

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COPA-COGECA WORKING PARTY ON HONEY ON **18 NOVEMBER 2008**

**PRESENT:** MS/MESSRS BRUNEAU, STICH, PANELLA, PAGANI, BRANNER, LIE, CLEMENT, PERON, SIRVINS, VEDRENNE, ANCHLING, BROSS, LASZLOFFY, CASACA, MASKE, KOCH, HEDERER, HAEFEKER, WEBSTER, PALACH, CHROSCIOWSKI, CHROSCIOWSKA, MARMUR, SOSNOCKI, MATOUSEK, SOJKA, IZQUIERDO GARCIA, BERNARDO ALVAREZ, RALIENE, VALONEN, PARIKKA, DAMME, GIDT, JOCHUM.

**SECRETARIAT:** FELLER, RIBERA, WILLNEGGER, JAS

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### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Working Party, chaired for the first time by Etienne BRUNEAU, adopted the agenda ([MI\(08\)6684](#)) albeit with several changes as well as the minutes of the last meeting ([MI\(07\)3862](#)). The Chairman also welcomed the two Vice-Chairs, J. STICH and F. PANELLA as well as the group's new secretary, S. JAS.

#### **Item 1: Market situation for honey and the beekeeping sector in Europe**

The Chairman briefly recalled the main market data supplied by the European Commission [MI\(08\)7285](#). Then before opening a round table discussion, he explained what the group's Presidency thought about the following points:

- The Community support programme for beekeeping was well-used and very useful. However since being put in place, the beekeeping situation had changed and new problems had emerged such as the widespread disappearance of bee colonies, climate change, increasing difficulties with bee diseases (varroasis...), given the dearth of veterinary medicines available.
- Some existing problems had been exacerbated: degradation of floral diversity even in areas traditionally rich in flora (i.e. Piedmont, withdrawal of set-aside), increasing age of beekeepers and rapid decline in their numbers. In addition to all of these points, the growing complexity of beekeeping-related dossiers also had to be added.
- Faced with this situation, beekeepers had also received non-objective criticism (i.e. inability to provide trustworthy statistical data, lack of structured research).
- The following strategic guidance proposals from the group's Presidency were put forward: drafting a strategic report which was expected to lead to a Community action plan (with support from the European Parliament and the European Commission); implementation of a dynamic statistics tool (statistics initially compiled in agricultural regions on the basis of a representative number of regularly-monitored beehives) which would also take into account the economic as well as sanitary aspects; improving the availability of human resources in order to ensure effective monitoring of beekeeping-related dossiers at European level; follow-up beekeeping activities for the public at large who were not covered by the existing programme of Community support.

→ The group supported this analysis and the proposals which were made. The group asked that the analysis also be communicated to the Commission. There was support for the idea of drafting a strategic document which would improve the situation at the time and also the

future prospects for the European beekeeping sector whilst identifying the main challenges and solutions to give greater impetus to the sector at Community level. Also, the specific characteristics of beekeeping and bees would be recognised.

→ The future strategy was expected to interface with the CAP and among other things would insist upon the need to continue with the present Community support programme and have independent research co-managed by the profession. The need to take all beekeepers into account was to be taken on board.

→ Concerning the market, the group would inform the Commission about the problem of having different levels of quality controls for honey in the Member States (product adulteration), including imported honey.

→ The group also asked to have the means available for putting in place analyses (e.g. beeswax, bees) aimed at focusing better on the origin of the disappearance of bee colonies.

→ Concerning improving the availability of veterinary medicines, the following proposal was formulated: EMEA and the European Commission were expected to authorise the use of veterinary medicines against varroasis that had been approved in one or several Member States so that they could exceptionally and urgently be used in all Member States.

### **Item 2: Recent initiatives from the European Parliament**

The Secretariat recalled the main messages contained within a [draft resolution](#) from the European Parliament. A draft press release from Copa-Cogeca was then suggested to participants.

