

22 June 2020

(20-4342)

Page: 1/2

Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

Original: French

**EUROPEAN UNION AMENDMENTS OF MRLS FOR MANCOZEB –
SPECIFIC TRADE CONCERN RAISED BY CÔTE D'IVOIRE****COMMUNICATION FROM CÔTE D'IVOIRE**

The following communication, received on 19 June 2020, is being circulated at the request of Côte D'Ivoire.

1. The agricultural sector accounts, on average, for 28% of Côte d'Ivoire's GDP and 45% of its exports (56% in 2012), or 62% of its exports excluding oil. The population of Côte d'Ivoire consists of 12.6 million urban inhabitants and 12.3 rural inhabitants. The agricultural sector employs 46% of the working population and provides a livelihood for two-thirds of the population.

2. The importance of the agricultural sector derives from the following: Côte d'Ivoire is the largest producer of cocoa and cashew nuts in the world, the fifth largest producer of palm oil in the world (and second in Africa), the seventh largest producer of natural rubber in the world (and the largest in Africa), and the fourth largest producer of cotton in Africa. Moreover, Côte d'Ivoire and Cameroon are the leading exporters of bananas in Africa, while Côte d'Ivoire is the thirteenth largest banana exporter in the world.

3. As a result, any measure that has an impact on the agricultural sector will inevitably affect the Ivorian economy as a whole and its rural population, which is composed primarily of women and young people in particular.

4. However, the various European Union (EU) measures aimed at reducing MRLs and, in some cases, simply removing them altogether, as in the case of mancozeb, which is the subject of this discussion, will devastate the agricultural sector in general and the banana industry in particular, driving them into an unprecedented economic slump.

5. It should be noted that mancozeb is a fungicide widely used by farmers. It is crucial to controlling black sigatoka (a devastating leaf disease of banana and plantain crops), and no effective alternative is available at present. Moreover, the risks posed by this product have not been scientifically proven.

6. It should also be noted that mancozeb has been used and authorized in all EU Member States since 1962. As a non-systemic fungicide that has been used by farmers around the world for over 50 years, it controls a wide variety of fungi on a variety of crops, including soybeans, nuts, vegetables, potatoes and fruits (bananas, citrus and grapes).

7. In the banana sector in Côte d'Ivoire, and in Cameroon and Ghana, mancozeb is one of the key plant protection products used in strategies to control black sigatoka, which causes significant losses in production.

8. Since the loss of sensitivity to curative systemic plant protection products in the early 2000s, regular application of mancozeb-based contact products has become the only solution to controlling sigatoka in bananas. No similarly effective alternative is available on the market at present, even though we have taken the initiative of trialling strategies that exclude contact products for several years, with renowned research institutes such as the National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and Environment (INRAE) and the Centre for International Cooperation in Agricultural Research

for Development (CIRAD), both in France. The "zero mancozeb" solutions currently being tested, based on low-volume mineral oil and biocontrol products, are not yet ready for large-scale commercial use.

9. Moreover, in partnership with our technical institutes for environmentally sustainable production and the development of agricultural science and technology, considerable efforts are being made to keep pace with market requirements.

10. In this context, restricting the use of mancozeb or lowering its MRLs would seriously undermine the marketing of our highly regarded products and impoverish rural communities, fuelling rural flight.

11. In light of the situation, the Association of Fruit Producers-Exporters of Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon and Ghana (AFRUIBANA), which liaises between producers in the sector and EU institutions with a view to facilitating the implementation of support measures for African producers, is in total disarray.

12. With regard to MRLs, while we recognize the right of Members to determine the appropriate level of sanitary or phytosanitary protection necessary to protect human, animal and plant life and health and to establish measures to this effect, we recall that such measures must be taken in accordance with the provisions of the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and not create unnecessary barriers to trade.

13. In view of the above and the importance of the existing trade between Europe and Africa, we ask the European Union to take steps to maintain the use of mancozeb and try to cancel the entry into force of possible MRL reductions.
