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Report Name: EU Member States Adopt Official Position on Farm to Fork Strategy

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Report Highlights:

On October 19, 2020, the EU Ministers of Agriculture adopted the Council Conclusions on the Farm to Fork Strategy. This document is the official position of the Member States on the Farm to Fork Strategy. It lays down the position of the Council on initiatives listed in the Strategy with regards to, inter alia, plant protection products, organic farming, food labeling, animal health and welfare, and biotechnology.

On October 19, 2020, the 27 EU Ministers of Agriculture met in the AGRIFISH Council and adopted [Council Conclusions on the Farm to Fork Strategy](#) (F2F). This document is the official position of the Member States on the F2F¹.

With these Conclusions, the Council endorsed the Commission's Strategy but warned that it needs to ensure sufficient and affordable food while contributing to EU climate neutrality by 2050. The Council also called on the Commission to base all legislative proposals on "thorough impact assessments. Following the adoption of the Conclusions, Julia Klöckner, Federal Minister for Food and Agriculture of Germany, who was chairing the meeting stated: "The unanimous decision reached is a crucial signal and a clear commitment to a sustainable and economically viable agri-food sector. For the first time, the entire food system is taken into account as a whole – from producers to consumers. It is a solid starting point and we are looking forward to working altogether the coming years towards a truly sustainable and fair food system in Europe and beyond."

In its Conclusions, the Council comments on the future proposals laid down in the Farm to Fork Strategy.

Plant Protection Products

On plant protection products, the Council takes note of the reduction targets for pesticides, antimicrobials and fertilizers as well as the other targets set out in the F2F Strategy². However, the Council points out that achieving those targets will require efforts from Member States and all stakeholders and intensive co-operation, consultation and collaboration. This is why the Council requests the Commission to "base legislative proposals on scientifically-sound ex-ante impact assessments describing the methods of calculation of the targets and the baselines and reference periods of each individual target, after consultation with the Member States." It adds that "successes already achieved, as well as Member States' different starting points, circumstances and conditions must be taken into account".

The Council also welcomes the Commission's intention to review import tolerances for pesticides and to take into account environmental aspects when assessing import tolerances applications, in accordance with WTO standards and obligations.

Organic Farming

On the topic of organic farming, the Council positively views the EU objective for EU's agricultural land under organic farming. In the F2F, the Commission sets a goal that 25 percent of agricultural lands should be used for organic farming, up from 8 percent currently. While the Council recognizes that organic farming can make an important contribution to sustainable food systems., it calls on the

¹ More information about F2F can be found in GAIN Report '[Green Deal Strategies for the EU Agri-Food Sector Present a Politically Ambitious Policy Roadmap](#)'.

² More information on the initiatives for plant protection products in the F2F can be found in GAIN Report '[Pesticides Initiatives in the EU Farm to Fork Strategy](#)'.

Commission to also assess other possible farming models that may deliver similar environmental benefits.

The Council also calls on the Commission to speed up the work on equivalence agreements with third countries in order to promote EU exports of organic products.

Food Labeling

The Council welcomes the Commission's proposal to develop an "harmonized science-based front-of-pack nutrition labelling scheme." However, the Council wants this new scheme to take into account existing national experience.

In the F2F³, the Commission also announced its desire to propose the extension of mandatory origin or provenance indications to certain products, while fully taking into account impacts on the single market before the end of 2022. In its Conclusions, the Council supports this initiative but emphasizes the need for "an impact assessment, including, for instance, the benefits for consumers and producers and the impact on the single market, of a harmonized approach to mandatory declarations of origin or provenance."

Animal Health and Welfare

On animal health and animal welfare, the Council agrees that existing animal welfare legislation needs to be reviewed. The Council notes that animal health and welfare are a precondition for sustainable livestock production, and that animal health is a precondition for a reduced need for antimicrobials. In that regard, the Council calls on the Commission to continue to promote "the prudent and responsible use of antimicrobials in order to preserve their efficacy for the treatment of infections in humans and animals."

Biotechnology

On biotechnology, the Council Conclusions welcome the Commission's observation that "new innovative ingredients and techniques may play a role in increasing sustainability, provided that they are safe for humans, animals and the environment, while bringing benefits for the society as a whole." The Council now awaits the Commission's study in light of the Court of Justice's judgement⁴ regarding the status of novel genomic techniques under EU legislation.

³ More information on the initiatives on food labeling in the F2F can be found in GAIN Report '[Food Labeling Initiatives in the EU Farm to Fork Strategy](#)'.

⁴ More information on the judgment can be found in GAIN Report '[EU Court Extends GMO Directive to New Plant Breeding Techniques](#)'.

Attachments:

No Attachments.