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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Council
Subject:	Commission's draft 2024 Work Programme for the EU's promotion policy for agri-food products - Information from the Italian delegation

Delegations will find in the Annex a document on the above subject to be presented by the Italian delegation under "Any other business" at the "Agriculture and Fisheries" Council on 23-24 October 2023.

Commission Work Programme for 2024 on the EU promotion policy for agri-food products

On October 25th, an upcoming meeting of the CMO Subgroup Promotion Committee will address the presentation and discussion of the draft Decision for the adoption of the 2024 work program for European horizontal promotion programs. This decision necessitates the approval of the Member States through a vote.

The European Commission has been diligently reviewing the promotion policy, governed by Regulation (EU) No 1144/2014, since January 2021, with the aim of ensuring its continued relevance, effectiveness, and alignment with broader EU policies. Consequently, various refinements have been introduced into the work programs since 2021.

However, the inclusion of a criterion that appeared to undervalue programs designed for the domestic market, specifically those promoting wine, red meat, and processed meat, has provoked substantial controversy and opposition.

It is pertinent to recall that the 2022 Work Programme included an assessment sub-criterion that appeared to undervalue programs targeting the domestic market, particularly those promoting red and processed meat, as well as wine. This approach was met with reservations, and subsequently, in October 2022, the 2023 Work Programme was introduced, retaining this sub-criterion. Member States voiced their opposition, leading to its ultimate removal in the revised proposal for the 2023 Programme, which was adopted in December 2022.

The 2024 Work Programme, slated for discussion in the Committee on October 25th, does not feature the assessment sub-criterion that appeared to undervalue programs for the domestic market promoting red and processed meat and wine (the latter being classified as an alcoholic beverage). Nevertheless, it does contain a section in the introduction (1.2.1) that introduces differentiation:

"For proposals intended for the domestic market, this sub-criterion will also evaluate alignment with the objectives of the European Plan to Combat Cancer, particularly in advocating for a transition to a diet that is more plant-based, with reduced consumption of red and processed meats and other foods associated with cancer risks (e.g., alcoholic beverages)."

It is essential to underscore that the promotion policy can play a pivotal role in enhancing the sustainability of the EU's food system, while simultaneously maintaining its role in promoting agricultural competitiveness, especially in sectors that enjoy strong international market acceptance. Supporting all food sectors that contribute to positioning European food and beverages as a global food powerhouse is imperative. Exclusion of certain products represents unwarranted discrimination and poses a disincentive to the advancement of development and the generation of wealth in rural areas. This approach is fundamentally misaligned with overarching policies such as the European Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy.
