



## *LMC Brussels Update – April 2017*

**Brexit** – EU Member States unanimously agreed on Council guidelines for Brexit negotiations on 29<sup>th</sup> April. The EU is opting for a phased approach where priorities for the 1<sup>st</sup> phase of the negotiations are put on protecting EU citizen's rights, financial settlement, the status of Ireland and limiting legal uncertainty. Provided negotiations show sufficient progress on these priorities, the EU will move on to the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage and start discussing its future trading relationship with the UK. The Council is now expected to agree on Commission negotiating directives by 22nd May.

**EU citizens** – A recent Eurobarometer survey finds that the feeling of belonging to the EU is a good thing has risen significantly and is nearly at its pre-crisis level, last seen in 2007. Generally speaking, Europeans are in favour of integration at various paces rather than the approach consisting of Member States developing certain policy all at the same time. However there are significant divergence between MS on this issue: A majority of respondents said the EU should wait until everyone is ready to make a move in Portugal (65%), Greece (61%), Spain (52%) and Ireland (50%). For agriculture, 40% of the respondents think that current EU action is insufficient and 56% would want the EU to intervene more.

**Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD)** – EFSA has conducted an epidemiological analysis based on the data collected from the Member States or non-EU countries affected by lumpy skin disease (LSD). The report highlights that within a few months at least 90% of the animal population had been vaccinated with live homologous vaccine against LSD in south-eastern Europe and that this mass vaccination successfully contained the outbreaks of lumpy skin disease in the region in 2015-16. Concerning the surveillance and any possible new LSD cases in 2017, experts recommend the immediate notification of clinical suspected cases and laboratory confirmation of suspected cases in vaccinated animals to differentiate the strains. Concerning adverse effects of vaccination, these should be collected systematically, where possible, at animal level. Further scientific advice will be provided at the beginning of 2018.

**Official controls** - The new regulation on official controls for food and feed has now been published. The regulation enters into force on April 27<sup>th</sup> 2017 (20 days after its publication) and shall apply from December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

**Animal Welfare** - EFSA has published an overview report on education activities for farm, transport and slaughterhouse staff on animal welfare. The report is based on Commission audits conducted during 2015 in eight different Member States (Finland, Austria, Sweden, Ireland, Netherlands, Denmark, Lithuania, Portugal). It shows that for effective transfer of knowledge on animal welfare to create a positive impact at national level, it is necessary that objectives from the public and private sector are aligned and well-coordinated. This remains a challenge for authorities in Member States. Overall, the livestock industry sees training on animal behaviour as very beneficial not only to avoid animal welfare problems, but also to improve production, avoid mutilations and reduce the use of medicines.

**Animal Consciousness** - EFSA commissioned INRA to conduct a study on Animal Consciousness. The report concludes that there is evidence that animals have knowledge of their own state (bodily self). They have the capacity to know and deal with their own knowledge, and also to evaluate the psychological state of their conspecifics, potentially leading to some form of empathy. One important outcome of this work is that the present report may be used for designing future ways of rearing animals. However, these conclusions are based on results from very few experiments. The authors therefore recommend further research to be carried out. They suggest that a pragmatic approach could be to adapt to livestock species experimental protocols that have been found useful in laboratory animals.

**Ecological Focus Areas:** A Commission report on the implementation of the Ecological Focus Areas (EFA) suggests that the system put in place is relatively stable in terms of how it is run as well as how farmers fulfil their obligations.

According to the report, the overall percentage of declared EFAs on arable land is nearly double the 5 % required at farm level. The Commission proposes not to increase the required percentage of EFAs but rather to focus on their quality aspects such as specific conditions and management requirements.

**Floods** – The Council decided to mobilise the EU solidarity fund to help the United Kingdom repair the damage caused by the floods in December 2015 and January 2016. The United Kingdom will receive €60.3 million.

**Organic products**- Following recommendations from the European Court of Auditors and a request from Member States to address concerns about monitoring the movements of organic products and the consistency of import checks, a new system of electronic certification to better monitor imports of organic products became applicable in April 2017. Both paper and e-certification will be used during a 6-month transition period. As of 19 October 2017, organic imports will be covered only by e-certification. At the same time, the first agreement on trade in organic products has been signed between European Union and Chile. The EU and Chile agreed to mutually recognise the equivalence of their organic production rules and control systems, allowing all organic products produced and controlled according to EU rules to be directly placed on the Chilean market, and vice-versa.

**Food waste** -During the last ENVI Committee meeting, MEPs unanimously adopted a resolution on food waste. MEPs call on EU countries to achieve food waste cuts by 30% by 2025 and 50 by 2030, reiterating the objective Parliament set out in its waste legislation voted in March. The report will now be put to a vote by the full House during the 15-18 May plenary session in Strasbourg.

**EU agri-food trade** – The EU agri-food trade update shows that monthly value of EU agri-food exports increased by +1.2% (+ €131 million) compared with February last year and by 2.2% in value terms compared to the same period one year ago. The monthly exports particularly increased for Russia (+86 million), China (+77 million), the USA (+58 million) and Korea (+55 million). Exports of pig meat did particularly well over the last 12 months with a recovery of +33% compared to the same period one year ago. At the same time, wheat (-14%) and other cereals (-36%), as well as milk powders (-12%) further reduced in value terms.

**WTO update** – WTO members held discussions about each other's farm trade policies at a meeting of the Committee on Agriculture. According to the US notification, the total trade-distorting farm subsidies — known as the aggregate measure of support - amounted to USD 3.8 billion, well below the US committed level of USD 19.1 billion. The EU's notification indicated that EUR 5.9 billion of trade-distorting domestic subsidies were spent over the marketing year 2013/2014, while the EU is entitled to EUR 72.3 billion of aggregate measure of support. WTO members agreed on a new chair of the Committee of Agriculture: Ambassador Karau (Kenya) is the tenth chairperson of the agriculture negotiations since talks began in March 2000. At the same time, a new ICTSD paper published ahead of the WTO's Buenos Aires Ministerial Conference (December 2017) highlights various options for negotiating agricultural domestic support and examines the implications of various approaches.

**Exchange programme with China**- An EU-China project on capacity building for young professional farmers and agricultural professionals has been launched in April 2017. The aim of the project is to strengthen bilateral cooperation in the area of agriculture and rural development between the EU and China, providing an opportunity for young farmers and agricultural professionals from both sides see how they each rise to the challenges of their respective farming sectors. Call for applications will be published this summer.

**Meat Fraud in Brazil** - The Commission updated the Council on the latest developments in the meat scandal in Brazil regarding the fraudulent release of licenses and irregular inspection of slaughterhouses. The Commission informed that "all consignments from the establishments implicated in the fraud currently on the way to the EU will be rejected and returned to Brazil" and explained that it would perform audits in Brazil no later than in mid-May. In the light of the outcome of these reinforced checks and of the audits, the Commission will decide if additional actions are necessary.