

COPA(24)03054 - PPA/ mt

Ms Ursula VON DER LEYEN

President of the European Commission

Brussels, 12 November 2024

Subject: A coherent trade policy that delivers for farmers and agri-cooperatives

Dear President von der Leyen,

Agriculture is a strategic sector for security and preparedness in Europe. This has always been the case and it was recently reconfirmed by the Commission. It is a vital sector for the future of Europe.

At the same time, it goes without saying that there are challenges for European farming. The farming community is confronted with an unparalleled convergence of economic, climate, and social challenges, such as geopolitical instability, extreme weather events, unfair competition, higher production costs, lack of fair renumeration, and administrative burden.

At this key juncture in the set-up of the EU Institutions, as leaders of EU farmers and agricooperatives, we ask again for **stability**, **visibility and predictability** to be able to look to the future with confidence.

In recent months, the optics on trade from the agricultural sector's perspective have progressively worsened. Between being unjustifiably caught in the crossfire of trade tensions with China, the prospect of the dreaded Mercosur agreement being pushed forward, and the consequences of Russian invasion of Ukraine, farmers and agricultural sector's perspective have progressively worsened.

Farmers risk being squeezed between worsening export possibilities and an everworsened level playing field on their home markets.

While our farmers are still very concerned on the ground, with poor harvests in many EU Member States making the situation as tense as it was at the beginning of 2024, any advances on trade openings would send a negative message, unless the issue of different production standards and a level playing field is adequately addressed, especially on Mercosur. Otherwise, this may undermine the fragile trust that has been built after the spring protests.

The Commission's approach on trade has long been to balance the sensitivities of EU agriculture with the offensive interests of the sector on exports. And this not without success. Under such challenging circumstances, it is difficult not to look with dismay at the discrepancies and incoherence we fear on trade.

With the outcome of the Strategic Dialogue on the future of Agriculture, the strategic importance of the farming sector for both EU's economy and society has been reaffirmed. Another significant outcome of the Strategic Dialogue concerns the key questions related to the future of agri-food trade. Elevating the importance of the agricultural sector in the

overall EU's trade strategy and ensuring coherence between our internal and trade policies has been a major request by all participants.

Our sector is a key contributor to **EU's positive trade balance and holds the potential to deliver benefits** not only for farmers and agri-cooperatives across the 27 Member States, but for EU economy and society at large. **Nevertheless, this requires coherence**.

It is therefore key that the Commission shows clear strategic thinking and understanding for the farming sector and its complexities when it comes to trade policy. The Commission should also act coherently, without undermining the livelihood of millions of farmers, the competitiveness of agri-cooperatives, and the possibility of prosperous rural areas. Agriculture must not be used as a bargaining chip in trade agreements!

In the case of the current **on-going trade disputes with China**, our sectors took decades to establish their presence on the Chinese market. After all the efforts made, they are now left to be the victims of their success. Therefore, we urge the Commission to do its utmost to lift this unjustifiable burden on producers.

It is equally important not to accept an agreement with Mercosur that disregards the key concerns of famers on the divergence of production standards and on the cumulative effects on sensitive sectors. European farmers and agri-cooperatives will never endorse an imbalanced and environmentally detrimental trade agreement. European farmers and their cooperatives understand the need of friends and alliances in these harsh international times. However, in our view, an agreement that jeopardises such a strategic sector as European agriculture does not make sense. The attractiveness of our sector for new generations and our family farming model is simply at stake!

A Mercosur agreement per se, with or without an additional sustainability instrument, is a no-go zone for European farmers, due to the important differences in terms of competitiveness for some sectors. Therefore, an agreement without sufficient compulsory commitment from Mercosur countries on standards linked to animal welfare, the use of medicines in animal production, climate, chemical treatment, and other environmental standards may cause European farmers to take to the streets again. And no amount would be enough to counterbalance the agreement on a deal that represents a threat to the competitiveness of our sector!

In the current context it is also impossible not to take into consideration the efforts our producers will have to make to further advance our trade relationship with Ukraine. This is an especially critical aspect to take into account as most of the same sensitive sectors concerned are the ones for which we will open our markets to Mercosur countries.

Today, as members of Copa and Cogeca, we emphasise the urgent necessity to address the concerns raised by the thousands of farmers that have taken to the streets in the past months.

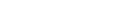
We want to continue to contribute to the EU's leading position in agri-food trade and to turn challenges into opportunities, towards a more secure and prosperous future in Europe.

