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**PLENARY MEETING OF THE ADVISORY GROUP (AG) ON THE FOOD CHAIN AND ANIMAL AND
PLANT HEALTH**

Summary Record

26 MARCH 2010

1. Welcome and approval of the Agenda

The COM welcomed participants and explained the revised agenda, which was duly approved.

2. Animal Cloning



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The COM gave an overview of the current status of the proposal for a Regulation on novel foods¹. The European Parliament asks for a ban on cloning and on all products from cloned animals and their offspring. The Council asks for the inclusion of foods from the offspring of cloned animals (first generation) in the scope of the Novel food Regulation. Commissioner Dalli had indicated that the COM would publish a report on animal cloning by the end of 2010. The report and any proposals would be made accessible to the public.

Stakeholders were asked for their input to the report to the EP and Council by the end of April 2010 and were asked to respond to the following questions:

- May the cloning technique present benefits for the sector you represent? Which ones?
- May the cloning technique present risks for the sector you represent? Which ones?
- Is a regulatory approach needed for cloning for food production? Which one?

Comments and questions raised

UGAL and COPA-COGECA wished to see more communication from the COM on this issue. UGAL wanted more involvement of consumers in problems regarding risks and ethics. CELCAA and UECEBV underscored the problems traders faced in enforcing a complete ban as meat from cloned animals would be difficult to trace. UECEBV reminded participants that EFSA, in its last scientific opinion, had concluded that the health and welfare of a significant proportion of clones have been found to be adversely affected but that the proportion of unhealthy clones is likely to decrease as the technology improves. Some stakeholders drew attention to some potential benefits of the technique e.g. enhanced global efficiency, breeding of animals with more efficient feed conversion and better resistance to animal diseases (UECEBV, AVEC); while COPA-COGECA indicated that the use of SCNT cloning technology might have

¹ Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on novel foods, amending Commission Regulation (EC) no. 1331/2008 and repealing Regulation (EC) no. 258/97 and Commission Regulation (EC) o. 1852/2001

a long term potential in affording animal breeders and farmers new opportunities to advance the genetic composition of their herd. The need for a global and transparent science-based approach was underlined. The COM is in favour of establishing a communication strategy following preparation of the report which would enable it to examine all aspects and take consumer views into consideration.

Comments and inputs from stakeholders on the issue will be discussed after the summer at a future working group meeting of the Advisory Group on the Food Chain and Animal and Plant Health.

3. EU 2020



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The COM presented the EU 2020 Strategy and SANCO's priorities and objectives under the three priorities: Smart growth, sustainable growth and inclusive growth.

Ms Testori-Coggi underlined that Commissioner Dalli wished SANCO to focus on concrete projects, particularly in public health and consumer areas as for food safety a clear framework already existed. The SMART priority was the most challenging for food and animal health.

The COM stressed that it would be necessary to better explain the benefits and encourage responsible innovation which would benefit consumers. Food and consumer safety would now also encompass sustainability. With regard to inclusive growth SANCO was examining areas where COM action might bring an added value, e.g. the health work force where increased future demand would result in a chronic lack of personnel.

Comments and questions raised

COPA-COGECA insisted that the crucial role of European agriculture should be highlighted. BEUC stressed that consumers support what is actually of benefit to them so they need to understand the real benefits. The EU should therefore develop and apply effective policies/practices to encourage the adoption of sustainable consumption habits. The COM reminded participants that the question of benefits, "other legitimate factors" was not well-defined in international trade. COM decisions in the field of risk management were based on science and would continue to be so but when framing policy on new technologies other factors may need to be taken into account. Several stakeholders underscored the role of communication: civil society's role in clearly formulating the problem (CELCAA), the need for public authorities to explain competing societal objectives (FEFAC), the importance of proactive science-based communication to connect citizens and science and make them aware of existing legislation (ECPA). ECPA stressed, however, that focus should be on sustainable rather than green growth. FVE welcomed the "farm to fork" approach and in the area of public health proposed that the COM should also examine infrastructure. UECEBV informed participants that its working group on climate change had concluded that a sustainable meat chain is possible and believed that the use of innovation is allowing operators to reduce environmental impact.

