

06/03/2023

**Meeting of Cabinet Member, Ms Joanna Stawowy, Deputy HoC, Mr Jorge Pinto Antunes, and 4.1(b)-privacy (AGRI B.2) with Avebe (Schuttelaar & Partners) on the European Green Deal and the EU Soil Health Strategy.**

**AVEBE Participants list:**

1. Mr 4.1(b)-privacy
2. Mr 4.1(b)-privacy
3. Mr 4.1(b)-privacy
4. Mr 4.1(b)-privacy
5. Ms 4.1(b)-privacy

Avebe – cooperative gathering more than 2000 members, featuring 1300 professionals who are working on achieving sustainable future by using and improving the potato protein production. In 2019, they received the honorary Royal Warrant of the Netherlands.

Schuttelaar & Partners – organization gathering multidisciplinary teams of consultants, communication and public affairs advisors, designers and digital developers contributing to a healthier and more sustainable planet.

**Avebe and Schuttelaar & Partners perspective**

**1. The Sustainable Use of Pesticides Regulation (SUR)**

The guests were keen to know if SUR legislation is challenging each MS differently and some sectors; what is the timeline of the SUR adoption; on what aspect is the 50% reduction focused on (sales); what possibilities precision farming offers in achieving the reduction; what the COM will do if there won't be any alternatives on the market amid the farmers' loss resulting from less use of pesticides – is it sustainable if the change leads to farmers bankruptcy? They also shared that the major challenge in potato cultivation on plant protection products usage is *Phytophthora spp.*

**2. The (legislative) development of New Genomic Techniques**

Avebe works with 3 potatoes varieties with diverse resistance. Conventional breeding of a variety takes up to 10 years of development to turn the variety into a full-scale production because of the back-crossing (elimination of unwanted traits and stabilization of the wanted ones).

Guests wanted to know if there is a development in the attitude towards NGTs. They also presented that they are working on the potato variety and if their example of potato production could be considered a good example for policymakers. The Managing Partner at Schuttelaar & Partners shared his concerns on the differences between organic farmers and conventional ones in a future, when the conventional production will be more sustainable (e.g by using NGT techniques). He expressed the comparability of the effects on the environment and asked about the border line between sustainable and organic production. He was also interested in the approach of the COM to different NGT techniques.

**3. The EU Soil Health Law**

What are the steps towards ensuring health and high quality of soils? How does the COM expect the future regulatory framework to impact farmers?

#### **4. The fertilizer crisis**

It is a struggle to support circular farming processes with current regulatory framework. Not enough incentives are provided for the farmers to manage the production according to the Good Agricultural Practices. Guests explained their specific problem with circulation and waste management of the sludge from their production process. It cannot be used as a fertiliser because of the higher copper content, but the content is still lower than the one in the pig manure. They will provide more details on their national situation in Netherlands.

### **CAB Wojciechowski & DG AGRI perspective**

#### **1. The Sustainable Use of Pesticides Regulation (SUR)**

The COM recalled that the lead on the file has DG SANTE. All MSs find the SUR implementation challenging, considering the ambitious reduction targets. The timeline is still very much open as it depends on the Council and the EP, although the Farm to Fork Strategy set the ultimate deliverables for 2030. CAP will support financially transitional period of 2 years for new conditions and requirements emerged from SUR. The most problematic aspect is the lack of data that hinders future evaluation processes. The COM could have data on sales (SAIO Regulation) to better quantify and evaluate every stage of the transition as regards the target of 50 % achievement (but still depending on Member states agreement on the methods improving data collection). The COM doesn't find precision farming a silver bullet solution even though they are one out of two tools used in the transition apart from alternatives (indeed potential effect could be mitigated due the current input price rise which invite farmer to be thrifty).

#### **2. The (legislative) development of New Genomic Techniques**

The COM shared that the lead on the file has DG SANTE. From DG AGRI perspective, there are 2 main concerns: 1) coexistence of conventional and organic farming and consumers' trust in the value of NGT as new technic for safety reason; and 2) creating financial burdens on farmers with patented seed varieties. The COM wants to provide farmers with modern tools to support them.

COM representatives broad up the idea of transparency on the locality of NGT variety cultivation. COM is looking for good examples of NGTs contributing to sustainability in order to create wider positive reaction towards them among the consumers.

The COM representatives explained the difference in regulatory framework of organic and sustainable farming and reassured the guests that the COM wants to provide the farmers the right to choose.

#### **3. The EU Soil Health Law**

The COM shared that the impact assessment was finalised in mid-January and it has been sent to the RSB. The COM informed proposal would focus on: 1) better monitoring of soil state in MSs, which requires identification of a set/range of indicators; 2) better planning so that the MS can reflect on the future of their soils; 3) rehabilitation of contaminated soils. After adoption of the proposal in June this year, it will be discussed by the EP and the Council. The COM is also establishing a Mission on Soil Health containing living labs, discussion groups and research support as a key enabler for the Sol Health Law.

#### **4. The fertilizer crisis**

The COM has published a Communication on fertilizers where the importance of supporting circularity within the agricultural sector is underlined. It would be useful for the COM to have information on practical barriers to circularity and a methodology and/or good examples to showcase positive impacts of changes; and help improve the narrative around positive contribution of farmers. The COM suffers from the lack of data.