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MINUTES

Meeting of the Expert Group on the European Food Security Crisis Preparedness and Response Mechanism (EFSCM)

23 March 2022

Chair morning session: Tassos Haniotis, DG AGRI.A

Chair afternoon session: DG AGRI.E.1

1. Nature of the meeting

The meeting was non-public.

The first regular EFSCM meeting saw a high level of participation with around 180 participants including Member States', non-EU countries', stakeholders' organisation's representatives and Commission services. The summary below refers to the oral interventions during the meeting as well as complements in the chat.

2. Opening by Charlina Vitcheva (DG MARE) and Claire Bury (DDG SANTE)

The morning session was opened by Ms Charlina Vitcheva (Director General DG MARE) and Ms Claire Bury (Deputy Director General DG SANTE). Ms Vitcheva underlined the important role played by the EFSCM in assessing scenarios of food security crisis and for helping the design of appropriate responses to mitigate the impact of threats. In this regard, Ms Vitcheva highlighted the specific challenges the fisheries sector is currently facing as the rise of fuel price that has made the fisheries sector unprofitable, the increase of electricity costs and lack of raw material. Ms Bury complemented this issue by mentioning the possibility of flexibilities in the area of DG SANTE's responsibility to alleviate the current situation, while the planned Farm to Fork Strategy remains the key stone to food security. Both speakers pointed to the necessity for Member States (MS) to coordinate actions and policy measures at the EU level and stressed that the expert group meetings on the EFSCM offer a unique opportunity to its members to work in this direction.

3. Approval of the agenda and of the minutes of the previous meeting

The Commission added a new agenda point 6 in view of the adoption of the Commission Communication on ‘Safeguarding food security and reinforcing the resilience of food systems’¹ the same day. The agenda of the meeting of 23 March 2022, including the additional agenda point and the meeting minutes of the previous meeting on 9 March 2022 were approved by the expert group

4. List of points discussed

4.1. Setting the scene and establishing a workplan for 2022/23

According to the Decision setting up the group of experts on the European Food Security Crisis Preparedness and Response Mechanism² adopted on 12 November, the Commission may consult the expert group on any matter relating to EU preparedness for, and response to, crisis threatening EU food supply and food security. The group shall meet once a year on a regular basis and can be convoked on an ad hoc basis without prior notice in case of an emergency. The expert group is composed of members and observers competent/active in the area of agriculture, fisheries, aquaculture, health policy and food safety or in any matter related to the well functioning of the food supply chain. Members are competent authorities of Member States, of selected non-EU countries and stakeholders’ organisations. Besides, the group includes also a number of observers.

The Commission walked the members through the action plan as per the Annex to the Communication and presented the following action points in more detail (see also ppt-presentation published):

- a study on mapping risks and vulnerabilities of the food supply chain that JRC Seville will lead for AGRI, MARE and SANTE;
- the development of a dashboard on food security;
- the setting up of two sub-groups on (a) crisis communication guidelines and (b) diversification of sourcing in the food supply chain.

The Commission proposed the expert group members to engage in the above-mentioned activities of the action plan.

Several members and observers (AREFLH, COCERAL, COPA, ECVC, EDA, EFM, EUROPEN, FDE, FEDIOL, FEFAC, FVE, UECEV, Unistock for stakeholders organisations, CH, DK, EE for MS and non-EU countries) expressed themselves either orally or via the chat on these items of the agenda. Different stakeholders and MS advanced ideas on how to contribute to the dashboard. They offered to identify new data sources that can complement the dashboard systems with information for the entire food chain with a view to upscale the output of the dashboard systems, provided that this is possible without breaching competition rules. They mentioned, in this regard, the

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/food-farming-fisheries/key_policies/documents/safeguarding-food-security-reinforcing-resilience-food-systems.pdf.

² [EUR-Lex - 32021D1115\(01\) - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#).

possibility to include data on stocks for food packaging materials and more data from the food and drink industry. Furthermore, some EU and non-EU countries informed that they have already established dashboard systems based on reporting from different business associations.

