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Mr Norbert Lins
Chairman of the Committee for
Agriculture and Rural
Development
European Parliament
60 rue Wiertz
B-1047 - Bruxelles/Brussels

Brussels, 2nd April 2020

Re: Postponing the Communication on the Farm to Fork Strategy

Dear Chairman,

I am writing to you on behalf of our 22 million farmers and their family members as well as our 22,000 cooperatives that are dedicated to providing 446 million EU citizens with safe, nutritious, high-quality and affordable food every day. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, EU farmers and agri-cooperatives have been able to maintain supply for citizens across the EU, thus ensuring European food security.

In this context, Copa and Cogeca welcome the confirmation by EFSA that there is currently no evidence that food is a likely source or transmission route of the virus.

However, farmers, forest owners and their cooperatives are facing an increasingly difficult situation. The emergency arising from the spread of COVID-19 and the major health repercussions is now leading to dramatic consequences in the most affected rural areas of the EU. These open fronts are having rapid and negative knock-on effects on the main agricultural and forestry sectors, both in the immediate and the medium to long term. Furthermore, this mounting crisis potentially puts both the single market and international markets at stake, threatening supply chains, jobs and ultimately EU food security.

Given these dire circumstances that the sector is facing, I would like to support the postponement of the presentation and adoption of the Communication on the Farm to Fork Strategy that the Commission is considering for later this month.

In this regard, and to maintain policy consistency and coherence, we call for a fact and science-based reflection on this strategy across the entire food supply chain, one that is clearly based on the lessons learned from managing this global pandemic.

On the other hand, Copa and Cogeca members are supportive of reaching a rapid decision on the ongoing legislative processes on the CAP post 2020 and the transition regulation. Farmers and their cooperatives need, now more than ever, a smooth transition as well as complete certainty on the rules that they will have to face in the next CAP. This is the only way that they can adequately plan and reach their production decisions to maintain food security in the Union.

While Copa-Cogeca supports a transition to more sustainable production and consumption systems, given the current pandemic and its impact on society as a whole and the sector in particular, it is necessary to postpone the adoption of the Communication on the Farm to Fork Strategy.

In particular, some of the targets that are currently being considered are likely to have far-reaching consequences for the volumes of food being produced in the EU and therefore the Union's food security.

In light of the new circumstances arising from curbing the COVID-19 pandemic, I believe that sufficient time should be provided to consider the measures backing a move to more sustainable food systems.

I therefore call on the European Parliament, as a co-legislator, to ensure policy coherence and consistency in support of the EU's single market and the agricultural sector. We are facing extraordinary circumstances that put at stake the continuity of farms' activities and the daily supply of food to EU citizens.

Therefore, in addition to introducing any measures to safeguard and guarantee the functioning of agricultural activity, I call on the co-legislators, under these exceptional circumstances, to postpone any decisions that are made without proper and adequate reflection.

As this initiative will have significant economic, social and environmental impacts, it is imperative that the Commission carry out an inception impact assessment, not only for the Farm to Fork Strategy but for the entire European Green Deal before taking any political or regulatory decision. This is even more relevant when it comes to the setting of targets such as those to reduce the use of pesticides, fertilisers or antibiotics.

Please find Copa and Cogeca's contribution to the Farm to Fork Strategy that was sent into the European Commission attached.

I am writing to you in the spirit of collaboration. For your information, we will also send a copy of this letter to the coordinators of the political groups in COM AGRI, to the Chairman of the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety and to all the members of these two committees.

I would be honoured to have an exchange of views with you on this topic in the near future.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pekka Pesonen', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Pekka Pesonen

Secretary-General of Copa and Cogeca

Cc: COM AGRI Coordinators; Chairman of COM ENVI; members of COM AGRI and COM ENVI.