Ref. Ares(2021)7836793 - 17/12/2021

UECBV
European Livestock and Meat Trades Union

Brussels, 19/11/2020
UECBV Ref: 20038

FARM TO FORK STRATEGY: NEED FOR ACTION

UECBV POSITION PAPER

UECBV strongly welcomes the initiative of the European Commission to make the European food sector the global front-runner in the area of sustainability. Europe's meat is already recognized as a world leader in terms of safeness and quality. The European meat sector has the same ambition for sustainability.

UECBV and its members therefore will play an active role in the Farm to Fork (F2F) strategy. Moreover, the EU meat sector is already realizing significant achievements for many elements of the F2F strategy. The use of antibiotics has already been reduced strongly. Animal welfare has been improved steadily. Green House Gas (GHG) emissions have been reduced significantly.

The European meat sector profoundly supports the initiative to significantly raise the sustainability standards in the EU in a harmonized way, without punishing the frontrunners. We also seek a fair and balanced approach across sectors of the economy and accuracy and balance in the dialogue on this important EU initiative.

Mitigating impact of meat on environment, important role for meat in a healthy diet

Given the above, UECBV deeply regrets that as regards meat, the Commission's F2F paper included two over-simplified elements:

- Meat is bad for the environment
- Meat is unhealthy

As requested by the AGRI-FISH Council, all measures to be adopted must be based on an ex-ante impact analysis, science-based facts, and accurate data being used by the Commission.
Meat production has its part regarding the impact on the environment, e.g. on GHG emissions. However, during the last years many efforts have been made to mitigate this impact. As the Commission in its papers is stating, the EU agricultural sector has already significantly reduced GHG emissions.
Furthers steps have to be made. The EU meat sector will make its contribution to the longer-term objective for a climate neutral Union in 2050 and to the more short-term objectives of the 2030 climate target plan. Many initiatives are taken and will be taken in near future. GHG calculation must be holistic, taking on board also the benefits of the livestock sector for maintaining the grasslands, developing carbon sink and biodiversity.

Concerning the role of meat in a healthy diet, UECBV does want to emphasize that there do exist many misunderstandings and misinterpretations in this area. Misunderstandings and misinterpretations in relation to recommended and factual intake/consumption figures, research results and nutritional values and importance. Any policy in this respect should be based on a better understanding of these elements.

All policies related to promoting sustainable food consumption and facilitating the shift to healthy, sustainable diets, have to take into account meat has been and continues to be an important food source delivering a wide range of valuable nutrients that can easily be absorbed. UECBV considers it is closer to the reality to promote a "balanced diet". The balanced diet varies a lot depending of age, sex, geographic area, affordability, physical activities, taste, etc.

81A rue de la Loi (bte 9) - 1040 BRUXELLES, Belgique Tel: 32 (0) 2 230 46 03 - Fax: 32 (0) 2 230 94 00
E-mail: info@uecbv.eu – Web: www.uecbv.eu
EU Transparency Register: 4422649896-52

Important role for meat industry in the communication with the consumer

We support the objective of the Commission to better communicate with the consumers and provide them with affordable healthy and sustainable food. UECBV would like to underline that the meat industry has to market the products of the European livestock farmers and in this way is acting as the intermediate between farmer and consumer. The meat industry companies are willing to play this important role within the Farm to Fork strategy and to take their responsibility.

The livestock and meat sector brings many services to the society

In addition to providing highly nutritious food, important for a healthy diet, the EU livestock sector provides **numerous valuable by-products but also services to our society**, mainly in rural areas; biodiversity, raw materials / components for the manufacturing of consumer products such as pharmaceutical products, cosmetics, leather, wool and fur products, feed for food producing animals and pet food, biodiesel, porcelain, insulation material whilst preserving rural communities, families, natural fertilizers, nature, biodiversity and landscapes.

Resilience of EU livestock and meat sector

In its document the European Commission notes that "The COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the importance of a robust and resilient food system that functions in all circumstances, and is capable of ensuring access to a sufficient supply of affordable food for citizens. It has also made us acutely aware of the interrelations between our health, ecosystems, supply chains, consumption patterns and planetary boundaries."

UECBV would like to stress that the actual COVID-19 crisis has made evident that the EU meat sector is already very robust and resilient. In comparison to many other (industrial) sectors, meat production did not face any challenge in relation to complicated and hampering supply chains. And even when a significant part of the market (foodservice) was closed because of the measures taken by national authorities to mitigate the spreading of the disease, the meat sector was largely able reschedule and redirect its sales and markets. As a result, the meat sector was one of the least supported sectors in Europe.

However, new measures to be taken should take into account the present context of the pandemic and the fragile conditions that EU experiences both in economic and social terms.

