

**From:** [REDACTED] (JUST)  
**Sent:** mercredi 5 avril 2017 10:10  
**To:** [REDACTED] (CAB-JOUROVA)  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] (JUST); [REDACTED] (JUST); [REDACTED] (JUST); [REDACTED] (JUST); [REDACTED] (JUST); [REDACTED] (JUST)  
**Subject:** Flash report - meeting with AIM on dual quality of foodstuffs – 04/04/2017  
**Categories:** Dual quality food

Dear [REDACTED]

Following our meeting of yesterday with AIM, please find below a flash report drafted with [REDACTED]

**Meeting with AIM on dual quality of foodstuffs – 04/04/2017**

AIM (European Brands association): [REDACTED]

Commission: [REDACTED]

Following their meeting with [REDACTED] on 13 March, AIM requested a meeting with Commissioner Jourová's Cabinet. AIM referred to a recent discussion of their Board on the issue and explained that the issue of dual quality should not be perceived as an East/West issue and that the adaptation of their members' products is a usual practice also among the EU15 Member States and worldwide. Consistency of quality within a specific market is most important for brands. AIM insisted however that most of products marketed under the same brands are the same and that small differences can be justified by the adaptation to the market, especially for food, to the quality of raw materials which can vary and to the fact that some producers are encouraged by MS to source locally, which can explain differences in the production. For detergents, differences can be explained by water quality and consumer behaviour (e.g. over-dosage). They also referred that every year composition/recipe of around 170,000 branded products are re-formulated.

Regarding the tests performed in particular in HU, AIM mentioned that the differences showed by these tests are limited and can be easily explained. They consider however that the interpretation given to the test results by politicians is a different one. According to AIM "facts are relative". Therefore, it is mostly a question how to address perceptions. AIM added that the issue of dual quality should not be considered on the basis of bilateral comparisons. Further comparison would be needed involving more than 2 countries to show that it is not an East vs West issue. The example of fish fingers was mentioned and AIM. The product tested in SK contains 58% of fish which is also the case for those sold in the UK, NL and PT (whilst in AT fish content is higher).

AIM members in CZ, SK and HU have contacted local consumer organisations, whilst AIM has been discussing the issue with BEUC.

[REDACTED] stated that the EC had reacted to the issue in a rather technical way until 2016. Now, however, the issue is at the political level, in particular due to political sensitivities in the Visegrad

countries [redacted] referred to the AGRI countries where also other Member States (also from EU15) raised concerns. Commissioner Jourová was tasked to take the lead on the issue. The Commission currently is aiming to gather data. It will not promise anything it cannot deliver.

The Commission asked AIM whether they could share any data that would demonstrate that issue is not an East vs West issue (e.g. the fish fingers example) and that would provide explanations for differences depending on the markets; AIM will check with its members. The Commission encouraged traders to communicate about the situation and the fact that they can explain the difference in the composition of some products. It was discussed whether it would be feasible to add the mention of the country near the brand, to indicate for which market the product is offered to consumers in case there are different compositions under the same brands (in addition to a different labelling if required). AIM raised the costs linked to the labelling and the complexity for the supply chain. This issue will be however be raised with AIM's members.

Regarding prices, AIM argued that producers are not responsible for them as they are fixed by the retailers on the basis of the market conditions in the relevant countries (e.g. competition, purchasing power, taxes etc.).

AIM requested more information on facts and in particular on complaints as their members have not been flooded with complaints.

[redacted] explained that the national authorities within the CPC Network were asked to provide information, data on complaints and evidence they would have on such topic. There will be discussions in the high level forum for a better functioning food supply chain in June (possibly at higher level than Sherpas) and then in December at Ministers level. The issue of dual quality will probably also be discussed again in the AGRI Council.

AIM mentioned that they are invited to the EP on 11/04 as well as [redacted]. They will also check if they can attend other meetings/seminars that will be organised on such issue.

Best regards,

[redacted]

[redacted]  
[redacted]



European Commission

