

CIBE PRESS STATEMENT

15th May 2024

European Sugar Beet growers take stock of a disappointing 2023/24 crop and turbulent political developments. They expect the 2024/25 crop to be very challenging.

European sugar beet growers held their 2024 General Assembly on 14 May in Brussels, re-electing Marcel Jehaes (BE) as CIBE President and Guillaume Gandon (FR) as Chair of the CIBE Economic and General Affairs Committee, both for a second term.

The 2023/24 sugar beet crop was affected by excessive rainfall during autumn in many countries, contributing to low sugar contents not seen in decades. In some regions which luckily escaped from virus yellows, diseases such as SBR (low sugar content syndrome) combined with RTD (rubbery taproot disease) caused significant damage. The 2024/25 sowings, which are not completed in many countries, are also already affected by difficult climatic conditions and by early pest infestations. Commenting on this situation, CIBE President Marcel Jehaes highlighted: *“The shrinking toolbox available to growers to protect their crop effectively and to adapt to climate change is a threat to the sustainability of our sector. We are still awaiting the introduction of new effective tools, including NGTs, and we want no further bans and restrictions on chemical plant protection products without effective alternative solutions. Growers and their partners are investing in research and development, but they also need time, appropriate public and policy support, as well as financial support. This is the top priority of the CIBE Manifesto 2024, made available ahead of EU General Elections”*.

On sugar markets and the new Ukraine ATM Regulation, CIBE Economic and General Affairs Committee Chair Guillaume Gandon declared: *“Our sector remains fragile: we went from an economic crisis after the end of quotas to a plant health crisis with the neonics ban, to an energy crisis, and finally to a market crisis with the massive and uncontrolled flow of sugar imports from Ukraine. In 2023, the sector was showing some signs of recovery but the flow of sugar imports from Ukraine is driving market prices downwards. We acknowledge the progress achieved after intensive discussions and are relieved that the EU institutions agreed to limit such flows for one year. This is a fair outcome for both European and Ukrainian growers who would be affected by a deteriorated market. We urge the Commission to act now and activate the safeguard measure foreseen in the new Ukraine ATM regulation on the first day of its implementation”*.

European sugar beet growers had a frank, fruitful and in-depth discussion with DG-AGRI Acting Deputy Director General, Mr P. Bascou, taking stock of recent political developments and their implications for agriculture in general and the sugar beet sector in particular. Finally, European sugar beet growers endorsed the 2024 CIBE Manifesto with their key priorities for the upcoming EU political mandate.

About CIBE

CIBE unites national and regional associations from 14 EU sugar beet-producing countries as well as the United Kingdom and Switzerland. It represents and defends the livelihood of 110 000 growers, for a total production of around 16 Mt sugar equivalent annually.