

From: [REDACTED] (AGRI.DDG3.G.3)

To: VISEK Lukas [REDACTED]; SCANNELL Michael (AGRI.DDG3) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Cc:

Title: Meeting of the EVP Timmermans with the Livestock Voice - 31 May 2021

Participants:

Livestock Voice: [REDACTED] (AVEC), [REDACTED] (EFFAB), [REDACTED] (COPA-COGECA), [REDACTED] (CLITRAVI), [REDACTED] (UECBV), [REDACTED] (Animal Health Europe), [REDACTED] (FEFAC) [REDACTED] (COTANCE), [REDACTED] (FEFANA),

European Commission: EVP Timmermans, Lukas Visek (CAB-Timmermans) - [REDACTED] (DG AGRI)

The **main points raised** by Livestock Voice were:

- **Lack of dialogue** with the Commission services in the design of the Green Deal, F2F and related initiatives. They were not consulted and had not many opportunities to present their position.
- The **lack of an impact assessment** on the Farm to Fork as a package; the interrelation among the different initiative cannot be overlooked.
- The **influence of fake news and over-simplification on political decisions** that should be science-based.
- The sector realised that something had to be done since the beginning but they have been out of the debate and **cannot find ways to convey their ideas**.
- The sector feels that **many initiatives will hit the sector** without a duly justified scientific reason (FOPNL – environmental labelling – promotion review, etc.).

Tour de table

[REDACTED] (AVEC)

- Introduced Livestock voice (LV) a multi-stakeholder group representing the main organisations along the livestock value chain, from breeders and farmers to meat industry, including feed production, leather sectors as well as the animal health industry.
- **LV agrees that action is needed**; they truly believe livestock is part of the solution to environmental and climate problems.
- The livestock chain started to deliver many years ago (by increasing productivity – reducing land use).
- They asked this meeting since they believe the **debate around livestock is unbalanced** and this could lead to take unconsciously wrong decisions for the sector.
- Together we have to ensure a constructive dialogue to achieve the changes needed.

- People living in cities are always more far and distant from the countryside and rural areas and this leads to an altered perception of the rural world.

(EFFAB)

- Huge diversity of farming systems in different landscapes. **Farmers are directly impacted by climate change** as they are in the front line. Therefore, they have been working on sustainability for many years, on a daily basis. The entire value chain wants to continue working hard for the survival of rural areas.
- The scientific community recognizes the **limit of current methods (LCA) to evaluate livestock impact**.
- Avoid misinterpretations and simplifications. We need understanding and rewarding, not fake news. **Policy should be based on a scientific basis, not on personal beliefs**.
- Some examples: we talk about intensive farming but **EU livestock farming is mainly composed by family farms**. Animal welfare is at the heart of the system. Intensive and factory are unfair terms that portray a negative idea.
- Land use: ruminants use marginal land and grass is the main feed; in this sense they produce high value protein using non-edible biomasses.
- Poultry and pigs consume cereals competing with human but **feed conversion in the EU is among the highest in the world** and protein from animal sources have a greater biological value.
- On water consumption, it is never said that **90% of water used by livestock come from rain** on grassland.
- On the other side, the positive outcomes of livestock are overlooked: preservation of grassland and landscape, production of organic fertiliser (key to reach F2F targets).

(COPA-COGECA)

- Lot of work in animal sectors. GHG emissions went down considerably since 1990. EU efficiency is one of the highest in the world, but to progress more we need new breeding technologies available in the EU, as well as value redistribution along the chain.
- Worried by the fact that **the biggest political initiative of the last decades is not based on an impact assessment**. Interaction of different initiatives cannot be overlooked.
- Is the Commission committed to new technologies and to provide a fair environment in supply chains where uptake of new technologies will be available also from small and medium farms?

(EDA)

- In the dairy sector all big players committed immediately to the Green deal vision and targets. Many already had initiatives to reach zero emissions by 2050.
- However, **the positive spirit faded away for lack of dialogue**.
- The sector feels that many initiatives will hit the sector without a duly justified scientific reason (FOPNL – environmental labelling – promotion review, etc.).
- These initiatives are based on prejudices.

(UECBV)

- Eating is more than nutrients intake. Is a cultural habit.
- More than 150 products from livestock: they are key for circular economy.

(CLITRAVI)

- Need for a constant dialogue and how the narrative is perceived outside. We are all committed to the final goals; the problem is communication on how we can arrive to these goals.

(Animal Health Europe)

- Changing an industrial method is easier but agriculture depends on nature, we cannot control everything. The sector is fully committed to reduce by 50% antimicrobial use in livestock. Many new technologies exist (**#morethanmedicine campaign**)

(COTANCE) (leather sector)

- We are not consider in the F2F but we do have a problem with a number of issues. The main relates to “Authenticity”: too many products can use the term leather.

EVP Timmermans replies

- Thanked for the good and open exchange.
- Agree we should not be spreading fake news and not simplify complex issues but **this often came also from the production side.**
- We need to **invest in new technology (broadband – precision farming – reducing pesticide – reducing medication in livestock farming).**
- More direct support should go to farmers. If livestock farming is mainly a family business, one **would expect more support for the proposed eco-schemes**, since they will redistribute more funds to small and medium farms more environmental friendly, while they were strongly opposed by your associations.
- **We didn't set a target for reducing livestock or meat consumption** but our aim is to inform people but not telling them what to eat. **Eating behaviour changes:** beef consumption decreased in last years while poultry consumption is going up (consumer's choices linked to health reasons).
- We have to create a **fair international trade environment** with a level playing field (we also export a lot, not only import).
- We recognise the effort already done by the sectors, but **we should continue pushing.**
- All the food chain must be sustainable. This is a responsibility of all actors (including consumers).
- Sustainability is not only about emissions, but also social (social conditionality) and economics.
- We are now focusing on your sectors. Eating is linked to our culture and our fundamental values. However, things change among generations. There are cultural developments, independently from policies put in place. **The fact that citizens are worried by the climate crisis and biodiversity losses has consequences on eating habits.** We have to anticipate something that is coming. **Biodiversity and F2F strategies are part of this anticipation. Properly informing consumers is part of the process.**

- All economic sectors are challenged by the climate change. In transport or building, we are asking huge changes.
- If you feel unfairly treated this can be resolved. If we made mistakes, we can resolve it, but **I cannot soften the message on the challenge of the transition all the sectors have to pursue.**
- Public attention is increasing and public perception is negative. Sometimes this is justified sometimes not because animal related issues are very emotional.
- **Intensification can have devastating effects.** New methods and technologies can create a balance with the environment but the mind of people is still on devastating effects.
- On the specific problem of the leather industry, we have to look into the issue but we are open to find a solution.
- Investing in innovation is fundamental (Horizon and CAP) but innovation should be accessible to the farming community (example of additives) and for this enhancing cooperation is very important.

 (AVEC)

There will be a livestock summit later this year. We expect your participation and the commitment of your team to further discuss all the topics raised today.

EVP Timmermans

Glad to participate in the summit. Cabinet is open to discuss openly and in a transparent way.

Aware of the tension around the debate on livestock but **we should not be silent on the challenges the sector still has to face.**

Agriculture used to be a closed shop where only a few people had the right to talk. Now society is getting more and more informed and sometimes society has preconception and is only partially informed. You should not be worried. Once we establish a good dialogue many of these preconceptions will go. **We should look at society participation as a good thing**, as an opportunity. We will never come back to a situation where only experts can discuss about agriculture.