

Brussels, 23rd November 2018

COPA AND COGECA STATEMENT ON THE BREXIT PROCESS

On November 25th, the endorsement by the European Council of the Withdrawal Agreement is a new step forward an orderly Brexit, further minimising the prospect of a 'no-deal' scenario which would be catastrophic for both EU and British farming communities. 60% of UK agri-food exports go to the EU. EU-27 exports make up an average total of between 70% and 99% of all UK imports.

Copa and Cogeca acknowledge the significant efforts of the EU and UK negotiating teams in achieving this deal and urge parliamentarians for the EU and UK to give a swift conclusion to the withdrawal process, avoid no deal as a priority and provide predictability to millions of European farmers and their cooperatives.

As Copa and Cogeca, we have been very pleased to see that negotiators have agreed upon a transitional period. These transitional arrangements will eliminate certain risk of trade disruption and additional costs for our members. This period is fundamental to allow them to prepare ahead of time for any potential changes to customs arrangements being introduced. For example, no customs procedures, no sanitary and phytosanitary inspections, no additional bureaucracy should be implemented during it. During this time, the UK would continue to abide by existing EU regulations governing food production and to honour its existing commitments.

Furthermore, Cop and Cogeca welcome very positively that the EU and the UK have also agreed that the stock of existing of EU-approved geographical indications would be legally protected by the withdrawal agreement. It is also positive that EU-approved geographical indications bearing names of UK origin remain unaffected with the EU.

Copa and Cogeca noticed as well with great satisfaction that negotiators have agreed in full on the terms of the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland. This lives up to the commitments made by both sides to ensure that a hard border will not be introduced on the Island of Ireland.

There is still work to do and uncertainty in the negotiations on the future of the relationship between the EU and the UK, but we should welcome this first outcome and the commitment of negotiators and governments on all sides.

Copa and Cogeca consider that the declaration for the future relationship corresponds to our call to the negotiators to maintain the closest trading relationship. It is very positive that the EU and the UK would seek new customs arrangements that facilitates trade that is as frictionless as possible, while preserving the integrity of the EU Single Market.

It is crucial to avoid setting-up new-tariff barriers in the form of customs or border requirements, and especially in the form of new regulatory procedures. We then support positively that the economic partnership should ensure no tariffs, fees, charges or quantitative restrictions across all sectors, with ambitious customs arrangements that build and improve on the single customs territory provided for in the Withdrawal Agreement, guarantying the single market protection and the community preference, enlarged to the United Kingdom.

Furthermore, it is essential to maintain a level playing field in the future relationship between the EU and the UK. The EU should maintain its high food production standards, and imported products should respect these standards, irrespective of their origin. Copa and Cogeca is happy to notice that these arrangements will be underpinned by provisions ensuring a level playing field for open and fair competition.

Copa and Cogeca call as well the European Union and the United Kingdom to maintain research and scientific cooperation regarding issues related to agriculture and food production.

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