Similarly, several stakeholders and MS commented the proposal to create working groups. Some of them expressed the wish that a sub-group or a focus group is organised to prepare the next harvest, following the communication adopted on 23 March 2022 which only addresses short-term needs.

As some stakeholders pointed out, the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine might not be the only one the world will be experiencing. Measures need to be implemented for covering the deficit in wheat supply from the EU, Ukraine and Russia to countries affected by the conflict in Africa and Middle East. These areas will particularly suffer from the lack of access to affordable and adequate food due to rising prices. Some stakeholders therefore considered the need to broaden the scope of interventions of the EFSCM and to include global food security.

4.2. Follow-up on food security impact of the energy and input price increase and of the situation in Ukraine

Several members and observers (BEUC, CELCAA, COCERAL, COGECA, COPA, ECVC, EDA, EuroCommerce, European Flour Millers, Euroseeds, FEDIOL, FEFAC, Fertilizers Europe, FoodDrinkEurope, Four Paws, FRESHFEL, FVE, ARVI, UECBV) expressed themselves on this item of the agenda.

Members agree on the fact that EU food security is not at stake at the moment. However, few panic buying movements and restrictions of sales imposed by retailers show that there is a need to elaborate crisis communication guidelines in order to avoid such unjustified consumer behaviour. Members asked all public authorities to communicate on the absence of risk of food shortages to avoid exacerbating a general atmosphere of anxiety.

Members informed on the persistently difficult conditions under which EU food supply chain operators are working following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. It has been pointed to the negative consequences that surging prices of inputs (feed, fertilisers and energy) are having across the agricultural, seafood and food sector. Orders of fertilisers have for example been decreasing compared to the previous years, possibly due to liquidity tensions, which indicates that the second and third spring dressings may be less important in Western and Central-East Europe with possible downside effect on yields. There is a limited number of cases where culling of animals was accelerated due to risks of unavailability of feed. Prices of other inputs like packaging material also keep on increasing. In the fruit and vegetables sector, beyond the impact of quantities re-routed to EU markets, producers face higher energy costs for glasshouses, higher transport costs and fear unavailability of seasonal workers (particularly in PL). In the fisheries sector, the increased cost of diesel led part of the fleet to stop fishing.

Short-term solutions can be instrumental, notably to ease the liquidity situation of farmers for the purchase of inputs (fertilisers, feed).

Members expressed different views on the balance between short term measures addressing pressing needs to increase production and the longer term respect of the commitments towards the Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy

Concerning goods normally imported from Ukraine in the EU such as oilseeds, vegetable oils and feed grains and for which there were concerns for availability, it seems that for vegetable oils, the market is adjusting allowing operators to find alternative sourcing or to switch to other oils than sunflower. Flexibility on labelling for consumers for vegetable oils will help, although the way MS are implementing flexibility may differ from one MS to the other, thus creating some need for coherence and/or coordination. On feed supply, flexibility on Maximum Residue Levels (MRLs) decided in some MS (ES, PT) have allowed some orders to South America to be placed, thus easing the threats on feed availability in Southern Europe.

Several members reported difficulties in the transport and logistics in the development of alternative export routes from Ukraine (to PL and RO) via land and inland waterways (rather than maritime freight which is blocked from Ukraine and disturbed in the whole Black Sea). Bottlenecks are reported at customs level or in train freight.

Several members suggested it will soon be needed to reflect on risks for the next harvest (2022/23) as well as on necessary responses, so that they are in place in due time when farmers will need to take production decisions, and prepare accordingly their orders for inputs. In the fruit and vegetables sectors, production decisions may imply less supply due to high in-door costs and competition with cereals at high price for field vegetables.

With regards to the situation in Ukraine, since the last meeting on 9 March, improvements in the seeds sector were recorded: around 80% of arable crops seeds for this season have reached Ukraine. However, the seeds have not reached the farm gate yet. The percentage of vegetables seeds that reached Ukraine amounts to 50% only but there is still more time to sow. Basic seeds (needed to produce the seeds for the next harvest) also still need to reach Ukraine. There are needs for other inputs, in particular fuel for the machinery needed for planting and then harvesting. There is not a lot of information, however, on the situation of Ukrainian farm animals. Some report that animals had to be culled by lack of feed (poultry or animals in war zones in particular), while there are mixed reports of dairy farms in areas with enough roughage available, while there are reports of farms lacking feed.