3.2. Stakeholders' views on SANCO priorities for the next five years

Stakeholders' views were requested on what they consider most important for SANCO to do in the next 5 years in terms of policy, legislation, implementation/enforcement and communication in the area of food and feed safety. Presentations were made by 6 member

organisations followed by a general debate. The COM undertook to prepare a summary of the proposals received.

- COPA-COGECA



COPA-COGECA

Comments and questions raised

ANIMALS ANGELS and FESASS were worried about increased administrative burden on farmers. The COM drew attention to its current exercise aimed at reducing such burdens. COPA-COGECA explained that codes of good practice were designed to help small holding farmers to understand legislation and the COM stressed codes also helped MS in ensuring uniform implementation of EU legislation. With regard to concerns over private standards, it reported that their impact would be examined by the Forum of the Food Supply Chain, a follow up to the High Level Group on the Competitiveness of the Agro-Food Industry. EFRA supported the reintroduction of animal protein under safe and controlled conditions and also positive communication to the consumer that EU food is health. The COM confirmed that the reintroduction of animal protein was a SANCO priority and talks would be held with the EP to obtain political agreement.

- EUROGROUP FOR ANIMALS



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Comments and questions raised

The COM welcomed the report by Marit Paulsen on the evaluation and assessment of the Animal Welfare Action Plan 2006-2010 which would be a good input for its new Action Plan for 2011-2015 on animal welfare.

ANIMALS ANGELS pointed out that enforcement is still very poor, especially in the field of animal transport. The COM reported that, in its discussions with the EP, emphasis had been placed on the enforcement of existing regulation before the establishment of more stringent requirements.

- CIAA



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Comments and questions raised

IFAH pointed out that there are no trained communicators to inform consumers of risks and benefits and reiterated its request for a working group to discuss this issue. CIAA supported a working group on communication and also underlined the importance of using layman's language and involving consumers. The COM would request this issue to be placed on the agenda of a future meeting of the Stakeholder Dialogue Group. Within SANCO discussions were ongoing on how to improve data strategy and communicate complex issues simply. The COM also informed participants that there were several initiatives within the EU Veterinary

Week (14-20 June 2010) to widen communication and address all the operators in the food chain not just veterinarians. The theme is identification and traceability along the food chain.

- EUROCOMMERCE



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Comments and questions raised

A brief discussion took place on whether animal welfare was information consumers "need to know" or "would like to know". The COM informed participants that it would present, by June 2010, a new scheme to ensure the freedom of the MS to cultivate GM. The evaluation of the two legislations, food and feed and deliberate release would soon be concluded and would be the basis for an open debate starting at the end of the year where labelling would be one of the points discussed. The COM was not currently in favour of a non-GM label. UGAL stressed the difficulties of tracing GM in products. It underlined the need for better regulation as many SMEs could not cope with existing legislation and the need for a more coherent implementation of legislation in the MS. The COM, whilst agreeing with the need for more harmonisation, underscored the difficulty of harmonisation with 27 MS.

- EUROCOOP



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Comments and questions raised

EUROPABIO challenged EUROCOOP's view that factors other than scientific facts should be taken into account in risk management. It believed that science-based decision-making can provide evidence to show whether GM and sustainability are compatible and is important to show to trading partners that Europe has valid ways of dealing with new technology. Several stakeholders supported EUROCOOP's call for cooperation and coherence with other Directorates-General.

