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Press Release

Newly re-elected Chairman of Copa & Cogeca Working Party on Organic Production Kees Van Zelderren outlines priorities including getting good deal on EU Organic Farming Review

Newly re-elected Chairman of Copa and Cogecas' Working Party on Organic Production Kees Van Zelderren outlined his priorities for the next two years in Brussels today, highlighting the need for a good deal at the end of May on the EU Organic Farming Review.

Speaking after his re-election, Kees Van Zelderren said "In view of the on-going talks on the review of EU organic farming legislation, we need to get a good agreement on May 31 during the triilogue negotiations with European Parliament. Organic operators cannot wait any longer without political guidance because of all the uncertainties that the lack of an agreement is causing their businesses and investments. The sector is very dynamic and we do not want to hold it up".

"There are only a few outstanding issues which remain to be solved. Concerning these, it is important for us to have a progressive approach when it comes to the issue of thresholds for non-authorized substances, as well as on the use of organic seeds. Indeed, we are not yet ready to adopt a harmonised EU declassification level, as before establishing this, member states need to harmonise the work processes of their control bodies and/or control authorities, in addition to the harmonisation of methods and investigative parameters used by European laboratories, for example. Instead of setting a fixed end date for the derogation on the use of conventional seeds, we believe that all operators within the organic sector should work together to supply the market with enough organic seeds. Innovation is highly needed, he stressed.

Outlining additional priorities, he said "In the light of growing demand and imports from non-EU countries, research and innovation is a key priority to further develop the EU organic farming sector. Research for development and production of organically-farmed alternatives needs to be encouraged. It should also cover improvements to plant production systems such as finding production techniques that allow crops to be better resistant to diseases, like multi-crop systems".

"Specific research in the area of climate change is also needed in order to further reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to improve energy efficiency in organic farming systems", he insisted.

"Finally, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) plays a key role for the sector and the strategic relevance of this sector needs to continue to be recognised in the CAP", he concluded.

Mr Van Zelderren will be supported by two Vice-Chairman, Heinrich Von Bassewitz from the German Farm Organisation DBV and Luigi Tozzi from the Italian organisation Confagricoltura

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