity for the farming sector. She underlined that there would be an impact assessment before any future legislative initiative. Stakeholders will be consulted during the process and input from Copa-Cogeca is very important. With regard to the pesticide reduction targets, the Commission is aware of the call to provide more tools to fight pests and diseases. The Commissioner mentioned that EUR 10 billion would be spent on research on food, bio-economy and agriculture from the Horizon Europe programme. The Commission will also be using EU funds in the agrifood sector to support SMEs. We do not want to leave anyone behind. In relation to streamlining the approval of low risk PPPs, the Commissioner mentioned the ongoing work on reviewing the data requirements and assessment methodologies for micro-organisms. She emphasised that we must look at plant protection more broadly. The implementation of low pesticide-input management practices such as integrated pest management and organic farming must be actively promoted. We must also ensure that where pesticides are used, they are used correctly and safely by the operators.

On African swine fever and avian influenza, the Commission will continue working together with Copa-Cogeca. On healthy balanced diet and lifestyle, the Commissioner refuted the claim that the Commission was pointing the finger to meat consumption. On mandatory front of pack nutrition labelling, she stressed that it would be dealt with in a future legislative proposal that would be supported by an impact assessment. Work will also start on nutrient profiles. The proposal is expected by the end of 2022. On mandatory origin labelling, the Commission is considering the extension of mandatory origin labelling to certain products. Individual measures by Member States pose a real risk of fragmentation to the single market. On imports and level playing field, the Commissioner acknowledged that thanks to the farming sector's significant contribution, Europe is recognised as having the highest food safety standards in the world. She mentioned that the Commission would be working with international partners to establish green alliances. Our bilateral trade agreements offer a means to pursue acceptance of EU environmental standards. She mentioned that the Commission would take into account environmental aspects when assessing requests for certain import tolerances. WTO obligations will be respected. The Commissioner invited Copa-Cogeca to work together during the implementation of F2F.

(Copa-Cogeca) talked about their concerns on the very ambitious target to triple the land size under organic production by 2030. They were in favour of doubling it. She stressed that organic production was driven by demand, and that farmers also have to make a business by farming. Not only farmers but also scientists are needed to improve production and increase the yields. She referred to the new EU action

plan on organics. How will the Commission ensure that demand for organic products also increases?

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] Copa-Cogeca [REDACTED] stressed that targets must be set after impact assessment. Scientific criteria should be taken into account. He highlighted their concern with regard to new genomic techniques, notably, that they are losing out on the world market because they have less tools compared to their competitors. He mentioned the loss of agricultural land for EU farming due to BREXIT, and the fact that neonicotinoids were not allowed to be used in the EU while they were widely used in their competitors. He asked the Commission to develop a plan together with the sector highlighting that farmers are part of the solution.

[REDACTED] (Cereals working party, [REDACTED] welcomed the green deal ambitions however stressed the need to increase production in the EU. In Sweden they learned the hard way how competitiveness can be destroyed because of stricter rules. If there are too many rules, it is impossible to get the money out of the business. He asked how the Commission wanted to ensure that farmers could maintain their competitiveness on the world market.

Commissioner Kyriakides stressed that the Commission would be proposing actions to help increase consumer demand for organic products and that the CAP would also support organic production via the national strategic plans. On new genomic techniques, she referred to the ongoing work on the study aimed to be finalised by the end of 2021. With regard to competitiveness with production outside Europe, she repeated that the Commission was considering to review the import tolerance requests for substances meeting the cut-off criteria, while respecting WTO rules. She reassured Copa-Cogeca of the Commission's commitment to continue working together.

[REDACTED] and [REDACTED] emphasised once again their commitment to collaborate with the Commission and asked their expertise to be taken into account as farmers are part of the solution. Copa-Cogeca is looking forward to further meetings to discuss F2F, in particular the implementation of targets on pesticides, fertilisers and antibiotics.