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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Commission's report on the findings of the EU coordinated action "From the hives" and its relevance for the revision of the Council Directive on honey (2001/110/EC) <i>- Information from the Slovenian delegation</i>

Delegations will find in the Annex a note from the Slovenian delegation on the above mentioned subject to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the Council meeting "Agriculture and Fisheries" on 25 April 2023.

Commission's report on the findings of the EU coordinated action "From the hives" and its relevance for the revision of the Council Directive on honey (2001/110/EC)

At the AGRIFISH Council meeting on 30 January 2023, Slovenia with the support of Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Spain called for an ambitious approach in drafting the proposal for a revision of the Honey Directive¹.

They advocated the obligation to indicate each country of origin and its respective share of honey in honey blends, while also considering implementation aspects.

The recent report on the EU-wide coordinated action "From the Hives"² on honey contaminated with sugars confirmed the assumption that a significant part of honey imported from non-EU countries and placed on the EU market is suspected of not complying with the provisions of the EU Honey Directive 2001/110/EC.

According to the findings, 46% of samples from imported honey were adulterated. The use of sugar syrups, the use of additives and colourings, the masking of the true geographical origin of honey by forging traceability information and by removing pollens, analyses in accredited laboratories to adapt honey/sugar blends to elude possible detection by clients and official authorities before import operations are amongst the most common malpractices detected.

The large price difference between authentic and adulterated honey explains why fraud in honey is highly profitable. The economic impact of adulterated honey is enormous especially for EU beekeepers and others producing genuine honey. Another important aspect is also the misleading of consumers who are paying premium prices for the honey substitute when purchasing adulterated honey.

¹ 5657/23

² https://food.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-03/official-controls_food-fraud_2021-2_honey_report_euca.pdf

With a 60% self-sufficiency in honey and a growth in the sector according to Euromonitor data – up from €2 billion in 2019 to €2.2 billion in 2020, the EU dependence on imports to supply the market will become even more pronounced.

Against this background and the fact that about 80% of honey sold in retail are blends, we call on the Commission to take into account the findings of the report in the negotiations on the revision of the Council Directive on honey (2001/110/EC).

Furthermore, we call upon the Commission to prepare solutions to address the difficulties identified in detecting adulteration with syrups, such as by means of increasing traceability, establishing a reference centre and continuing coordinated activities among Member States.

Due to expected implications of the revision of the Honey Directive for the beekeeping sector, it is of utmost importance to allow an assessment of all aspects, beyond the consumer protection perspective, involving all relevant working groups.
