



The EU Promotion Policy: An essential tool to ensure the competitiveness and sustainability of the European livestock sector



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Online event

Hosted by **MEP Elsi Katainen**

Co-chair of the Sustainable Forest Management Working Group of the European Parliament
Intergroup on 'Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development'

Speakers:

- **MEP Elsi Katainen**
- **Nathalie Sauze-Vandevyver**, Director for Quality, Research & Innovation and Outreach, DG AGRI, European Commission
- **Erik Kam**, Head of Unit on Pigmeat, Danish Agriculture Council
- **Declan Coppinger**, Marketing Finance Manager, Bord Bia, Irish Food Board
- **Professor Alice Stanton**, Professor of Cardiovascular Pharmacology at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, and Director of Human Health at Devenish Nutrition
- **Jean-François Hocquette**, Research Director, INRAE (French National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and Environment)
- **Michele Spangaro**, Head of Office, ASSICA
- **Birthe Steenberg**, Secretary General, AVEC
- **Paolo Patruno**, Deputy Secretary General, CLITRAVI

In a nutshell

The aim of the event was to shed light on the importance of the EU Promotion Policy to ensure a **sustainable and competitive European livestock sector**, as the EU Promotion Policy is currently under revision. The EU Promotion Policy is a **crucial tool** to ensure European farmers and producers **access to international markets**. Competitiveness of European agriproducts is intertwined with the sustainability of the sector. Indeed, the sustainable quality of European products and their **high standards ensure European global competitiveness**. The new EU Promotion Policy can further **encourage the transition towards more sustainable farming and producing methods**. Yet, as meat and dairy products are part of a healthy and sustainable diet, the Policy should **not leave any sector aside**. **Better communication efforts** should be drawn towards the current international leadership of the EU in terms of environmental legislation and animal welfare.

Welcome remarks

MEP Elsi Katainen

“In the EU, we have numerous good examples of sustainable livestock farming which we should promote, incentivize, and boost in exports.”

Ms. Katainen started her intervention by recalling the importance of the EU Promotion Policy for European farmers and the food industry. As the EU Promotion Policy is being reviewed, the new one will need to meet the targets of the Farm to Fork Strategy and to be more reachable for small and medium players. The Commission is paying considerable attention to promoting healthy diets and sustainable food systems. However, Ms. Katainen emphasized that this should **not be done at the expense of meat and dairy products that are part of a healthy and sustainable diet**. Instead of excluding certain products, the EU Promotion Policy can be an **instrument to reward and move towards transition for more sustainable products**. Moreover, the EU should incentivize more sustainable ways to produce meat and dairy

products not only at the European level but also globally. The EU Promotion Policy is also an **important tool to increase EU competitiveness**, save market shares and adapt to new market challenges. To conclude, as quality, safety and traceability are the EU's strengths on the market and are what consumers are increasingly asking for, the EU Promotion Policy is a crucial tool for European farmers.

Keynote intervention by European Commission

Nathalie Sauze-Vandevyver, Director for Quality, Research & Innovation and Outreach, DG AGRI

“We must reflect more profoundly on how the EU Promotion Policy, with its current resource and structure, can ethically trigger a meaningful shift in the EU producing methods and consumption patterns, towards sustainability, while supporting the competitiveness of the agriculture sector.”

Ms. Sauze-Vandevyver first introduced the results of the evaluation of the EU Promotion Policy completed by the Commission in 2020. The evaluation found that the EU Promotion Policy had **broadly positive effects**, contributed effectively to the policy objectives, and its activities were deemed relevant and adding a clear EU added value. However, there is still **scope for improvements**. The evaluation recommended the review of the EU Promotion Policy examine how to increase the coherence of the EU Promotion Policy with other policies, particularly regarding **how it can support the transition towards a more sustainable EU agriculture sector**. Ms. Sauze-Vandevyver underlined the new EU Promotion Policy could become a powerful **tool to promote sustainably produced European food** and reward livestock farmers and agrifood producers that have embraced the transition towards more sustainable carbon efficient methods of livestock production. It could also provide incentives to other farmers and producers to start their transition towards sustainability. Therefore, the **new EU Promotion Policy should provide the right incentives to support the transition of the agrifood sector and ensure the transition is just and fair**. For the Commission, the new EU Promotion Policy should also contribute to promoting sustainable consumption by nudging consumers towards a more plant-based diet with less red and processed meat and

more fruits and vegetables. At the same time, the new EU Promotion Policy will still **aim to increase EU competitiveness, in particular** at the international level. Thus, it will continue to support the agrifood sector, with a focus on **promoting the sustainable quality of products and promoting EU standards globally.**

Panel discussion on the EU Promotion Policy

Erik Kam, Head of Unit on Pigmear, Danish Agriculture Council

“Compared to rest of the world, the European pork meat industry is at the forefront of sustainability. It is a key element in our communication strategy and a unique sales point vis-a-vis competitors from third countries.”

