



EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF FOOD, AGRICULTURE AND TOURISM TRADE UNIONS

*Brussels, 19th September, 2008*

## **EFFAT CONCERNS for the 4<sup>th</sup> Sherpa Meeting**

### **High-Level Group on Agro-food Competitiveness**

#### **1. Workstream 1 : Access to raw materials and trade issues**

##### ***Trade issues:***

We agreed that we want a sustainable competitiveness for Europe and that needs to be considered in a global approach as well. Many states, non-EU members, do not stick to the sustainable standards such as for instance *GSP+*, though we all need to respect and implement these criteria in order to have a sustainable and equal playing field. The European food industry does not want to compete with child-labour. The biofuels sustainability deal attempted by the French Presidency whereas some environmental criteria are binding and the non use of child-labour are not, goes against the sustainability approach.

#### **2. Workstream 2: Food chain structure**

##### ***Human Capital and employment:***

Our first remark refers to the denomination *human capital*. I think we can all agree that it comprises the stock of skills and knowledge of workers and not to people as such. The wording reduces people to as a production factor.

All the economic, political and social actions depend on the availability of the workforce and on the investment we make in it. Therefore, our second point is about the lack of sufficiently available, skilled and motivated workforce in the agro-food industry.

Thirdly, the investment needed (e.g. training) is in many cases seen as a burden cost and not as a tool to competitiveness. Moreover, the agro-food industry needs training for the employees at all levels not only for the highly-skilled researchers and engineers. All employees need training programmes in order to adapt to novelties, to work with the new-technology and to be competitive.

Generally speaking, there are not enough matches between supply and demand for training and that is because there is not enough networking and cooperation between the stakeholders: SMEs, trade unions, academia, European, national, regional/local

institutions. In other words, the industry is quite fragmented in terms of communication, identification of common needs and common solutions.

Fourthly, the agro-food industry is competing with other industries in terms of job attractiveness.

Then, there is no human resource policy in terms of organizing and integrating mobile and migrant workers which can be and are a valuable workforce for the agro-food industry.

Last, but not the least, there is no social dialogue in the agro-food sector. We encourage the social partners to enter social dialogue as soon as possible. This concept has to be part of the holistic approach we are trying to build-up here.

When this process started, EFFAT propose the following questions, which still wait for answers:

- a) The qualification challenge:
  - What are the (new) skills and qualifications needed now and for the future in the food sector?
  - How to improve employability?
- b) The demographic challenge:
  - How are we going to further deal with mobility and migration?
  - How are we going to supply the industry with sufficiently available, skilled and motivated workforce?
  - How can we improve jobs' attractiveness in the sector?
- b) How can the particular needs of the SMEs be met?
- c) What should be the role of the social partners?
- d) What should be the role of the European Commission?