- BEUC



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Comments and questions raised

With regard to its work on zoonoses, the COM informed participants that EFSA had been asked to examine possible control tools for campylobacter and the COM would look at possible policy options. In June 2010 it would present a second Road Map for TSE controls (TSE Road map II) and in the field of hygiene legislation and meat inspection there would be a Roundtable on the Revision of Meat Inspection on 18 May 2010. The meeting is a first exchange of views with all relevant parties (Member States, stakeholders, third countries, CODEX) on the future of meat inspection. EFSA has also been asked to identify new risks in meat inspection. With regard to AMT, EFSA had also been asked to prepare a guidance document on the submission of data for the evaluation of the safety and efficacy of substances for the removal of microbial surface contamination of foods of animal origin intended for human consumption. The document will include all the information needed in order to allow EFSA to evaluate the food

safety aspects, the environmental impacts and impacts on the development of antimicrobial resistance of any future substance. UECBV reported on its working group on veterinary issues which had issued a statement on organics acids, a decontamination tool which should prove to be an effective tool for operators.

CELCAA wondered who would meet the costs involved in increased official controls, laboratory testing and labelling. BEUC underlined the need to ensure that the controls are effectively planned and implemented and that the same controls are in place throughout MS (in terms of quality and quantity effectiveness). Otherwise both consumer protection and fair competition are harmed. HOTREC highlighted the problems for restaurants regarding calorie labelling as dishes are not standardised in restaurants and constantly change. The allergen proposal was not considered to be practical because of cross-contamination. Finally HOTREC underlined the cost burden for 92% of the sector (under 10 employees). BEUC stressed that food allergens cross contamination prevention (and/or precautionary labelling) is a food safety and consumer health protection matter and therefore not negotiable. With regard to calorie information (or other nutritional information) as consumers increasingly eat in restaurants, the EU should also make provisions for information delivered by food businesses in the sector if it wishes to encourage healthier consumption habits

COPA-COGECA pointed to the need to communicate to consumers that scientists can be trusted. AVEC pointed out that communication is left to national associations resulting in a real challenge to convey the same message and reassure consumers.

General debate

Participants were asked to flag up issues which had not been raised during the 6 presentations. FVE, supported by IFAH, considered that the issue of veterinary medicine should be highlighted, especially the use and availability which were important issues to be addressed. Simplification of legislation and the authorisation procedure are complicated in this area and should be solved. The COM undertook to place this item on the agenda of the next Plenary of the AG.

CELCAA emphasised the need for a strong EU presence at international level, underlining that SPS barriers are the biggest issue to be faced in the future. The COM agreed to give an overview at the next Plenary on what is happening internationally and if this does not suffice a working group could be foreseen. ECPA mentioned the continuous work on secondary non-regulatory standards, leading to decreasing consumer confidence and undermining existing legislation. The COM responded that private certification does not replace regulation and it had concluded that there was no justification for preparing legislation on private certification schemes at this stage. However good practice schemes might be established. CELCAA and COPA-COGECA highlighted the work being carried out by DG AGRI on guidelines on private certification schemes and the need for coordination between the various DGs involved in this issue. The latter believed that the COM should play a major role in ensuring that the specificities of European standards are promoted at international level.

4. Reports on working groups

- **Draft Regulation for the implementation of the Animal By-products Regulation (EC) no 1069/2009) 18 February 2010**

A report on the meeting can be found at:

http://ec.europa.eu/food/committees/advisory/summary_18022010_en.pdf

- **Conference on "Modernising the Common plant health regime in view of globalisation and climate change", 23-24 February 2010**

The Conference was a joint meeting of the WG on Plant Health and a Commission Expert Working Group composed of the Chief Officers for Plant Health. The aim was to discuss the interim findings of the evaluation of the Common plant health regime by the Food Chain Evaluation Consortium (FCEC) for the COM. A report on the meeting can be found at: http://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/strategy/docs/cphr_conference_23_24022010_report_en.pdf

5. Any Other Business

Following a request concerning the Lisbon Treaty, the COM undertook to explain the impact of the Treaty on comitology procedures at the next Plenary of the AG.

A working group would take place on 20 May 2010 on the draft report which the COM had to prepare on the advisability and feasibility of presenting a proposal establishing fees for the European Food Safety Authority.

A partial call for expressions of interest in membership of the AG would shortly be launched.

6. Date of next meeting: *(provisional date: 8 November 2010 to be confirmed)*