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NOTE

From: Presidency
To: Delegations
Subject: Protein Plan
- Information from the Presidency

1. The EU's protein deficit is a long-lasting feature of European agriculture. It is the result of unfavourable agronomic conditions, low competitiveness of protein crops both with other arable crops grown in the EU and with soya imported from third countries, and duty free access to the EU market conceded as part of trade arrangements in the 1980s. The high proportion of soybean crops grown outside the EU that are genetically modified and the strong European demand for GM-free food and feed further increases the case for stimulating the production of protein crops within the EU.
2. Protein crops are a crucial element in human nutrition as well as in animal feed. The market for plant proteins in Europe can be divided into three main segments: compound feed, premium feed and food. While the feed markets are by large the biggest, the food market is growing fast, with annual growth rates of more than 10%.

3. EU demand for feed protein amounts to around 45 million tonnes of crude protein/year. out of which one third is met by soya. For this protein source, EU self-sufficiency is particularly low representing only 5% of EU consumption. However the level of self-sufficiency varies a lot depending on the protein source and amounts to 79% for rapeseed and 42% for sunflower. EU self-sufficiency is also much higher (92%) for feed proteins supplied by unprocessed crops like cereals, oilseeds and pulses. This means nevertheless that we need to import around 17 million tonnes of crude proteins (of which 13 million tonnes are soya based) from third countries, and mainly from the USA, Brazil and Argentina.
4. In the Council, Ministers were briefed by the Commission at the AGRIFISH meeting on 19 February 2018 on the steps that it intended to undertake to prepare its protein plan (5841/18). Many Member States expressed strong support to the Commission's plan, with some insisting on the need to avoid increased deforestation and to protect the environment. In the meantime, however, with a view to the approaching end of its mandate in October 2019, the Commission established a general rule limiting the number of new initiatives. This resulted in a change of nomenclature, with the protein "plan" becoming the protein report adopted by the Commission on 22 November 2018 (14681/18).
5. At the AGRIFISH meeting on 17 December 2018, the Austrian Presidency presented an AOB point on the conference entitled "The development of Plant Proteins in the European Union – Opportunities and Challenges" which took place in Vienna on 22-23 November 2018 (15258/18). The Presidency underlined the importance of protein crops for both human nutrition and animal feed and informed on how plant proteins production in Europe would help to increase the EU's self-sufficiency and to contribute to mitigating climate change. Commissioner Hogan confirmed that many tools were already available for farmers, including through the promotion policy, and that more would come in the future, for instance through the CAP Strategic Plans and the Horizon Europe programme.

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Against this background, and with the aim of triggering further actions to promote the development of plant proteins in the European Union, the Romanian Presidency would like to invite the Ministers at the Council on 28 January to take part in an exchange of views on the basis of the following questions:

Q1: The Commission sets a framework for future actions aiming at the development of plant protein crops in the EU. What kind of tools would, according to you, work best to support the growth of plant protein production in your country? Does the report fail to mention any potential opportunities? If so, what could be, in your opinion, the adequate actions to take?

Q2: The post 2020 CAP reform package, and specifically the proposal for Regulation on CAP Strategic Plans, gives flexibility to Member States to draft their national plans according to their needs and ambitions. Within this structure, do you think that voluntary coupled support could be the right instrument to support the development of plant protein production in the EU, subject to a proper adjustment of its quantitative limits and ceilings? (increasing the current limits - 10 + 2% - provided for in Article 86(5) of the CAP strategic plans Regulation)
