



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL  
REGIONAL AND URBAN POLICY (REGIO)  
Smart and Sustainable Growth and Programmes Implementation IV  
**Director**

Brussels,

REGIO/[REDACTED] (2020)

**NOTE TO Ms A. BUCHER  
DIRECTOR-GENERAL DG SANTE**

**Subject:** Inter-service Consultation – Communication ‘A Farm to Fork Strategy – for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system’

**Reference:** Consultation ISC/2020/01398 of 03.03.2020 (Internal reference Ares(2020)1333725) (Deadline 13.03.2020)

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Reply of DG REGIO to an inter-service consultation launched by DG SANTE:

- ☐ Agreement
- ☒ Favourable opinion subject to account being taken of the following comments
- ☐ Negative Opinion

Contact person: [REDACTED]

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**Comments:**

Thank you for consulting DG REGIO. We welcome the draft Farm to Fork Strategy and its ambition for achieving a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system. However, we regret that our comments communicated on the earlier version have not been taken into account.

For REGIO, the following issues are problematic and raise further questions:

- The issue of a just transition should be further elaborated in the strategy. In section 1., it is noted that the transition to a sustainable food system should be a just transition, benefiting all citizens and economic players. However, it is important to specify how the Commission intends to support and ensure a just transition in the regions dependent on the sectors that will be most affected and need to undergo a substantial transformation (incl. agriculture, food, fertiliser industry, etc.). More specifically, concrete actions, including the use of instruments at EU level, to mitigate the potential negative effects of the transition (on both supply and demand sides) should be included and described in the strategy.
- In section 2., and in line with the Communication on Boosting Growth and Cohesion in EU border Regions, it should be noted that Member States should

make sure to cater for the possible impact on neighbouring regions as well as ensure that new obstacles are not created in the supply chains across borders, in particular in neighbouring border regions.<sup>1</sup>

- Sustainable food production also implies more local and nearby food production. In section 2.1., the role of local level should be acknowledged (i.e. LEADER/CLLD), especially in relation to supporting local food production, food safety, innovation, etc. This should also include local food production and sales across borders within border regions without additional border obstacles.
- In section 3.1., the contribution of the cohesion policy to innovation in the sustainable food value chains across Europe, through smart specialisation needs to be acknowledged. Around 20% of smart specialisation priorities focuses on agriculture, food and related areas. Within the framework of Smart Specialisation Platform for Agri-Food, many regions are cooperating in these sectors, developing joint investment projects and contributing to a more competitive and sustainable EU food supply chains and more resilient food systems.
- In section 3.2., a tailored support should be envisaged for the EU outermost regions with tropical and sub-tropical climate and crops in order to find tailored solutions to fight pests, to ensure that the Farm to Fork Strategy is in line with the communication of the European Green Deal.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, the role of the citizens and the need to raise awareness should be emphasised. In this regard, and with its broad outreach cohesion policy, including its territorial cooperation dimension can make an important contribution.
- In section 3.3., we suggest to include an additional action, for which the EU can have an impact. Notably we suggest that the EU promotes sustainable food systems in the Overseas Countries and Territories, including through cooperation with the EU outermost regions.

We therefore propose the following modifications of the text:

## Section 2. The way forward

“<...> By end 2023, a legislative framework for sustainable food systems will be proposed to recognise performance of front-runner and gradually raise sustainability standards so as to become the norm for product placed on the EU market. **Member States should cater for the possible impact on neighbouring border regions in the legislative processes. Where Member States will be obliged to transpose EU Directives they should ensure that, their national transposition provisions do not create new obstacles in the supply chains across borders, in particular in neighbouring border regions.**<sup>3</sup> <...>”

### Section 2.1. Ensuring sustainable food production

“<...> New business models, better advice and knowledge transfer, as well as adequate pricing signals will improve the way primary producers are working and increasingly put them at the centre of a food value chain that promotes circular use of food resources.

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<sup>1</sup> Communication on “Boosting growth and cohesion in EU border regions” COM(2017) 534 final

<sup>2</sup> “[The Commission] will pay particular attention to the role of outermost regions in the European Green Deal, taking into account their vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters and their unique assets: biodiversity and renewable energy sources.” COM(2019)640

<sup>3</sup> In line with the 2017 Communication on “Boosting growth and cohesion in EU border regions” COM(2017) 534 final

**Sustainable food production implies also more local and nearby food production. This should include local food production and sales across borders within border regions without additional obstacles. <...>**

### Section 3.1. Research, innovation and technology

“<...> In particular, a mission in the area of soil health and food will aim at developing solutions for restoring soil health and soil functions.

**In addition, the European Regional Development Fund, through smart specialisation, will invest in innovation and collaboration along the European sustainable food value chains. Around 20% of the smart specialisation priorities focuses on agriculture, food, and related areas. Within the framework of the Smart Specialisation Platform for Agri-Food, many regions are cooperating in agriculture and food sectors and thereby accelerating the development of joint investment projects in the EU as well as contributing to a more competitive and sustainable EU food supply chain and more resilient food system.**

The R&I actions will advance knowledge, build capacities and develop innovative solutions <...>”

### Section 3.2 **Tailored support,** advisory services, data and knowledge sharing

“<...> Integrated pest management should become a common standard for every farmer and advisory services have a crucial role to play in making this happen. Advisory services are also key to reducing excess use of nutrients and promoting the appropriate use of antimicrobials. **The EU will support its outermost regions with tropical and sub-tropical climate and crops to find tailored solutions to fight pests.** The Commission will develop a Farm Sustainability Data Network that will allow primary producers to monitor not only their economic results but also their environmental and climate performance. <...>”

“<...>”Ensuring life-long learning opportunities – in school education, professional and on-the-job training – to build knowledge and appreciation for the value of food is critical foundation to achieve sustainable food consumption. **Citizens should also be involved in the implementation of this strategy. With its broad outreach cohesion policy, including its territorial cooperation dimension can make an important contribution in this respect.** <...>”

### Section 3.3. Promoting the global transition

“<...> To support a global move towards sustainable food systems the EU will:

- **Promote sustainable food systems in the Overseas Countries and Territories, including through cooperation with the EU outermost regions for capacity building and technology transfer.**

REGIO is ready to discuss any of these in more detail or to propose alternative drafting solutions. In line with our comments above, we can also propose a specific drafting suggestion on the just transition.

Nicola De Michelis