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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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FARM TO FORK STRATEGY

COMMUNICATION FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION

The following document, received on 22 June 2020, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of the European Union.

1.1. On 20 May 2020, the European Commission adopted a **Farm to Fork Strategy** for a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system. The strategy is at the heart of the **European Green Deal**, presented in December 2019, and is crucial for its implementation. The strategy addresses comprehensively the challenges arising when making food systems sustainable and recognises the inextricable links between healthy people, healthy societies and a healthy planet. It is central to the European Commission's agenda to achieve the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (**SDGs**).

1.2. The **COVID-19** pandemic has underlined the importance of a robust and resilient food system that functions in all circumstances, and is capable of ensuring access to a sufficient supply of affordable food for all citizens. It has also made us acutely aware of the interrelations between our health, ecosystems, supply chains, consumption patterns and planetary boundaries.

1.3. The Farm to Fork Strategy will enable the transition to a **sustainable EU food system** that safeguards food security and ensures access to healthy diets sourced from a healthy planet. It will reduce the environmental and climate footprint of the EU food system and strengthen its resilience, protecting citizens' health and ensuring the livelihoods of economic operators.

1.4. The strategy sets concrete **targets** to transform the EU food system, including a reduction by 50% of the use and risk of pesticides; a reduction by at least 50% of nutrient losses, while ensuring that there is no deterioration in soil fertility; a reduction by 50% in sales of antimicrobials used for farmed animals and aquaculture; and reaching 25% of agricultural land under organic farming by 2030. It also proposes ambitious measures to ensure that healthy options are the easiest for EU citizens, including improved labelling to better meet consumers' information needs on healthy, sustainable foods.

1.5. For its **development** and implementation, the action plan accompanying the strategy lists a set of regulatory and non-regulatory measures, including a legislative framework for a sustainable food system.

1.6. The Farm to Fork Strategy has an important **international dimension**. It aims to promote a global transition to sustainable food systems, in line with the SDGs and in close cooperation with international partners. Indeed, through **international cooperation**, bilaterally and multilaterally, the European Union will promote more sustainable farming and fisheries practices, reducing deforestation, enhancing biodiversity, and improving food security and nutrition outcomes. The Commission will incorporate these priorities in the programming guidance for cooperation with non-EU countries in the period 2021-2027.

1.7. A more sustainable EU food system also requires increasingly sustainable practices by our **trading partners**. The European Union will engage actively with trading partners, especially with developing countries, to accompany the transition towards a more sustainable use of pesticides to avoid disruptions in trade and promote alternative plant protection products and methods.

1.8. With the Farm to Fork Strategy the European Union has decided to pursue an ambitious level of protection that does not only look at the EU territory, but makes sure that **environmental problems** are not shifted to other parts of the world. Certain environmental issues are matters of **global concern** that go far beyond national boundaries, e.g. the decline of pollinators in many parts of the world, and the accumulation in the environment of persistent, bio-accumulative and toxic substances. Therefore, in line with WTO law, the European Union will start to take into account such environmental concerns when assessing requests for **import tolerances** for pesticide substances no longer approved in the European Union.

1.9. Also related to matters of global concern, the strategy envisages legislative and other measures to reduce the European Union's contribution to global **deforestation** and forest degradation. Similarly, imported products of animal origin will have to comply with relevant EU requirements to address the global threat of **antimicrobial resistance**.

1.10. The European Union will strive to develop **Green Alliances** on sustainable food systems to respond to distinct challenges in different parts of the world. It will promote a **global transition** to sustainable food systems in international standard setting bodies, relevant multilateral forums and international events, including the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, the Nutrition for Growth Summit and the UN Food Systems Summit in 2021. Equally, the European Union will seek to ensure that ambitious sustainability chapters are included in all EU **bilateral** trade agreements.

1.11. As part of its approach to food information to consumers, and combined with the legislative framework on sustainable food systems, the European Union will promote new innovative schemes (including an EU sustainable food labelling framework) and intends to lead the work on **international sustainability standards** and environmental footprint calculation methods in multilateral forums to promote a higher uptake of sustainability standards. It will also support enforcement of rules on misleading information.

1.12. The Farm to Fork Strategy is an opportunity to reconcile the EU food system with the needs of the planet and to respond positively to people's aspirations for healthy, equitable and environmentally friendly food. It also aims to make the EU food system a **global standard** for sustainability.

1.13. **Next steps:**

- In parallel with internal debates within the European Union, the European Commission will engage in an intensive and meaningful discussion with all WTO Members both at a bilateral and multilateral level.

1.14. **More information:**

a. Documents:

- European Green Deal: https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en.
- Farm to Fork Strategy: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1590404602495&uri=CELEX:52020DC0381>.

b. Website:

- Farm to fork: https://ec.europa.eu/food/farm2fork_en.
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