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Phone conference between CAB Wojciechowski and the German Farmers Union (Bauernverband) - exchange of ideas in the context of the F2F strategy

Participants: Deutscher Bauernverband, **Personal Data Protection**, Bauernverband Bayern: Commission Transparency Register Nr.: 73085531345-65,

COM: Catherine Geslain-Laneelle, Deputy Head of CAB Commissioner Wojciechowski, **Personal Data Protection**, DG AGRI D.2

The phone conference took place 26 March 2020

For the German Farmers Union, **Personal Data** mentioned the following sensitive issues in the context of the F2F strategy: Animal-farming methods, animal welfare labelling, labelling of origin, nutrition, sustainability.

Mrs. Geslain-Laneelle explained the time-line for the adoption of the F2F strategy (end April 2020). A postponement became necessary because of the Covid-19 crisis. This incident needs reflection, not in terms of ambition, as climate change will not go away, but in fine-tuning the final text, considering the additional new challenges linked to the crisis and the economic recovery.

Farmer's contributions to the existing standards, be it environmental, food safety, production methods, animal welfare etc. need recognition, not only internally in the EU, but also internationally. However, we can do better and therefore production methods, farming practices and production further up the food chain including food industry have to be further developed.

From this, it follows that in the wider competitive environment, the EU needs a level playing field and therefore several tools need reflection within the existing WTO framework. Reflections about a sustainable food labelling system are ongoing. Farmers increasing sustainability of their production by entering into eco schemes, animal welfare etc. commitments need a return for their efforts. The volumes covered by such a label must be significant for effectively contributing to the circular economy. It is however still open how such a scheme may be organised.

Personal Data admitted that discussions within the Bauernverband are not very advanced and that for them it is not clear, if they have to be afraid of the new developments or if they could see it as a chance. For them efficiency and productivity are indispensable elements and less efficient system would not be acceptable. However, the green component is important for future developments.

Mrs. Geslaine-Laneelle made it clear that the Green Deal is a growth strategy based on a productive, prosperous farming system but oriented to more resilience in several aspects (environmental, resource wise, PPPs, antimicrobials, animal welfare etc.).

Personal Data referred to the increase of farm productivity during the last 20 years and mentioned the German "Tierwohl" initiative as an example for a voluntary labelling scheme, which is pouring €120 MIO per annum into a fund, which remunerates farmer's efforts for

higher animal welfare standards. A similar approach is imaginable for increased sustainability. The question is if on the international biodiversity and animal welfare are valuable arguments. **Personal Data Protection** emphasised the necessity to increase internal EU convergence in several areas (antimicrobial use, authorisation of PPPs, animal welfare) of farm inputs for the sake of a level playing field, as today farmers are under different legislations depending on which side of the border their farm is situated.

Organic farming is an interesting success story; the question is if we can translate this to conventional farming and if we can create a standard for conventional farming to increase income?

Mrs. Geslain-Laneelle reiterated that good ideas are welcome at this stage. Examples for EU labelling schemes exist (organic, GIs), however it must be avoided that any new scheme is substantially a green washing exercise. This does not work. We shall put real efforts into any future scheme focusing on e.g. higher animal welfare, sustainability, biodiversity and environmental outcomes. When designing a dynamic conventional EU scheme IPM, animal welfare, eco-schemes, second pillar measures, pulled altogether could become the ingredients of a label. There are no detailed ideas yet, but we need a smart set of measures with the potential of making a difference. Several 100 local or national schemes cannot not be the appropriate response.

Personal Data Protection took the point up by considering that for an EU type label many participants have to share the same narrative. They have to understand why they make the additional efforts.

Mrs Geslain-Laneelle reminded that the key question the Bauernverband needs to reflect is if a voluntary scheme, resulting in higher producer prices can be an option.

Personal Data indicated that they have not yet arrived to a conclusive answer. A private scheme could work, a Regulation based on 1000 requirements, maybe creating a new control monster, certainly not. Adopting sustainability standards shall provide producers with better prices. This could shield them from initiatives like MERCOSUR. Certainly, competition will continue after Covid-19. He mentioned the Austrian Quality Mark, AMA Gütesiegel as an example, by which farmers successfully integrated into the EU market. Furthermore, he underlined the important role of COPA/COGECA in this discussion.

Mrs. Geslain-Laneelle, closed the meeting by thanking the participants for a good first discussion and offered her availability to the German Bauernverband to continue the reflections.

Personal Data