→ The group unanimously approved the idea of expressing their support for the European Parliament action via a press release. The draft press release was to be changed and added to, in order to take into consideration where possible the numerous suggestions which were put forward by participants (particularly by including numerical data highlighting the environmental and economic role that bees play at world level) [CDP\(o8\)7518](#).

### **Item 3: Green Paper on Quality**

The Secretariat informed members about the content and the timetable for the [initiative from the European Commission](#) which aimed to gather relevant public opinion on improving the quality of EU agricultural products. It was recalled that the production of beehive products was affected by the different EU and private systems in existence, particularly geographical origin indications (PDO, PGI, TSG) and organic production. Members of the group then remarked that honey was already a specific product by virtue of its intrinsic quality.

→ The document from the Commission [COM\(o8\)6486](#) would be sent out to members of the group by e-mail with a request for written contributions which had to be sent to the Copa-Cogeca Secretariat by 12 December 2008 at the latest. The Secretariat would integrate the received responses into the official response to the Commission's [public consultation](#).

### **Item 4: Organic production**

The Secretariat presented the main elements from the recent [Regulation 889/2008](#) which established the implementing modalities for organic production in the EU, including beekeeping.

→ The group's representatives were to question the Commission on taking into account the specific characteristics of beekeeping in Community legislation governing organic production and on the possibility of future amendments.

### **Item 5: Maximum Residue Limits (MRL) of veterinary medicines**

The Secretariat gave an update on the dossier ([draft regulation](#) for setting MRLs). The European Parliament aimed to conclude a political agreement with the Council towards the end of 2008. For beekeeping, the most important point seemed to be the political agreement with

the multi-stage system (extrapolation) in order to improve the availability and accessibility to veterinary medicines, EU acceptance within certain limits of international standards setting MRLs (honey with unintentional traces of antibiotics) and the inclusion of biocides in the framework of the regulation. Several amendments submitted by the Honey Working Party relating to the reference threshold had been taken into account by the European Parliament.

→ The dossier would be kept on the agenda of the next meeting with the aim of explaining the specific implementation details. There were several questions that remained to be clarified, e.g. which criteria would be used to evaluate risk and MRL values and who would be authorised to request the setting of reference points for action.

#### **Item 6: Revision of Community legislation on plant protection products (PPP) – update**

The Secretariat recalled in detail the timetable and content of the “phytosanitary package” ([framework directive](#), [regulation](#) on placing on the market) which was being progressively steered, despite the extremely difficult negotiations between the Council and the European Parliament, towards the final stages, planned before the end of 2008. Concerning products for the pelleting of seed, when there was a demand for authorisation and placing on the Community market, all 27 Member States would be consulted and the countries could raise objections. The Chairman insisted that the procedure and risk assessment scheme for PPPs such as those recommended by the ICPBR at its conference held in Bucharest, were failing and the beekeeping world was completely opposed (the scheme completely obscured the chronic toxicity evaluation of active materials subjected to tests).

→ The lobbying work would focus on supporting the European Parliament’s amendment aimed at lowering PPP risk assessment on acute, chronic, lethal and sublethal toxicity tests at the same time. Beekeepers were part of the agricultural world and it was in everyone’s interests to place molecules on the market which were safe for bees.

#### **Item 7: GMO**

The Secretariat gave a summary of the internal debates which had been held within the scope of the Copa-Cogeca GMO Task Force in April and October 2008 [GMO\(o8\)4394](#). The Task Force had a low political profile and aimed to encourage a transversal debate (not sector-based), devoid of extreme positions. The Honey Working Party had a representative within the Task Force, W. HAEFEKER. The next meeting of the Task Force would be held at the beginning of 2009 and the Secretariat’s intention was to focus on the subject of coexistence.

The Chairman took the opportunity to thank W. Haefeker for his commitment. In the debates, the group would continue to build on his existing contribution which clearly highlighted the sensitivity and specific characteristics of beekeeping with regard to GM crops.