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PFP Position on Biofuels

PFP represents the European primary food processing industry towards the European Union and International Organisations. PFP members process approximately 220 million tonnes of agricultural raw commodities (cereals, sugar beets, oilseeds and crude vegetable oils, starch potatoes and cocoa beans), ensure high quality food for EU citizens and employ over 120,000 people in Europe.

Securing the availability of agricultural raw materials supply is the priority for EU primary food processors in the face of growing demand for food, feed and industrial uses. Our industries are mainly supplied with European agricultural raw materials and many rely on the local availability of the agricultural raw materials they process. European primary food processors are keen to use EU raw materials whenever possible.

Biofuels are the main alternative to fossil fuels as they play an important role in decarbonising the European transportation sector. Today, there are two commercially available biofuels on the market. Biodiesel is the most common application in Europe and is produced from vegetable oils (rapeseed oil, soybean oil and sunflower oil) and fats (palm oil). Bioethanol is produced from sugar (sugar beet and sugarcane) and starch (wheat, corn, potatoes, etc.).

Due to the nature of their processing activities, PFP members are at the crossroads of food and feed markets, but also – for most of them – of green chemistry and energy sectors.

In 2009, the European Commission set a target for the use of renewable energy in transport and established sustainability criteria to ensure that biofuels are produced in an environmentally-friendly way. These criteria range from cultivation of agricultural raw materials to blending of the fuel, and encompass several issues of critical importance, such as land and water use, and biodiversity. By introducing the Renewable Energy Directive (RED – EC/2009/28), the European Union has also put in place the most stringent sustainability standard in the world.

In addition to decarbonising the transportation sector, biofuels promise opportunities for the rural communities in encouraging productivity improvements. Moreover, certain biofuels help towards overcoming the European protein deficiency, through co-production of vegetable proteins during processing.

PFP members are hence sensitive to the debate of food versus fuel and consider that food will always be given priority over other outlets for their products. Such positioning of PFP members is compatible with the existence of a policy that provides a clear and predictable framework for the medium and long-term investments in the biofuels' sector. PFP members call for particular attention on the following points:

- The Common Agricultural Policy is the key for a balanced supply for food, feed biofuels and industrial applications. Only a productivity-oriented CAP could secure constant and regular access to agricultural raw materials, while ensuring the competitiveness of European agro-industries.
- Agricultural research and innovation shall be given more emphasis, in order to support agricultural production and productivity, notably in view of the EU Action Plan on bio-based economy and as a starting point for creating a low-carbon bio-economy.
- The EU biofuels policy should be feedstock neutral. In order to achieve a competitive economy, even-handedness of the EU is essential and the multi-feedstock sourcing is absolutely critical for food, feed, industrial and biofuel markets. This approach shall be maintained in the EU biofuels production, since the contrary would put more demand on a reduced number of crops and might create competition with the primary food outlet.
- With regard to the indirect effects attributed to biofuels, the European Commission shall examine ways of addressing these uncertainties so that primary food processors' competitiveness and their access to raw materials are not jeopardised. Political decisions must be based on sound science and reliable methodologies.
- The production of co-products, such as vegetable proteins, is an added-value of biofuels production. The local availability of protein-rich products is beneficial for the downstream chain (dairy, meat, etc.), lowers the imports considerably and positively contributes to solving the European protein deficiency problem.

The Primary Food Processors of the EU (PFP) is composed by:

European Starch Industry Association (AAF)
European Cocoa Association (ECA)
European Committee of Sugar Manufacturers (CEFS)
European Flour milling association (The European Flour Millers)
European Vegetable Oil and Proteinmeal Industry (FEDIOL)
European Vegetable Protein Federation (EUVEPRO)

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