Tax treatment: many complexities involved

Meat contains high profile nutrients that make it fully part of a balanced and healthy diet. It stands in the same tax scope as other healthy foods. When using tax measures to guide the transition to more sustainable production systems, the proper functioning of the internal market should be safeguarded. Any policy in this respect on national or European level should furthermore be non-discriminatory and proportional.

Promoting the global transition: relevance of meat sector

The European Commission intends to promote the global transition to sustainable production by means of bilateral agreements and multilateral standards. UECBV strongly welcomes and supports this. There is however an important third way of realizing this.

The EU meat sector, thanks to its high standards of safety and quality, has access to all markets in the world. EU meat exporters are selling and promoting their high standards products all over the world. In their communication with actual and potential clients, these exporters are also strongly referring to the sustainable character of their products and the high level of animal welfare. More and more this becomes a unique selling point. But it also creates a demand for sustainable products in these markets. And it is in this way a big promoter and driver of global transition.

The European Commission should facilitate and encourage this process. By facilitating and supporting the export of sustainable meat from Europe. Specifically, by supporting the export of EU meat (being the global front-runner in terms of sustainability) with the existing EU (export) promotion programmes.

81A rue de la Loi (bte 9) - 1040 BRUXELLES, Belgique Tel: 32 (0) 2 230 46 03 - Fax: 32 (0) 2 230 94 00
E-mail: info@uecbv.eu – Web: www.uecbv.eu
EU Transparency Register: 4422649896-52

In this respect it is also crucial to mention the important role of exports for the sustainable transition in Europe. Certain meat cuts are less desired and less valued by European consumers. By valorizing these cuts in non-EU markets with strong preferences for these cuts, value is added to the revenues of the livestock sector so the necessary investments for the sustainable transition can be made.

UECBV would like to highlight its support to the Chief Enforcement Trade Officer and to the prinicple of level playing field.

Animal Welfare

EU legislation ensures the highest level of animal welfare in the world, including in intensive farms. It is important to remind the existing rules and the achievements. Efforts can still be made on the enforcement. Improvement of the legislation can be looked for, but it is important to ensure a harmonized implementation and an acceptance from trade partners to implement equivalent requirements.

Economic and social value of the EU meat sector

To end, UECBV would like to refer to the substantial contribution of the meat sector to the European economy (€170 billion annually, 40% of the total agricultural activity) and to employment (direct jobs for 4 million people and indirectly for 30 million people). And to the important role that livestock and meat production do play the rural areas in many EU Member States. The meat sector as a whole significantly contributes to the maintenance of rural areas and their attractiveness. Behind every livestock farm 7 jobs are maintained in rural areas.

Need for an EU harmonised approach

UECBV would like to flag the dangers that national initiatives have consequences for the legislative measures that will be discussed at EU level. In many cases Member States take advantage on a certain issue and regulate it nationally, without waiting for an EU harmonised solution. The idea spreads to other countries do the same (for example, origin labelling, FOP), and when the EU Commission comes with a formal proposal it is already late and really complex to harmonise it. In this sense we could remind that TRIS Regulation states that once a Common Position is agreed, Member States should refrain from taking any initiative . Moreover, UECBV would welcome a change of TRIS Regulation and bring this limit a bit earlier – once the Commission has adopted a formal draft proposal. If we want common, clear rules that do not disturb the Internal Market, and any interference from the side of Member States should be avoided.

UECBV is fully available to cooperate and to work closer with the Commission services and the EU Institutions. Meat is often under the focus of attention, any progress can only be made in cooperation with the sector itself.

The **European Livestock and Meat Trades Union (UECBV)**, founded in 1952, is the EU voice of national federations representing livestock markets, livestock traders (cattle, horses, sheep, pigs), meat traders (beef, horsemeat, sheepmeat, pigmeat), and meat industry (slaughterhouses, cutting plants and meat preparation plants).

Brought together within the UECBV are:

- an international association i.e. the **European Association of Livestock Markets (AEMB)**;
- a **Young European Meat Committee (YEMCo)**;
- the **European Natural Sausage Casings Association (ENSCA)**
- the **Organisation of European Shipsuppliers (OCEAN)**
- fifty-three national or regional federations in twenty-four of the twenty-eight Member States of the European Union, as well as Japan, Norway, Russia, Switzerland and Ukraine.

In total, some 20,000 firms of all sizes and 230,000 jobs are represented within the UECBV through its national member federations.

EU Transparency Register: 4422649896-52

81A rue de la Loi (bte 9) - 1040 BRUXELLES, Belgique Tel: 32 (0) 2 230 46 03 - Fax: 32 (0) 2 230 94 00
E-mail: info@uecbv.eu – Web: www.uecbv.eu
EU Transparency Register: 4422649896-52