

Minutes of the meeting of the Civil Dialogue Group on Arable Crops

Cereals, Oilseeds and Dried Fodder

The agenda and the minutes of the previous meeting were adopted.

Item 1: Forecast and market outlook for grains and oilseeds

DG AGRI went over the 2014/2015 balance sheet, which had been updated on 15th June. 2014/2015 had been a record marketing year in terms of production, exports and usage for feed and to replenish stocks. Weather events in 2015, such as cold spells in May and warm temperatures in June had affected the potential yield. The 2015/2016 forecast balance sheet predicted that volumes would fall to 307 million tonnes of cereals, with a 6% drop for wheat. CELCAA representatives expressed their concerns about new maize aflatoxin crises due to water stress. Copa representatives went over their preliminary indications on the impact that warm weather could have on rapeseed, such as resulting in a lower specific weight. Copa and FoodDrinkEurope expressed their concerns about the market situation and production trends for durum wheat in Europe. The group agreed to pay particular heed to the issue of mycotoxins, new legislation on monitoring the presence of ergot alkaloids and developing the durum wheat sector during the meeting scheduled in November 2015.

Item 2: Production forecasts and market outlook for dried fodder

FoodDrinkEurope went over the activities of the sector, which targeted feed, pet food and exports to Middle East countries. They were concerned about the lack of data monitoring by the Member States and the different definition of dried fodder on the other side of the Atlantic, which could represent a valuable market for EU production.

Item 3: Implementation of the CAP

DG AGRI gave an update on the greening measures and explained that light tillage of pastures had been permitted in non-sensitive areas. An EEB representative asked the Commission to further elaborate on the expected impact of the EFA measure, which had been introduced under the CAP reform. DG AGRI also described the state of play of discussions concerning the public intervention procedure. The proposal on this aimed to compile the eligibility criteria for intervention and private storage into a single delegated act. The minimum storage capacity, protein content and level of humidity were some of the points that were still being discussed with the Member State experts.

Item 4: Production factors

A DG SANCO representative informed the group about the call for expressions of interest concerning new scientific data on the impact on bee health. Copa and Cogeca representatives detailed their preliminary impact assessment after one whole year of the ban on neonicotinoid seed treatment. The main concerns were the increase in the cost of plant protection products, changes to cropping systems to mainly focus on winter crops, and the development of insecticide resistance. A Bee Life representative gave a presentation on the use of mutual funds for integrated pest management. FoodDrinkEurope mentioned the issue of timing for national certification. An ELO representative expressed concerns about the lack of tools in the field. The EEB called for more public research on this matter.

DG SANCO presented the Commission's proposal on the national ban on placing GMOs on the EU market, which would allow Member States to prohibit something that was considered safe. They repeated that there was no plan B. FoodDrinkEurope, EuropaBio and CELCAA called for an impact assessment on the Commission's proposal. PAN Europe stressed the need to respect national choices.

Item 5: Environmental issues

A DG ENVI representative gave an update on the legislation. FoodDrinkEurope bemoaned the lack of flexibility demonstrated by the Commission's service in taking the data collected by the sector on carbon sequestration into account.

Item 6: AOB

- An EEB representative mentioned the relationship between biodiversity and agriculture. He considered the step forwards on carbon sequestration as a positive move, yet more needed to be done on productivity, decreasing the impact on natural resources, and safeguarding habitats for birds. He concluded that biodiversity was not static and that agriculture was not its enemy. A CELCAA representative highlighted that the issue was also on the agenda of the CDG on International Aspects of Agriculture.
- The Chair requested input to improve the functioning of the Civil Dialogue Group. The main concerns expressed related to the deadline for placing preparatory material on CIRCABC, ensuring a better presence of the DG AGRI hierarchy, and guaranteeing flexibility in seat allocations in order to use all available seats. The Chair concluded by mentioning the opportunity to have more time for bilateral contact during the meeting.