Mr. Kam highlighted the **crucial role of the EU Promotion Policy for EU farmers and food producers to gain access to international markets.** Mr. Kam recalled that the European pigmeat industry is already engaged in a sustainable agenda, with strong commitments on animal welfare, safety, traceability, and promised to reduce its CO₂ emissions as rapidly as possible. Mr. Kam underscored **sustainability as a key element in its communication strategy** as it is a unique sales point vis-a-vis competitors from third countries. Moreover, animal welfare standards, and the excellent quality of the meat thanks to transparent communication, food safety, and traceability standards in the EU are also key messages. The EU Promotion Policy is vital to communicate these messages to consumers so they can understand the higher price of European products. Therefore, the EU **should focus on exports of higher-value products.** Finally, as affordability is also a concern for numerous European consumers, Mr. Kam emphasized the need to inform them of EU agriculture standards to prevent cheap food imports from third countries.

Declan Coppinger, Marketing Finance Manager, Bord Bia, Irish Food Board

“It is important the EU continues to incentivize and reward climate initiatives of European agrifood stakeholders by promoting their produce both on the internal and international markets.”

Mr. Coppinger started his presentation by calling for the EU Promotion Policy to **play a role in the economic recovery** after the Brexit and the Covid-19 crisis in order to preserve the competitiveness of the European agricultural sector. The new EU Promotion Policy should **continue to support the EU's high standards** in food safety, quality, sustainability, and animal welfare to remain competitive internationally. Otherwise, it will leave the door open to imports, jeopardizing food producers and farmers' livelihood. Mr. Coppinger warned the shift to a more plant-based diet mentioned in Europe's Beating Cancer Plan should not be disproportionate. As **meat is an important part of a healthy diet**, the new EU Promotion Policy must take a measured and informed approach to plant-based diets and **continue to promote all animal sourced food**. To conclude, Mr. Coppinger underlined that livestock farmers are **engaged in the transition towards sustainability**. Thus, the **livestock sector must be incentivized** in the new EU Promotion Policy. Excluding it would undermine the efforts of livestock farmers engaged towards sustainability.

Professor Alice Stanton, Professor of Cardiovascular Pharmacology at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, and Director of Human Health at Devenish Nutrition

“If red meat and dairy products are substantially reduced or excluded from the human diet, considerably greater disease burdens will result in Europe and globally.”

Prof. Stanton decided to emphasize the **role of animal sourced food in protecting human health** in her presentation. Prof. Stanton underscored that excessive consumption of red

meat contributes to less than 0.1% of deaths and 1% of disability-adjusted life years. Studies show that a 50g consumption of red meat a day, which is the average in Europe, reduces the risk of a heart attack. Furthermore, six publications in 2019 concluded that there is considerable **uncertainty surrounding the evidence linking red meat consumption to diseases and deaths**. Concerning dairy products, milk and dairy intake up to 750mls/day **protect against nutritional deficiencies, cancer, and cardiovascular diseases**. Prof. Stanton highlighted that the recommendation of doubling the intake of fruits, and vegetables and halving meat and dairy intakes is **due to environmental reasons, and not health-related ones**. Prof. Stanton concluded that if red meat and dairy products are substantially reduced or excluded from the human diet, **considerably greater disease burdens** will result in Europe and globally.

Jean-François Hocquette, Research Director, INRAE (French National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and Environment)

“It is possible to have win-win relationship; the most economically efficient farms are also the ones with the least greenhouse gas emissions.”

Research in animal science should **combine different factors** together when evaluating meat production, such as efficiency, safety, quality, welfare and environmental concerns. Further, the quality of a given product depends both on **intrinsic characteristics** such as sensory aspects as well as **extrinsic factors** associated with the product, like animal welfare or marketing strategies. The notion of quality also ought to be dealt with in environmental, social and economic terms, for which **consumers are becoming more and more demanding**. Mr Hocquette carried on by insisting on the importance of goods and services derived from livestock farming, which can be perceived from five different perspectives. Firstly, from a market point of view (food consumption, production, international trade) but also in terms of social concerns (animal health, cultural aspects), of the environment, of the relative inputs and of jobs. Considering conditions of production in some areas of France (Brittany and the Centre of France), one can also depict a **negative correlation between bovine gross margin and the rate of greenhouse gas emissions**; in other words, the most economically efficient

farms are also the ones with the least greenhouse gas emissions. In conclusion, more and more complex factors are driving meat consumption, and extrinsic concerns such as those related to **animal welfare or the environment are key to secure consumers' trust.**

Michele Spangaro, Head of Office, ASSICA

“The new EU promotion policy should reflect that there are no sustainable or unsustainable sectors per se, rather sustainable or unsustainable business practices.”

