



## MAC ADVICE

### Roadmap on the EU Promotion Programme for Agricultural and Food Products

Brussels, 18 March 2021

#### 1. Background

On 9 February 2021, the European Commission published a Roadmap on the review of policy on promotion of EU farm and food products inside and outside the EU, which was open to feedback until 9 March 2021<sup>1</sup>. The EU promotion programme aims at increasing awareness of the qualities of EU food products and at enhancing the competitiveness of the Union's agricultural sector. Seafood sector organisations can also participate in this policy through the promotion of a "basket" of products in cooperation with partners in the agricultural sector.

Under the Farm to Fork Strategy, the Commission aims to adjust the different policies that impact the food sector, in order to face the challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss. An evaluation support study of the promotion policy<sup>2</sup> found no major inconsistencies with other EU policies, including the CFP, but noted that it could be better aligned with political priorities and contribute in particular to the objectives of the Farm to Fork Strategy. The review should enhance the contribution to sustainable production and consumption, while maintaining or even increasing the policy's effectiveness in supporting the agrifood's competitiveness.

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<sup>1</sup> Accessible on the European Commission's Better Regulation website: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12782-EU-farm-and-food-products-review-of-policy-on-promotion-inside-and-outside-the-EU>

<sup>2</sup> The evaluation support study was prepared by external consultants at the request of DG AGRI and is available on the Publications Office of the European Union's website: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/61b15a1d-09dc-11eb-bc07-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>



In terms of problems to tackle, the review aims to refocus the EU policy objectives, since the current promotion policy is neither sufficiently geared to supporting the sector in the transition towards sustainable food systems, nor is it sufficiently aiming at nudging consumption to sustainable choices or healthy diets. The review also aims to streamline the implementation model, including through further harmonisation.

## **2. Policy Review**

The Market Advisory Council (MAC) welcomes the launch of a policy review on the EU promotion programme for agricultural and food products. The MAC agrees that the policy's review should enhance its contribution to sustainable production and consumption, in line with evolving diets, while maintaining or even increasing the policy's effectiveness in supporting the agrifood sector's competitiveness. This should also cover the seafood sector. At the same time and to be able to achieve this transition, full coherence is needed between the objectives of the Farm to Fork strategy and the EU promotion policy.

Food plays an important part in the carbon footprint. Therefore, a switch towards low carbon diets can contribute to a reduction of climate change. The seafood sector can play an important role in this switch. As an example, wild caught seafood is a naturally derived food source providing animal protein with low carbon footprint to EU consumers, since it requires virtually no land-use, fresh water or pesticides. Sustainable food products should benefit from the EU promotion programme and the EU seafood products should be promoted for their sustainability, while also being explicitly mentioned when referring to healthy and sustainable diets, as in their important role in providing essential long chain fatty acids of marine origin (Omega 3, EPA and DHA) which have been proven to be key in preventing cardiovascular diseases.

Taking into account the globalisation of the market, the international trade of aquatic food products in the EU, and the stringent environmental and socio-economic sustainability

requirements applicable to EU seafood production, enhancing the competitiveness of the EU operators and its value chain is fundamental to face climate change and the loss of biodiversity, and to contribute effectively to a sustainable production and consumption.

### **3. Evaluation and policy option**

According to the policy's evaluation, the EU promotion programme has broadly achieved its objectives. The evaluation found no major inconsistencies with other EU policies but noted that the promotion policy could be better aligned with political priorities and contribute in particular to the objectives of the Farm to Fork Strategy.

In the view of the MAC, the policy has achieved its objectives on increasing awareness of the qualities of EU food products, but has not fully achieved the objectives to enhance the competitiveness of EU agricultural and aquatic food sectors. The policy is not appropriately tailored for seafood products, meaning that, in general, EU seafood products are not sufficiently recognised and promoted for their healthy, low carbon and sustainable characteristics.

The policy should be better aligned with other political priorities, including international trade policies, and contribute better to the objectives of the Farm to Fork Strategy. The strategy should recognise the characteristics of EU production, such as environmental and socio-economic sustainability and food safety requirements, while also aiming at a level-playing-field with imported products. It is important that the EU's consumer information rules are adequately implemented in the HORECA and retail channels, in order to contribute to promotion efforts and the competitiveness of EU food producers.

In terms of policy options, the MAC supports the streamlining of the implementation model. Independently of the policy option selected by the Commission, the review should review the policy to address the shortcomings mentioned above.

#### **4. Challenges faced by seafood operators**

The MAC believes that, under the current framework, it is very difficult for EU seafood products to benefit from the EU promotion programme. Locating agricultural partners to develop a “basket” of products is especially hard, since seafood operators are not always familiar with agricultural operators, making it difficult to identify partner products. Applications to the EU promotion programme require significant time and effort, which most seafood producers, particularly SMEs, are not able to meet. It is important to note that application does not guarantee that support will be provided. The policy’s financial envelope should be increased, in order to better meet the needs of SMEs and of non-agricultural food production.

#### **5. Recommendations**

In summary, in the context of the Roadmap on the EU promotion programme for agricultural and food products, the MAC believes that the European Commission should:

- a) Bear in mind the EU seafood market, including through cooperation between DG AGRI and DG MARE as well as the engagement of seafood stakeholders;
- b) Proceed with a review that enhances the policy’s contribution to sustainable production and consumption, in line with evolving diets, while maintaining or even increasing the policy’s effectiveness in supporting the agrifood sector’s competitiveness, including seafood;
- c) Ensure full coherence between the objectives of the Farm to Fork Strategy and the EU promotion policy;
- d) Take into account the role of the EU fishery and aquaculture production in the provision of healthy, sustainable and low impact food;
- e) Advance with a streamlining of the implementation model, while also addressing the shortcomings in terms of awareness, competitiveness and policy coherence objectives;
- f) Facilitate access to the programme by seafood operators and increase support for SMEs.