



SUMMARY REPORT

The Value of Biodiversity in the Agri-Food Chain

22 June 2016

European Parliament, Brussels

Key stakeholders in the agri-food chain were brought together by MEP Angélique Delahaye to discuss the importance of promoting biodiversity throughout the chain. This meeting was held as a follow-up to a previous working group event that took place in May, which tackled the topic of biodiversity in food production.

Angelique Delahaye MEP and Chair of the “Biodiversity & Ecosystem Services” working group of the EP Intergroup on “Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development” welcomed participants and emphasised that biodiversity and agriculture are not opposing areas but rather complimentary. However, communication is often lacking between the various sectors and it was mentioned that joint solutions for sustainable economic farming need to be found incorporating both the upstream and downstream to meet the means of consumers. It was highlighted that this is possible as biodiversity is one of the engines of progress in agricultural production methods. However, this form of sustainable farming is often overshadowed by the demand on farmers to increase their crop yield.

Maciej Krzysztofowicz, Market Officer “General aspects of agricultural markets”, DG Agriculture and Rural Development highlighted that one of the main reforms to the agricultural market was market orientation towards the consumers. Communication was emphasised as an issue of particular importance on all related issues in the food chain. Two-way communication was emphasised as essential exchanging together with farmers and consumers on sustainable measures and what products consumers demand. It was however said that this information must be followed by actions. In the short term much of the discussion related to the food chain is on market crisis and unfair trading practices, but looking beyond immediate problems, the food supply chain biodiversity is essential as well as promoting sustainable production to ensure added value. Building more resilience into the food chain was also mentioned. With regards to the CAP it was said that it entails three main areas of actions. The need to create the basic conditions for preserving and enhancing biodiversity is essential, which is within through the greening and rural development. Secondly, adaptability of farmers and innovation is crucial, using the European Innovation Partnership. Thirdly, a better organisation of farmers (in producer and interbranch organisations) is important so as to provide them with tools to work together in the food chain.

Franz Kraus, Manager EU Public Affairs, Mondelez Belgium Services outlined that Mondelez is a multinational food company present in 165 countries. It was highlighted that the organization wants to ensure sustainability within its production and aim to reduce its environmental impact where possible. It was explained that the biggest environmental



impact relates to sourcing of raw materials, with cocoa and wheat being the main ingredients. As part of their sustainability goals they have developed two signature programmes focusing on impact at scale. The Harmony wheat programme started in 2008 in France and has three pillars: to ensure quality and traceability of grain, to safeguard the environment by obliging farmers to adhere to various practices, with a focus on biodiversity, as well as to help society by working with local communities, by building up know-how of farmers, and by having farmers take pride in the products they produce. It was said that preserving biodiversity is an essential part of the programme with at least 3% of every Harmony wheat field dedicated to set-aside areas with flowers that attract pollinators. Inter-season crops and responsible use of pesticides are also promoted. The project has nine pilot farms and is working with farmers and research institutes to go even further. Another important part of the programme is to improve communication with customers through various channels. It was said that the project has also been successful in driving sales and enhancing the reputation of the brand which provides further leverage for the programmes to improve. It was said that the programme is evolving and is looking into other measures to effectively improve the environmental impact, such as on water use. It was also investigating how the learnings from the Harmony programme could be scaled up globally.

Stanka Becheva, Sustainable Food Campaigner, Friends of the Earth Europe highlighted that the issues must be tackled by taking a broader and more holistic approach. It was said that the current food system has a major impact on biodiversity, which is reflected in the State of Nature Report underlining that 86% of farmland habitats are in bad condition. The [IPES report "From Uniformity to Diversity"](#) was also mentioned, which outlines that there are two different types of value chains. It was explained that the long value chain is based on crop monocultures, livestock using concentrated animal feed, and long distance transportation of the system. The short value chains are characterised by diversified crops, different breeds of animals and landscapes as well as a direct link between consumer and producer. It was said that this is the preferred value chain in which the EU should strive to move towards. It was said that several actions need to be taken to get there such as diversifying retailers, changing subsidies into ones that promote diversified sustainable food systems (including biodiversity), and promoting sustainable diets by emphasising seasonal and traditional foods, as well as less but better meat consumption. Additional ideas for policy-makers is to look at the role of small scale farmers for agro-biodiversity (since they use often traditional local breeds), use public procurement as a tool to support diverse organic local food, a sustainable food diet strategy, cooperation among all stakeholders in the food chain as well as developing a pollinator strategy that fits into the system change needed. It was underlined that different policies that are not directly linked to biodiversity but have a huge impact must be integrated together.

The discussion with the audience underlined that all participants agree upon the shared objective of protecting the future of our planet, but dialogue is still needed on how to best implement the measures needed. It was said that a lot of companies are hesitant to implement measures that would enhance biodiversity but the example of Mondelez, however, shows that a company can implement measures to reduce its environmental impact while increasing sales. This link also needs to be shown to farmers, who do not



always understand the value of putting the environment above the economy. It was also said that many farmers do see the environment as an investment but do not always receive the fair price for their products. It was highlighted that ecosystem services are often taken for granted but need to be paid for as this is clearly part of the solution. Another issue raised is the need to bring production closer to consumers. Education was underlined as of utmost importance as it is essential that consumers understand the manufacturing process and where the food is actually coming from also changing mindsets to value quality. This is also linked to public health. It was also said that the agri-food chain is not just an EU issue but can have global repercussions as producers constantly need to adapt to the international situation. Thus, it was emphasised that the EU must be careful about the means implemented to not worsen existing situations and thereby creating new problems. The CAP was further discussed highlighting that the Commission is currently reflecting on the implementation of the greening and its impact on biodiversity. The European Innovation Platform was reiterated as a mean to collaborate with stakeholders and achieve sustainable food supply chain management. The importance of communication was further reiterated highlighting the importance of outreach and communicating along the value chain.