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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: AOB for the meeting of the “Agriculture and Fisheries” Council on 18 November 2024:
Putting forward an EU Protein Strategy
- Information from Germany, on behalf of Denmark and Germany, supported by Czechia, Estonia, Ireland, Luxembourg

1. Proteins are a fundamental part of the diet of both humans and animals. The challenges we face concern not only the amount of protein in the diet, but also the quality and origin of the proteins consumed. We believe that changes need to be made to our protein supply – both for food and for feed. The supply must comprise more high-quality proteins whose production is less harmful to our climate and biodiversity. A production of proteins in the EU that is increasingly based on plant protein could reduce the impact that food and feed consumption currently have on our climate, environment and nature. We know that there is a rising global demand for protein, and companies in the EU can contribute to meeting the future need by providing high-quality proteins that are more climate-friendly.

2. On 22 November 2018, the European Commission published its *Report on the development of plant proteins in the European Union*¹, with the intention of meeting the commitment it made during the adoption process for Regulation (EU) 2017/2393. A corresponding conference took place in Vienna from 22 to 23 November 2018, focusing on opportunities and challenges regarding the development of plant proteins in the European Union.
3. On 23 March 2022, building on its 2018 report, the European Commission announced a review of EU plant protein policy in its Communication on Food Security and Resilience of Food Systems².
4. On 19 October 2023, the European Parliament (EP) adopted the European Protein Strategy resolution (EP, 2023), exhorting the European Commission (EC) to take action by providing a framework to boost protein production within the European Union (EU)³.
5. On 9 April 2024, the EU Ministers of Agriculture held an exchange on possible options to improve the EU's protein crop supply situation and explored the policy instruments available at EU level to further accelerate the diversification of protein supply.⁴
6. The results of the Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture, published in September 2024, will be incorporated into the development of proposals to be put forward by the Commissioner-designate for Agriculture and Food. These include the call for the creation of an EU action plan for plant-based foods in 2026.⁵

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52018DC0757>

² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52022DC0133>

³ [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/751426/EPRS_BRI\(2023\)751426_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/751426/EPRS_BRI(2023)751426_EN.pdf)

⁴ <https://belgian-presidency.consilium.europa.eu/en/news/european-agriculture-ministers-gathered-to-work-on-food-as-strategic-sector-for-europe-1/>

⁵ https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/cap-overview/main-initiatives-strategic-dialogue-future-eu-agriculture_en#strategic-dialogue-report

7. Against this background, we are convinced that, in order to adequately address the issue of our supply of sustainable protein crops and products, the European Union has an important role to play in consolidating the objectives for European protein production and consumption (for and by humans and animals). A coherent set of instruments is needed to achieve these objectives (under the CAP, but also in the areas of environment, climate, health and nutrition, trade, support, innovation, research, consumer policies etc.). A common European approach is deemed necessary – and, therefore, a European protein strategy that focuses, among other things, on the following:

- strengthening of the sustainable domestic production of plant-based proteins, produced in accordance with high European standards;
- fostering of research and innovation in the area of plant-based proteins, as well as other alternative sources of protein, along the entire value chain, targeting need-oriented and optimised use of plant-based or alternative protein sources (e.g. green proteins⁶);
- further increasing protein crop potential by improving and broadening research on breeding strategies and by specifying the requirements of sustainable plant protection, particularly for legumes;
- improving, within the framework of the CAP, the profitability and the agronomic value of green proteins;
- continuously collaborating with institutions and agricultural organisations to promote the cultivation and use of domestic plant proteins in the food and feed industry;
- exploring potential information and knowledge exchanges, for instance on dietary guidelines that balance both health and climate to stimulate demand and on options for raising awareness among consumers and retailers of the advantages of sustainable protein sources;

⁶ By green proteins, we mean alternative sources of protein other than soya or conventional animal products. The production of these green proteins helps curb climate emissions and takes greater account of nature and the environment.

- emphasising the promotion of the market potential and scope for further development;
- further increasing transparency on the protein crops markets by improving the informative value of national and EU-wide protein balance sheets;
- exploring possible alternative income sources for the agricultural and food sector and working to reduce the environmental impact and the climate emissions.

8. The supporting Member States call on the European Commission to build upon the available knowledge to formulate a European Protein Strategy, taking into account national strategies and practices. This strategy should foster research and innovation, and promote the diversification of protein intake and the use of proteins in food and feed.
