



Brussels, 21 November 2017

CIBE, CEFS, COPA-LOGECA and EFFAT strongly warn the European Commission to reject any attempt to include sugar in the revised trade offer to Mercosur

This statement comes as the EU plans to modify its market access offer to Mercosur to include sensitive products, among them sugar, during the next round of trade talks between 4 and 10 December.

The Commission risks once again failing to maintain a firm line on sugar in its trade negotiations. EU sugar beet growers, sugar producers, and workers stand determined: we will not pay for the offensive interests of other industrial sectors or for those of the Brazilian state-supported sugar-ethanol regime.

CIBE President Bernhard Conzen explained: “the European Commission is actually asking beet growers and processors to make sacrifices for Brazilian interests, which is totally unacceptable. Ever higher standards for ever lower prices for us, and ultimately importing lower standards, is incomprehensible and a nonsense for farmers. This must stop or we are heading for a major and very painful crisis.”

Further opening of the EU sugar market would be to the severe detriment of the EU beet sugar sector and would imperil many of the 140,000 farmers, 30,000 employees, and hundreds of rural communities whose livelihoods depend on the sector. It would undermine the sustainability and dynamics of the sector at a time of unprecedented uncertainty following the end of production quotas from 1 October 2017. The risk of further factory closures is high, warned CEFS President Johann Marihart and EFFAT Secretary General Harald Wiedenhofer. This would have serious consequences for the vulnerable rural areas supported by the industrial jobs and high-quality employment that beet sugar production provides.

“There is no level playing field between the EU and Brazil; the Commission continues to dream that our sector is able to handle further opening up of the market without consequences, and continues to hide from reality: this is irresponsible” noted Johann Marihart, adding: “The Commission might as well tell us which factories in the EU would have to close.”

“The European sugar sector delivers safe, quality jobs. It is crystal clear that the sector would be a loser in that deal. The employment impact could be devastating. Is this the future workforce strategy of Europe after the promises of the Gothenburg Social Summit?” asked Mr. Harald Wiedenhofer.

Copa and Cogeca Secretary General Pekka Pesonen concluded: “We need fair and balanced trade agreements that ensure that we do not have surpluses on our market. EU farmers and their cooperatives should not be penalized when the EU negotiates free trade deals. They cannot afford additional income losses resulting from a trade deal which puts more pressure on the EU sugar, ethanol and beef markets in a trade deal. In the sugar and ethanol sectors, there is no level playing field with the Mercosur countries which have developed sophisticated domestic support schemes. We are already a major net importer of agricultural produce from these countries and by increasing their access to our market, there would be a further risk of deforestation in these countries at the expense of the climate. We urge the Commission to show determination and leadership in these negotiations. We call on Member States not to make another blow to the EU agriculture sector which is vital for the economies of our rural areas.”