Stakeholders continued to report episodes of trade disruption due to trade-restrictive measures implemented by Bulgaria and to a lesser extent by Hungary as well as by Serbia. The Bulgarian representative explained that there was no export ban for grains in place in Bulgaria.

At the same time, strikes from the logistic sector in countries like Spain are posing threats to transport availability. The logistic sector is further affected from the shortage of labour force. The parties reminded that the logistic sector is crucial to the functioning of trade flow.

Several stakeholders mentioned the risks linked to the inevitable higher food inflation for the most vulnerable, including for emblematic staple food like bread. The initiatives of some MS relative to lowered VAT rates (i.e. on pulses and fruit and vegetables in DE) or to food vouchers schemes (ES) were mentioned as positive decisions.

4.3. Presentation of the Communication on ‘Safeguarding food security and reinforcing the resilience of food systems’

The Commission presented the new Communication, adopted the same day (for more details see ppt presentation).

Members asked questions on the short term measures announced and discussed the balance between short term needs and longer term objectives for sustainable and resilient food systems. Some supported the need to revisit measures to boost plant proteins in the EU, others noted that the energy cost component was not developed a lot in the food security communication while it was the key bottleneck for the moment.

5. Conclusions/recommendations/opinions

The Commission thanked the participants for their contributions. The main concerns remains on the EU responsibility towards global food security and food supply to Ukraine. The Single Market, CAP and CFP legislation are valuable assets to ensure food security and MS are invited to cooperate to improve the achievements reached so far. In terms of EU actions, the policy measures that respond to immediate threats to EU food supply and food security will address both short and long-term needs of food chain operators and consumers. The objectives of the European Green Deal and Farm to Fork are still high on the agenda given the strong interconnection between food security and resilient food systems.

6. Next meeting

The Commission announced a second ad hoc meeting of the EFSCM within 4 to 6 weeks time.

7. List of participants

(e-signed)

Michael SCANNELL
Acting Director

List of participants– Minutes
Meeting of the Expert Group on the European Food Security Crisis Preparedness and Response Mechanism (EFSCM)

23 March 2022

EU Member State	Ministry or National body
BELGIQUE/BELGIË (Belgium)	Flemish Government
BELGIQUE/BELGIË (Belgium)	FPS Economy
БЪЛГАРИЯ (Bulgaria)	Ministry of agriculture
ČESKO (Czechia)	Ministry of Agriculture - Deputy Minister
DANMARK (Denmark)	Danish Veterinary and Food Administration
DEUTSCHLAND (Germany)	Bundesministerium für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft
EESTI (Estonia)	Ministry of Rural Affairs
ÉIRE/IRELAND (Ireland)	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Ireland
ΕΛΛΑΔΑ (Greece)	GENERAL DIRECTORATE OF AGRICULTURE - MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND FOOD
ΕΛΛΑΔΑ (Greece)	Ministry of Rural Development & Food, Directorate General for Fisheries, Directorate of Fisheries Policy & Development of Fishery Products
ΕΛΛΑΔΑ (Greece)	Permanent Representation
ESPAÑA (Spain)	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
FRANCE (France)	Ministère de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation -
HRVATSKA	Ministry of Agriculture

(Croatia)	
HRVATSKA (Croatia)	Ministry of Health
ITALIA (Italy)	Ministero delle Politiche agricole alimentari e forestali
ITALIA (Italy)	Ministero della Salute
ΚΥΠΡΟΣ (Cyprus)	Ministry of Health
LATVIJA (Latvia)	Ministry of Agriculture of Republic of Latvia
LIETUVA (Lithuania)	Ministry of Agriculture
LUXEMBOURG (Luxembourg)	Ministry of Agriculture, Winery and Rural Development
MAGYARORSZÁG (Hungary)	Government office
MAGYARORSZÁG (Hungary)	NFC SO
MALTA (Malta)	Environmental Health Directorate
NETHERLANDS	Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality
ÖSTERREICH (Austria)	Agrarmarkt Austria
ÖSTERREICH (Austria)	Bundesministerium für Landwirtschaft, Regionen und Tourismus
ÖSTERREICH (Austria)	Bundesministerium für Soziales, Gesundheit, Pflege und Konsumentenschutz
ÖSTERREICH (Austria)	Federal Office for Food Safety
POLSKA (Poland)	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
PORTUGAL (Portugal)	DGAV
PORTUGAL	DGRM - MINISTRY OF THE SEA

