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**Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures**

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## FARM TO FORK STRATEGY

### SUBMISSION BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

The following document, received on 20 November 2020, is being circulated at the request of the Delegation of the European Union.

1. The European Union would like to thank Colombia for this request for information on the Farm to Fork Strategy (also raised in the WTO Committee on Agriculture in July 2020<sup>1</sup>).
2. As the European Union already informed at the last SPS Committee meeting, the objective of the Farm to Fork Strategy, adopted on 20 May 2020, is the transition to a sustainable EU food system that safeguards food security and safety, ensures access to healthy and sustainable diets sourced from a healthy planet and ensures the livelihood of all actors in the food system.
3. Food security and food safety are cornerstones of EU food system, and will never be compromised.
4. By adopting this Strategy, the European Union has responded to the climate and environmental emergency the world is facing, to citizens' demands, but also to developments and collaborative actions at global level that are already taking place to preserve biodiversity and strengthen sustainable practices. The European Union has joined forces in these efforts with other countries that have also committed to undertake urgent action to put our planet on a recovery path.
5. The document is a Strategy, which means that it has no legal effect. By adopting the Strategy, the European Commission has set out its own policy direction on how it intends to act in the coming years on this topic. The Strategy envisages a mix of regulatory and non-regulatory measures. These measures will be taken forward in line with the consolidated traditional better regulation principles, including evaluations, public consultations and impact assessments as appropriate and, last but not least, in regular consultation with the WTO Members in accordance to the rules set by the SPS agreement for which this Committee is the relevant forum.
6. Regarding the EU policy orientation related to pesticides – in reply to the questions of Colombia – we must not ignore broad consensus that the use of certain pesticides is linked to serious environmental concerns, such as the worldwide decline of pollinators or effects related to persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic substances. These effects do not stop at national borders and this fact must be considered when defining an appropriate level of protection. In other words, where serious environmental concerns of global nature prevail, national use restrictions may not be sufficient to achieve necessary protection goals and the setting of import tolerances may have to take this situation into account.
7. For example, EU risk assessments identified serious environmental concerns of a global nature with regard to clothianidin and thiamethoxam, which both belong to the group of neonicotinoids.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that a previous document on this topic was circulated as [G/SPS/GEN/1797](#), on 22 June 2020.

8. The European Union will take any regulatory decision on a case-by-case basis, founded on the best available scientific evidence and ensuring that its measures are not more trade restrictive than necessary to achieve the protection goal. The European Union is committed to continue to fulfil its international obligations and to act according to the WTO rules, with full transparency.

9. It is important to note that the EU strategy does not attempt to prohibit other countries from using certain pesticides on their crop. If the crop is destined to be placed on the EU market, it is our intention to insist that it complies with the maximum residue levels that are in place in the European Union.

10. The European Union is already engaging actively with trading partners, especially with developing countries, to accompany the planned transition towards a more sustainable food production and to promote alternative plant protection methods, including integrated pest management. Agriculture and food production are highly dependent on nature. Sustainability is therefore in the best interest of farmers and in the best interest of us all.

11. The European Union strives to provide its partners with timely and comprehensive information on its policies.

12. With regard to the Farm to Fork Strategy, in September 2020, the European Union organised an information session at which Colombian and many other Delegations participated. In October, the European Union also held – virtually – the first Farm to Fork conference.

13. A more specific seminar on pesticides residues is currently envisaged to take place in early 2021.

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