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Page: 1/1

Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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**REQUEST TO SUSPEND THE PROCESSES AND ENTRY INTO FORCE OF REDUCTIONS
OF MAXIMUM RESIDUE LIMITS FOR PLANT PROTECTION PRODUCTS
DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC – [G/SPS/GEN/1778/REV.4](#)**

SUBMISSION BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

Revision

The following document, received on 5 November 2020, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of the European Union.

1.1. We have taken note of the reiterated request to suspend the ongoing legislative procedures to establish new maximum residue limits (MRLs) for plant protection products and the application of MRLs already established and we would like to provide the following observations.

1.2. The global coronavirus outbreak is a crisis like no other and poses daunting challenges for policymakers the world over, especially where the nature of public health systems, capacity constraints, and limited resources cannot mitigate the spread of the virus and the consequences of the pandemic.

1.3. As we all have seen, the regular functioning of the society has been profoundly shaken by the introduction of protective measures required to combat the virus, and protect lives and livelihood of our citizens; and despite a public eagerness to get back to normal, we are painfully aware that efforts will continue to be needed to control the virus during the recovery phase.

1.4. Against this backdrop, the European Union has strived to keep its markets open. The European Union has not succumbed to protectionism or reduced its commitment to globalisation, maintaining the firm belief that keeping markets open helps everyone—especially the world's most fragile economies. We are aware that some of our trading partners are experiencing serious disruptions of their high value chains. Thus, significant and rapid action was taken to facilitate the continuation of trade.

1.5. The European Union has not been a passive bystander. On 7 April, the European Union announced the EU Global Response Package, allocating EUR 15.6 billion to its COVID-19 Response. On 8 June, the Team Europe collective contribution has reached almost EUR 36 billion, combining resources from the EU institutions, its member States and financial institutions, including the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

1.6. The European Commission has also reviewed its current portfolio of actions across the board to support partner countries by adjusting or increasing financial envelopes, reorienting projects, committing new funds, or re-committing undisbursed funds.

1.7. In particular, budget support interventions have been re-assessed to boost financial capacities and liquidities of partner countries and secure core government services. These measures are expected also to have a positive impact on food security and to support the agribusiness sector.

1.8. The European Fund for Sustainable Development guarantee will be used to support small businesses through working capital and liquidity support, technical assistance, trade finance and local currency financing. This includes small and medium enterprises engaged in food production.

1.9. This is a formidable challenge for everyone and while we wish this was not the case, lowering the bar on food and agricultural standards is not the solution. When steps are taken to protect consumers' life and health, derogations are highly unlikely. We cannot compromise on consumers' health even under the worst-case scenario. This is not EU policy or what our consumers demand nor any consumer in the world.

1.10. We also need to be aware that deferred applications and suspensions of measures in the making, would be subject to formal legislative requirements and would need to be endorsed by all EU member States and by the European Parliament, requiring a considerable amount of time to be processed. The European Union wishes to reiterate here its commitment for the respect of the Rule of Law both for domestic issues and in the international arena.

1.11. We are all facing unprecedented circumstances, and we are all navigating uncharted waters, trying new approaches and shedding old ones. While we are willing to find suitable and innovative approaches to help partners to fight the consequences of the pandemic, protection of public health must be a priority for all our deeply interconnected societies.

1.12. The European Commission published its Farm to Fork strategy on 20 May 2020. At the heart of it is to put food systems on a more sustainable basis, and thus to be more resilient to crises such as COVID-19. The European Union looks forward to work with international partners to support the global transition to sustainable agri-food systems.