(Portugal)	
PORTUGAL (Portugal)	Ministry of Agriculture-GPP
PORTUGAL (Portugal)	ASAE
ROMÂNIA (Romania)	National Sanitary Veterinary and Food Safety Authority
ROMÂNIA (Romania)	RPRO
SLOVAKIA	Ministry of agriculture and rural development
SLOVENIA	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food
SUOMI (Finland)	Finnish Food Authority
SVERIGE (Sweden)	Swedish Board of Agriculture (Jordbruksverket)
SVERIGE (Sweden)	Swedish Food Agency
Non-EU States	Ministry or National body
<i>LIECHTENSTEIN</i> (Liechtenstein)	Food and Veterinary Office, Liechtenstein
<i>NOREG/NORGE</i> (Norway)	Ministry of Agriculture and Food
<i>North Macedonia</i>	Food and Veterinary Agency
<i>SUISSE/SVIZZERA/SCHWEIZ</i> (Switzerland)	Swiss Federal Office for Agriculture
<i>SUISSE/SVIZZERA/SCHWEIZ</i> (Switzerland)	Swiss Federal Office for National Economic Supply, Food Supply Secretariat
<i>CPBIJA</i> (Serbia)	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management
<i>CPBIJA</i> (Serbia)	Ministry of Health
<i>CPBIJA</i> (Serbia)	Veterinary Directorate - Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management
<i>KOSOVO</i> (Kosovo)	Kosovo Food and Veterinary Agency

<i>KOSOVO</i> (Kosovo)	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development
<i>KOSOVO</i> (Kosovo)	Ministry of Industry, Entrepreneurship and Trade
<i>ICELAND</i>	Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries
<i>MONACO</i> (Monaco)	DIRECTION ACTION SANITAIRE
<i>CRNA GORA/ЦРНА ГОРА</i> (Montenegro)	Administration for food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary affaires
<i>ANDORRA</i> (Andorra)	Ministeri de Salut - Andorra
<i>FAROE ISLANDS</i> (Faroe Islands)	Ministry of Environment, Industry and Trade
<i>FAROE ISLANDS</i> (Faroe Islands)	Mission of the Faroes to the EU
<i>SAN MARINO</i> (San Marino)	uos sanità veterinaria e igiene alimentare
	EP COMAGRI
	European Food Safety Agency (EFSA)
	EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
Organization	
	EFTA
	EESC
	EESC
	AREFLH (Assemblée des Régions Européennes Fruitières, Légumières et Horticoles)
	ARVI - Cooperativa de Armadores de Pesca del Puerto de Vigo
	AVEC
	BEUC
	CELCAA
	CEMA - European Agricultural Machinery Industry

	Association
	COCERAL
	Cogeca
	COPA
	EDA European Dairy Association
	EFFAB
	ePURE – European renewable ethanol
	ePURE – European renewable ethanol
	EuroCommerce
	European Coordination Via Campesina
	European Council of Young Farmers (CEJA)
	European Federation for Animal Health, Hygiene and Food Safety (FESASS)
	EUROPEAN FLOUR MILLERS
	European Food Banks Federation
	Europen
	Euroseeds
	Fediot
	FEAP
	FEFAC
	FEFANA - EU Association of Specialty Feed Ingredients and their Mixtures
	Fertilizers Europe
	FoodDrinkEurope
	FOUR PAWS / VIER PFOTEN
	FRESHFEL
	FVE
	International Road Transport Union (IRU)

	Nagel-Group
	UNISTOCK