

JOINT PRESS RELEASE

“Leading European agri-food organisations call for reciprocity standards in Mercosur agreement to ensure fair trade, fair competition and consumer protection”

Brussels, [Tuesday 26th, November 2024] – Following the recent acceleration of EU-Mercosur trade negotiations and with the next potentially decisive round scheduled this week, our eight organisations, representing European farmers and manufacturers, urge the Commission to take a firm stand to protect the integrity of European agriculture and uphold consumer trust.

In the absence of reciprocity in standards, accepting the Mercosur agreement would be a significant step back and run counter to the EU's objectives on food security, sustainability and consumer protection. It would send a very bad signal to our sectors that are already facing numerous uncertainties and would go against the September 2024 conclusions of the Strategic Dialogue on the future of Agriculture.

“This agreement, even after 20 years of negotiations, still remains unacceptable for the farming community, both due to the market access agreed in 2019 and the lack of reciprocity on production standards that would directly put our producers at a competitive disadvantage.” underlined Copa President Massimiliano Giansanti.

As things stand, the EU-MERCOSUR agreement will exacerbate unfair competition - not only negatively affecting European farmers, processors, workers and producers from the agricultural world but also misleading European consumers on the quality and safety of imported food. Many of them wrongly assume that products from third countries meet the same stringent production and environmental standards as those enforced within the EU.

Guillaume Gauthier, President of SELMA, Sustainable European Livestock & Meat Association, said: “We are at a critical juncture, and the EU must show leadership by ensuring that imported products are subject to the same standards as those demanded of European producers. Reciprocity in standards is a non-negotiable element of the Mercosur agreement”.

Our sectors firmly support the EU's coordinated efforts to promote all European food products, and we advocate for the principle of reciprocity in standards, which should be a cornerstone of all trade agreements and policies. Without provisions that ensure imported products comply with the same sanitary/health, environmental, and animal welfare standards as those followed by European operators, the viability of the EU's agricultural production and manufacturing sectors—alongside its crucial contribution to European food security and rural development—will be jeopardised. The Commission's desire to pursue negotiations is highly worrying, especially since a DG Sante Audit recently unveiled that Brazil lacks reliable controls over oestradiol 17 β — an animal-growth stimulating hormone banned in the EU.

Marcel Jehaes, President of CIBE, International Confederation of European Beet Growers and Franck Laborde, President of CEPM, European Maize Production Confederation, stressed that “reciprocity in standards of production, including “mirror clauses,” are crucial to ensure fairness, to encourage sustainable production, and to maintain consumer trust in the quality, sustainability and safety of products on the European market. Without these essential guarantees, agreements like Mercosur undermine the very principles of fair trade and consumer protection and ultimately constitute a betrayal vis-à-vis EU farmers producing key agricultural crops and products”.



NOTE TO THE EDITOR

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

SELMA - Sustainable European Livestock & Meat Association

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ANNEX - CO-SIGNATORIES

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

AVEC is the voice of the European poultry meat sector. It facilitates communication and exchange between international organisations and decision-makers, and focuses on key areas like animal health and welfare, food safety and quality, trade and sustainable development

CEFS – European Association of Sugar Manufacturers

CEFS is an international non-profit organisation and a recognised interlocutor for the EU Institutions since 1953, sharing knowledge and technical expertise on the European beet sugar industry. Working on trade, environment and social sustainability, agriculture, skills, food and feed and nutrition.

CEPM – Confederation of European Maize Producers

CEPM brings together professional and inter-professional organisations from Bulgaria, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Spain, whose mission is to represent and defend the interests of all or part of the maize sector: grain maize, silage maize, seed maize and sweetcorn.

CIBE – International Confederation of European Beet Growers

CIBE represents the European sugar beet growers since 1927, promoting a sustainable EU sugar beet sector. CIBE gathers national and regional associations from 14 European beet-producing countries

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

Together, we ensure that EU agriculture is sustainable, innovative and competitive, while guaranteeing food security for 500 million people throughout Europe. We, the European farmers and agri-cooperatives, strive to deliver the type of agricultural products that our citizens expect and demand, with a market-oriented agriculture that provides the highest level of food safety, sustainability, plant and animal health and welfare standards.

EUWEP – the umbrella organisation representing the interests of European Egg Traders and Egg Processors. The EUWEP secretariat is currently housed in the Netherlands.

iEthanol – the European Industrial & Beverage Ethanol Association

iEthanol, the European Industrial & Beverage Ethanol Association, is a Brussels-based trade association representing over 60% of the producers of ethanol for industrial and beverage use in Europe. The Association acts as a focused voice for the European ethanol used in the industrial and food sectors.

SELMA – Sustainable European Livestock & Meat Association

The Sustainable European Livestock & Meat Association (SELMA) is an umbrella organisation representing the European livestock and meat industry. Its members advocate for fair trade, sustainability, and the highest standards of animal welfare and food safety across the EU. SELMA brings together national organisations from six European countries including FEBEV (Belgium), EDOK (Greece), OI Intercarneitalia (Italy), Provacuno and Interovic (Spain), PZBM (Poland) and Interbev (France).