The new EU promotion policy **should not discriminate between different sectors.** The promotion policy should rather focus on **production methods** than on specific products or sectors. The underlying problem is **overconsumption**, therefore the EU Promotion Policy should focus on how consumption is apprehended, not on what people consume. Such an approach would eventually lead to the detrimental exclusion of some sectors. Rather, what should be promoted is the need to shift to **less but better consumption**; excluding some sectors from EU promotion funds could leave consumers with no alternative but to buy products from third countries. The EU promotion policy should aim to promote sustainability within each sector, yet within the Green Deal sustainability indicators are missing.

Birthe Steenberg, Secretary General, AVEC

“In the EU, we already have strong legislation on environmental protection and animal welfare. We are willing to improve, yet the EU also needs to be careful to not set too high targets, thus risking excessive production costs and forcing us to import from third countries with lower standards and higher greenhouse gas emissions.”

Ms. Steenberg recalled how **meat production in Europe is already efficient and environmentally friendly.** Our emissions rate per million tons of produced animal protein is considerably lower than America, Near East and North Africa as well as other countries. While total meat consumption is expected to decline over the next few years, this is not the case of poultry meat. 25% of poultry breast meat eaten in the EU comes from third countries, thus standing as the most significant import amongst all types of meat. **The EU currently has the**

highest level of animal welfare and legislative environmental protection; tightening our standards even more could risk forcing the EU to import from third countries due to excessive European production costs. Even though meat prices in the EU are not so competitive, the EU is already competitive in terms of meat quality; the EU poultry meat project presented by Ms. Steenberg aims to **raise awareness on existing high standards and the high quality** of poultry meat in the EU.

Paolo Patrino, Deputy Secretary General, CLITRAVI

“In the last year, there was a shift in consumption; consumers preferred consuming less but better deli-meat products.”

The objective of the EU Promotion Policy is to bring **better competitiveness** both within the internal market and outside the European Union. Indeed, it should be a milestone for businesses to go further towards sustainability and help promote sustainability within each sector, not to fund green washing strategies. When it comes to environmental sustainability and health, the overarching principle is that we do not have sustainable and unsustainable sectors, but more and less sustainable business practices. And this principle should inspire the allocation of funds within the EU Promotion Policy. The EU has a strong budget dedicated to ecological practices, which needs to be allocated in a balanced way. Moreover, it is important to keep in mind the **social, economic and environmental pillars** of the EU Promotion Policy. Funds should be allocated in that regard, yet the **budget awarded to green production methods should be consistent with the budget of the real economy**.

Q&A session with audience

When asked what would be the **consequences of excluding some sectors from the EU promotion policy**, Mr. Spangaro shed light on the possibility that high value products representing the core of European culture **could be erased from the European map due to excessive production costs**; in turn, these could be replaced by cheaper and less sustainable products in the medium to long term. Ms. Vandevyver claimed that emphasis should rather

be placed upon **production methods and their level of sustainability**. In addition, **consuming less** should be kept in mind, though not excessively.

The following question implied an interrogation as to **what other tools may be required in addition to the promotion policy so as to avoid sustainability leakage**. Ms. Steenberg argued for a **change in WTO rules** and that problems may arise in terms of sustainability if import standards are different than those applied to European output. Further, **Europe's sustainability should be spread and shared more widely** so as to gather more public awareness on this progress.

The next question consisted in asking the panelists whether **if all agricultural products have their place in a balanced and healthy diet, then how can we ensure the promotion of their healthy and sustainable production?** Mr. Spangaro answered this should be the by-product of a **shared responsibility between consumers, companies and institutions**. Ms. Stanton also considered the need to have a **balanced and healthy diet**, yet not everyone has the same starting point in that regard.

Finally, in answering the question whether sustainable parameters and competitiveness could be promoted in the promotion policy, Mr. Kam stressed the importance of **not excluding any sectors from developing sustainable means of production**. Mr. Spangaro responded in favor of the Farm to Fork Strategy yet relayed the ambition of meat manufacturers to be part of the game. Mr. Patrino closed the Q&A session by concluding that **sustainable practices and competitiveness need not necessarily be dissociated**.

Closing remarks by MEP Elsi Katainen

Agricultural products roughly represented **9% of the whole EU trade in 2020**. The EU Promotion Policy stands as an **essential and workable tool** to promote good food quality and food safety. In order to make it efficient, the policies established at the European level should be **constant and coherent across different policy areas**. Yet European institutions and bodies cannot make it work on their own, and need the **support of other public and private actors** so as to make the promotion policy truly efficient.