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## Thresholds and compromises for the organic farming sector

Dear Mr Hogan

Thank you for the discussions during your stay in Denmark. We are thankful that you took the time to visit Danish farmers and I am pleased with your interest in the organic farming sector and your efforts to achieve compromises for the new organic regulation.

You asked for help to reach a compromise on the issue of presence of non-authorized products and substances on organic products. From our point of view it is possible to maintain and strengthen consumer confidence without jeopardizing the livelihoods of the organic farmers, but the organic producer may only be held responsible for his own management and production and not for background contamination in general.

We would like to introduce the following approaches. The new organic regulation should ensure:

- a) Harmonized approach from control bodies when a contamination is detected. A common action level defining the minimum effort from the control bodies. As a starting point, the burden of proof lies with the control body.
- b) Automatic declassification only, if:
  - non-authorized products were used by the organic farmer
  - if contamination appears to be the result of actions that are comparable to active use on the organic farm (e.g. fields or parts of fields by accident treated with non-authorized substances)
  - if the organic farmer has been careless and violated the provisions on boundaries and separations to non-organic production.

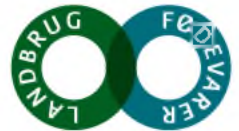
### The benefits of new thresholds is too limited

We fear that new declassification levels will have a negative impact on the conversion to organic farming, and we fear that it will contribute to a non-desirable atmosphere among organic and conventional farmers.

We believe that consumers will understand that organic products are produced in an open environment that affects the final product, for better or for worse, and we are confident that consumers will buy the organic products because of practices and management in the organic production - because the organic farmers do not use pesticides as the conventional farmers.

**The Danish Agriculture & Food Council** is a trade association representing agriculture, the food and agro industries. With annual exports in excess of DKK 156 billion and with 169,000 employees, we represent one of Denmark's most important business sectors.

Through innovation and promotion of the industry's contribution to society, we work to ensure a strong position for our members in Denmark as well as in international markets.



We have confidence in the EU maximum residue levels to ensure when food is safe to eat and when to be cautious, and we fear that different levels might result in mistrust of the existing maximum residue levels.

Agriculture is intensive all over Denmark. Organic and conventional farmers are located side by side all over the whole country. The farmers respect each other and good relations and dialogue among neighbours ensure that the contamination of organic products in general is negligible, however never 100% avoidable.

#### **Prosulfocarb contaminates Danish organic fruit**

Prosulfocarb is a well-known herbicide preferred by many conventional farmers to reduce weed in cereals in the autumn. For the past three years, residues of prosulfocarb have been detected on organic fruit. This is frustrating for the organic farmer as well as the conventional farmer who is fulfilling all the requirements for spraying pesticide. A study from Aarhus University Denmark reveals that the annual wet deposition of prosulfocarb at two different locations is somewhere between 50-140 ug/m<sup>2</sup>. In 2014, wet deposition was measured to 104 og 115µg/m<sup>2</sup> for pesticides (19 different substances), of which more than 60% derived from prosulfocarb. The researchers concluded that 80% of the sprayed prosulfocarb evaporate from the leaves within 48 hours after spraying. Only an insignificant amount was lost to drift during the spraying. A significant amount of the detected prosulfocarb in Denmark is, however, expected to derive from other countries. Each year wet depositions of pesticides that are no longer used in Denmark are registered on Danish sampling sites. This reality makes declassification levels a nightmare for the organic farmers. We fear distrust among neighbours, potentially long-lasting legal challenges for the farmers without benefits or advantages for the organic production or consumption, and we fear that Danish farmers will hesitate to convert their farms.

The control of a product's organic status should be process-oriented and not mainly based on pesticides residue analyses. For this and the reasons above we are not in line with the position from the Commission on this subject.

We hope you will find our contribution useful and we would be happy to provide you with more information, if it can be helpful to you and the coming negotiations

Yours sincerely