To be able to do this, we want an EU that supports the competitiveness and productivity of farms and agri-cooperatives, ensuring that trade delivers and does not become another burden to carry for our community. This can be done only with a coherent trade policy that recognises the strategic importance of our sector!

Yours faithfully,

Massimiliano Giansanti President of Copa

Lennart Nilsson President of Cogeca



Landwirtschaftskammer Österreich



Landwirtschaftskammer Österreich - LKÖ (Austrian Chamber of Agriculture)





Österreichischer Raiffeisenverband - ÖRV (Austrian Raiffeisen Association)





Hrvatska Poljoprivredna Komora - HPK (Croatian Chamber of Agriculture)





Fédération Wallonne de l'Agriculture - FWA



Confederation of Finnish Cooperatives - PELLERVO



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Bulgarian Agrarian Chamber

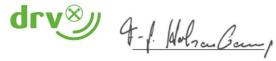


La Coopération Agricole



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Bulgarian Farmers Union



Deutscher Raiffeisenverband - DRV (German Raiffeisen Association)



(PANAGROTIKOS)







SASOEE









Agrární Komora České Republiky - AKCR (Czech Agrarian Chamber)

Irish Co-operative Organisation Society Ltd. - ICOS



Republic)







Alleanza delle Cooperative Italiane Agroalimentare - ACI







Confederação Nacional das Cooperativas Agrícolas e do Crédito Agrícola de Portugal -CONFAGRI







Zadružna Zveza Slovenije - ZZS (Cooperative Union of Slovenia)



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Maa- ja metsätaloustyottajain Keskusliitto - MTK (Central Union of Agyicultural Producers and Forest Owners)



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Chambres d'agriculture France - APCA





Confédération Nationale de la Mutualité, de la Coopération et du Crédit Agricoles - CNMCCA



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Fédération Nationale des Syndicats d'Exploitants Agricoles - FNSEA

Deutscher Bauernverband

Deutscher Bauernverband e.V. - DBV





GAIA EPICHEIREIN



Froncie Sorm

Irish Farmer's Association - IFA



Cia - Agricoltori italiani

Confagricoltura

Confederazione Generale dell'Agricoltura Italiana - CONFAGRICOLTURA

COLDIRETTI

Confederazione Nazionale Coldiretti - COLDIRETTI



Zemnieku Saeima - ZSA (Farmers Parliament)



Lietuvos Respublikos že mės ūkio rūma - LRŽŪR (Chamber of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania)



Lietuvos ūkininkų sąjunga -LŪS (Lithuanian Farmers Union)



Lietuvos Žemės Ukio Bendrovių Asociacija - LŽUBA (Lithuanian Association of Agricultural Companies)



Centrale Paysanne Luxembourgeoise - CPL (Luxemburg Farmers' Union)





Koperattivi Malta



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Land- en Tuinbouw Organisatie Nederland - LTO



Federacja Branżowych Związków Producentów Rolnych - FBZPR (Federation of Agricultural Producers Union)



Krajowa Rada Izb Rolniczych - KRIR (National Council of Agricultural Chambers)

NSZZ RI Solidarność - SOLIDARNOSC



Zwiazek Zawodowy Rolnictwa SAMOOBRONA - ZZR



Związek Zawodowy Rolników - OJCZYZNA (FARMERS LABOR UNION)



[Assinatura Qualificada] Assinado de forma digital por [Assinatura Qualificada] Alvaro José Costa de Mendonça e Moura Dosé Costa Costa (Moura Dosé Costa (Moura Do

Confederação dos Agricultores de Portugal - CAP



FEDERAŢIA NAŢIONALĂ A PRODUCĂTORILOR DIN AGRÍCULTURĂ, INDUSTRIE ALIMENTARĂ ŞI SERVICII CONEXE - PRO AGRO



UNIUNEA DE RAMURĂ NAȚIONALĂ A COOPERATIVELOR DIN SECTORUL VEGETAL -U.N.C.S.V.







Asociatia Forta Fermierilor



Slovenská Poľnohospodárska a Potravinárska Komora - SPPK (Slovak Agricultural and Food Chamber)





Asociacion Agraria - Jovenes Agricultores - ASAJA





Coordinadora de Organizaciones de Agricultores y Ganaderos - COAG - I.R.





Union de Pequenos Agricultores y Ganaderos - UPA

LANTBRUKARNAS RIKSFÖRBUND

Palle Bang Lantbrukarnas Riksförbund - LRF