



Ref. LETTER(23)04750[1]

To the Agricultural Permanent
Representatives to the EU

Brussels, 18th October 2023

RE: Agri-food sector's views on the 2024 Annual Work Programme

Dear Permanent Representative,

In view of the upcoming vote on the draft 2024 Annual Work Programme (AWP) in the committee for Common Organisation of Agricultural Markets (subgroup Promotion) on 25 October, the undersigned 12 European agri-food sector organisations would like to **flag issues of key concern regarding the reintroduction of discriminatory wording against red meat and alcoholic beverages and urge you to remain vigilant for further last-minute changes to the draft EC Implementing Decision.**

As indicated in our previous letter dated 4 July, we were very pleased to ascertain that the provisional programme presented at the Civil Dialogue Group in late June did not envisage a further decrease in the 2024 AWP budget (€185.9 million) and that no discriminatory criteria against red and processed meat and alcoholic beverages were put forward. We were also pleased and grateful to learn that the majority of you raised these aspects in your contributions sent to the EC before 7 July.

We regret to highlight though that, notwithstanding your contributions expressly indicating that there should be no discrimination or exclusion of particular products eligible under Article 5 of the Reg (EU) 1144/2014, your reiteration that the AWP should support the competitiveness of the EU-agrifood sector and the vote in 2022, the draft EC Implementing Decision includes the following sentence: *“For proposals targeting the internal market, this sub-criterion will also value the alignment with the objectives of Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan, in particular encouraging the shift to a more plant-based diet, with less red and processed meat and other foods linked to cancer risks (e.g. alcoholic drinks).”*

Such a development would not only be detrimental to the meat and alcoholic beverages sectors benefiting from the promotion policy funding, but also undermine your previous efforts and disregard your written and oral contributions of the recent months. A reintroduction of the discriminatory criteria would affect the livestock and the wine sectors which together represent more than seven million jobs, mostly in rural areas, and go beyond the scope of Article 2 of the Reg (EU) 1144/2014. Furthermore, the wording seems to establish a correlation between certain

types of products and cancer despite an absence of robust data. It is important to underline that, besides the fact that the information campaigns targeting the internal market are already aligned with the objectives of the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan, the AWP already further contributes to it by ringfencing the topic "fresh fruit and vegetables" and allocating an adequate budget to it.

In line with the objectives set out in Article 2 of the Reg (EU) 1144/2014, we propose that the sentence in the relevance sub-criterion *"Contribution of the proposed information provision and promotion project in respect of the objectives of the climate and environmental ambition of the CAP, the Green Deal, and the Farm to Fork Strategy, in particular concerning the sustainability of food production and consumption"* be modified to read *"[...] in particular concerning the consumption of sustainably produced agri-food products in the Union."*

In addition to this, we would like to stress that budget allocations need to mirror market realities and take into account 2023 AWP submission statistics. This entails greater support for simple programmes, quality schemes and other sustainable agricultural practices on the internal market. As for multi programmes, the budget would require boosting for third countries. To this end, we welcome the introduction of the "flexibility clause". Re-allocating unused funds from multi to simple will avoid possible budgetary reductions on the grounds that the budget is being underused, while the current drop in project submissions is due to the continuation rules and not lack of interest.

In light of the aforementioned, **we call on you to please ensure that the 2024 AWP:**

- Avoids any discrimination against specific products or sectors, such as red and processed meat or wine and spirits.
- Allocates the budget available where most demanded to simple programmes, quality schemes and other sustainable farming practices and multi programmes in third countries.
- Maintains a robust budget to respond to ongoing challenges (at least €200 million as in 2020).

The EU Promotion Policy has been successful in boosting the competitiveness of EU agricultural products. We wish for it to continue to be an inclusive policy which equally and proportionately supports all sectors and sustainable agricultural practices and count on your support.

We thank you in advance for your time and consideration and remain available to engage in further exchanges on the matter.

Yours faithfully,

On behalf of the following organisations:

AREPO – Association of European Regions for Products of Origin

CEEV – Comité Européen des Entreprises Vins

CELCAA – European Liaison Committee for Agricultural and Agri-Food Trade

CEVI – The European Confederation of Independent Winegrowers

CLITRAVI – Liaison Centre for the Meat Processing Industry in the European Union

Copa-Cogeca – The united voice of farmers and their cooperatives in the European Union

EFOW – European Federation of Origin Wines

FRESHFEL – European Fresh Produce Association

OriGIn EU – The Organization for an International Geographical Indications Network

SpiritsEUROPE – European representative body for producers of spirit drinks

TRADE PROMOTION EUROPE – One voice for European trade promotion

UECBV – European Livestock and Meat Trade Unions