First “and correct” steps by Commissioner Hansen at the head of European agriculture

Copa and Cogeca welcome Commissioner Hansen's first political initiative to strengthen farmers' position in the food supply chain.

Following the widespread farm protests at the beginning of 2024, the European Commission put forward a reflection paper outlining concrete ideas to improve farmers' position in the food supply chain. Copa and Cogeca commend Commissioner Hansen’s proactive approach as, within just 10 days of taking office, two proposals for corrective regulations have been released: one addressing Unfair Trading Practices (UTPs) and another aimed at improving the Common Market Organisation (CMO) framework. These proposals reflect many of the demands voiced by farming communities and their representatives earlier this year.

While the proposal on UTPs is a step in the right direction to correct and improve the 2019 directive, it is crucial for this to go further. Farmers and cooperatives can no longer bear the burden of selling their produce below the cost of production. The list of unfair trading practices must be updated to reflect the realities of today’s markets. We must also address the "fear factor" by enabling anonymous complaints and ensure effective enforcement mechanisms not only at national level but also in cross-border transactions. Robust and dissuasive sanctions must be applied in cases of rule violations to deter infringements and restore fairness in the supply chain.

Particular attention must also be paid to the proposals to improve the CMO regulation, especially regarding the role of Producer Organisations (POs). POs are instrumental in enhancing farmers' market position, ensuring better negotiation conditions, and securing fair prices. Strengthening POs and safeguarding the specific relationship between farmers and their cooperatives will be vital in achieving these goals.

Copa-Cogeca will be actively engaging with policymakers in the coming months to ensure these proposals are refined to deliver the much-needed improvements for farmers and their cooperatives across Europe.