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MINUTES

Meeting of the Expert Group for Agricultural Markets, in particular concerning Aspects falling under the CMO Regulation - Animal Products

18 March 2021

Chair: Kai-Uwe Sprenger (point 1), Carlos Martin Ovilo (point 2).

Experts from all Member States were present.

1. MARKET TRANSPARENCY

1.1. State of play of animal products' notifications

Presentation by the Commission: overview on the state of play of notifications received from MS for meats, eggs, dairy and fat-filled powder (FFP). Member States were encouraged to fill the missing information without delay. The Commission also urged Member States to send the same data on monthly raw milk deliveries to Eurostat and through the ISAMM system.

1.2. Exchange of best practices: presentation from Member States on meat cuts and dairy price notifications

Presentation from DE, HU, CZ on their first experience with additional data recording (prices, production).

1.3. Tour de table on challenges encountered and scheduling on missing notifications

Short exchange on information by Member States' experts on challenges and good practices in implementation.

2. EU SCHOOL SCHEME

2.1. Implementation in school year 2019/2020

- Presentation by the Commission: overview of implementation in the EU based on the Member States' monitoring reports.

The Commission services presented the main highlights of implementation in the 2019/2020 school year. Information is preliminary as some monitoring reports are being verified and figures may change.

EU expenditure for the distribution of school fruit and vegetables was around EUR 88 million, with fresh fruit and vegetables making up for almost 93% of the total¹. Several countries provided additional national funding for a total amount of EUR 34 million. EU expenditure for the distribution of school milk was almost EUR 55 million, of which 85% for drinking milk, 12% for yoghurt, cheese and milk products with no added sugar and the remaining 2 to 3% for Annex V products (mostly chocolate or flavoured milk and fruit yoghurt). Additional national funding was around EUR 54 million. In both cases, EU expenditure decreased by more than 20% compared to 2018/2019 school year.

EU expenditure for educational measures was EUR 5.5 million, most of which to accompany the distribution of school fruit and vegetables. This represents 4% of the total EU expenditure for the scheme and only around half of what was planned in the strategies, which raises some concerns.

Around 19,3 million children were reported as having participated in the scheme. Children in primary schools, eligible in all participating countries, were 73% of the total.

They received around 53 million kilos of fresh fruit and vegetables and 5 million litres of fruit/vegetables juices and soups.

They also received around 131 million litres of drinking milk. In terms of portions, this amount represents 88% of the milk products made available. Plain yoghurt (with around 6 million kilos), other milk products with no added sugar (mainly kephir) and cheese account altogether for 9%, and Annex V products make up for the remaining 3 to 4% of the total of milk products. This is an average for the EU. Some monitoring reports do not show priority to drinking milk, in terms of expenditure or quantity or frequency: clarifications have been asked and the point will be assessed as part of the evaluation of the scheme.

The monitoring reports show a relatively wide variation in the size of the average fruit and vegetables portion, ranging from 50 to 220 grams. The size of the milk portion in participating countries varies less around the EU average of 200 millilitres.

The average cost per portion also shows wide variations around the EU average, for both school fruit and vegetables and school milk. This is linked to the choice of products, logistical reasons and different reimbursement rules.

The arrangements for the distribution of school fruit, vegetables and milk show different patterns across and within participating countries, both in terms of frequency (from once a week to daily) and of duration (from two weeks to the entire school year), often linked to the schools' autonomy.

¹ This is higher than the amount in the Member States' declarations of expenditure submitted to the Commission according to Regulation (EU) 908/2014 (expenditure up to and including 31 December 2020= EUR 86 million), possibly because it takes into account aid applications under processing for which aid has not yet been declared to the Commission.

The monitoring reports provide useful information on the topics of the educational measures carried out: not only agriculture and health but also other topics that feature high on the agenda such as, for instance, food waste.

Finally, information on the authorities and stakeholders involved in the scheme shows several more or less structured forms or tools for involving them: mainly participation in steering committees or working groups with advisory and support function, regular meetings, ad hoc events. Overall, the public authorities in the health and education sector were involved more in the initial planning stage, on the design of the strategy, than in the subsequent implementation. The role of private stakeholders, including schools and parents' associations, is generally limited. Authorities and stakeholders in the environmental sector do not seem to be involved.

- Tour de table: information by the Member States' experts on challenges and good practices in implementation

All experts taking the floor to comment and/or complement the presentation by the Commission services concurred with the recognition of the big difficulties brought by Covid-19.

The fact that, despite the challenging circumstances, many schools continued to participate is a positive element showing the importance of the scheme (BE).

Several experts referred to mitigating action taken, through enhanced flexibility and simplification (BG), the prolongation of the period to carry out the activities (EE), changes in the arrangements to distribute products to children in distance learning such as through the home delivery of parcels or their collection by parents (DE, LT and PL), and changes in the educational activities carried out, with more electronic tools for the dissemination of knowledge or the creation of a digital curriculum (HR).

Covid-19 was also the opportunity to reflect on what can be improved (IE and PL).

Ongoing action was mentioned by the expert from FR (amended strategy to improve implementation, which did not yet produce the expected results), ES (changes in national legislation on public procurement) and BE-Wallonia (discussions with the evaluator; central tendering as an additional possibility to reduce the administrative burden for schools).

The expert from DE mentioned the difficulties in carrying out the planned evaluation activities due to the schools' closure and wondered if other countries have experienced the same difficulties and found solutions. In the same line, the expert from BG expressed its wish to receive information and good practices from the other countries applying simplified cost options: namely, how the additional costs such as transport, packaging, logistics, administrative costs, etc. are determined and included in the final price of products. The Commission will post in CIRCABC and circulate to experts any material received.

As regards the exchange of experiences and good practice, the expert from DK shared the positive appreciation by stakeholders of the introduction of standard costs and highlighted the importance of associating stakeholders in the implementation of the

scheme with a view to shared understanding, enhanced compliance and users' satisfaction.

The expert from CZ also reported the positive effect of the replacement of a paper-based system by an electronic-based system to handle aid applications.

The expert from AT shared examples of the teaching materials produced, by showing videos with experiments that children aged 6 to 10 years can make in class². Information, also posted in CIRCABC, includes a quiz to inform children, parents and teachers about the scheme (with a certificate for those getting all correct answers)³.

In the school scheme webpage by LV, most of which translated in English, an infographic makes the figures on implementation very concrete: distributed fruit, vegetables and milk in 2019/2020 if in wagons and tanks would make up a train one km long⁴.

The Ruoka Tutka website for the educational measures campaign in FI (in Swedish and Finnish) includes many games, quizzes, videos with young influencers⁵.

The expert from SI informed about the forthcoming action to promote the scheme by the Ministry of Agriculture as part of the initiatives of the International Year of fruit and vegetables (2021).

The meeting also allowed for questions and answers. The Commission indicated to the experts from two countries (EE and EL) that it had not received requests for a prolongation of the 2020/2021 school year.

2.2. AOB

N/A

(e-signed)

Michael SCANNELL

² <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLG3wdNbu3mZidgR73bc9pDAox9zKzbniR>

³ <https://shiny.ages.at/euschulprogramm/quiz/>

⁴ <http://piensaugliskolai.lv/en/about/what-has-been-achieved-in-the-programme-school-milk-and-fruit/>

⁵ <https://www.ruokatutka.fi/>

List of registered participants– Minutes
***Meeting of the Expert Group for Agricultural Markets, in particular concerning
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