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Joint Statement

European agricultural stakeholders call for a carefully balanced approach to any potential further trade liberalisation with Ukraine

As the European Commission prepares to present its objectives to the Council on future negotiations for the trade liberalisation with Ukraine sometime this month, EU agricultural associations of key affected sectors are urging caution and balance. While supporting Ukraine in these challenging times remains important, any revised agreement must account for the cumulative pressures facing sensitive EU sectors (cereals, seeds, sugar, poultry, eggs, ethanol, honey), especially in the wake of the recently announced EU-Mercosur agreement.

The EU's agricultural sector has been over the past years significantly impacted by the exceptional Autonomous Trade Measures (ATMs) taken to support Ukraine in its war effort. In this context, although the EU sector welcomes the decision to revert to the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, as it would provide more predictability and security, they also share growing concerns over the potential further expansion of liberalisation under Article 29 of that agreement. Therefore, it is important to highlight the need of maintaining sufficient limits and safeguards to ensure that EU farmers and manufacturers are not disproportionately burdened. Mechanisms such as tariff-rate quotas (TRQs) must be maintained and other explored to ensure sufficient protection for EU producers and manufacturers. Unfortunately, the current ATMs fall short of fully addressing market vulnerabilities, as thresholds protecting sensitive products are too high and no protection is granted to some of the most impacted sectors, such as wheat or barley.

Finally, it will also be crucial for the new long-term agreement to no fall in the trap of fully liberalising some products not yet impacted by Ukrainian imports and to include effective safeguard measures. This would mean ignoring the incredible capacity of Ukrainian agriculture to swiftly expand the production of products when an opportunity for exports is identified, as it was the case with sugar. This could easily repeat itself with potatoes, pork, dairy or ethanol.

Furthermore, stakeholders emphasise the broader context of ongoing and future trade agreements, including Mercosur, Thailand, and India. These potential deals, combined with



the dynamic geopolitical landscape, add complexity to the EU market and pose a significant risk to some of these sensitive sectors. Therefore, a careful and balanced approach to Ukraine's trade liberalisation is necessary to ensure that EU producers, who already face challenges from cumulative trade impacts and unlevel playing field, are not further disadvantaged.

We should also not forget that the effects of full liberalization on some Member States have led to protective measures to safeguard national markets, which, while understandable, risk fragmenting the EU single market. Without a trade agreement that addresses these national challenges, the integrity of the EU market could be further weakened, and competitive distortions may arise.

Our associations also urge that this ongoing revision accelerates the alignment -of Ukraine's standards with the EU acquis. Ensuring thorough monitoring and controls of this alignment will be critical to maintaining fair competition and market stability.

We call on the European Commission to work closely with stakeholders, European Parliament and Member States to develop a trade framework that preserves European agriculture and that the outcome of these negotiations reflects both solidarity with Ukraine and the realities of European markets and of its producers and manufacturers.

On behalf of the following associations:

AVEC – Association of Poultry Processors and Poultry Trade in the EU countries

CEFS – European Association of Sugar Manufacturers

CEPM – European Confederation of Maize Production

CIBE – International Confederation of European Beet Growers

COPA-COGECA - the united voice of farmers and their cooperatives in the European Union

EUWEP - European Union of Wholesale with Eggs, Egg Products, Poultry and Game

iEthanol - European Industrial & Beverage Ethanol Association

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