

January 17, 2019

## International Green Week 2019 Remarks at the Official Opening - Phil Hogan, EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development , Thursday 17th January 2018, Berlin

– Check Against Delivery –

### Introduction

Minister Klöckner, Ministers, Fellow Commissioners, elected representatives, farm and industry leaders, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

I am absolutely delighted to be back at International Green Week for the 5th time as EU Agriculture Commissioner.

We all value this superb annual opportunity to come together and discuss important agricultural policy ideas for the year ahead.

And let us be in no doubt: 2019 is a big year for the European Union.

European elections take place at the end of May. The next EU budget will be decided. Brexit is scheduled to take place at the end of March. We need to speed up progress towards our ambitious 2030 climate and environment targets. And of course we must finalise the next life cycle of the Common Agricultural Policy.

Let me say a brief word on each of these challenges to set the scene.

### Multi-Annual Financial Framework

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First of all, there is the budgetary question. The sooner we come to an agreement on the EU budget, the better. Our citizens and our economy will benefit from the certainty and stability of a new 7 year plan. Farmers need predictability and not a prolonged vacuum.

This will help to guarantee food security, food safety and food quality for our people, while providing vital jobs in rural areas and making a greater contribution to our climate and environment.

### Brexit

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Let me turn next to Brexit. It remains unclear what the final outcome of Brexit will be. What we can say with absolute certainty is that the unity and resolve of the EU27 has been extraordinary.

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### Future CAP

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Finally, let me mention my own area of agriculture and rural development. Last year, I spoke at this opening event and promised that in 2018, the Commission would submit a proposal to modernise and simplify the policy. Last June, we delivered on that promise.

Our proposal aims to build a truly modern policy for food, farming and rural development, with **clearer and more effective results** for our citizens, our farmers and our environment

The centrepiece of our reform is a **new delivery model**, which moves the emphasis of the policy from compliance and strict rules to performance and results.

This new model will allow national and regional administrations to better design how direct payments, market measures and rural development programmes are made.

This will allow agricultural policy objectives to be met in a strategic way while serving the needs of farmers and rural communities in each Member State.

**9 ambitious objectives** will be set at EU level (3 economic, 3 social, and 3 environmental). These are:

- to ensure a fair income to farmers
- to increase competitiveness
- to rebalance the power in the food chain
- to enhance climate change action
- to enhance environmental care
- to preserve landscapes and biodiversity
- to support generational renewal
- to support vibrant rural areas
- and to protect food and health quality

To meet these objectives, each Member State will have to design a "**CAP Strategic Plan**" to be approved by the European Commission. This can be thought of a business plan, spelling out clear objectives and an overall strategy for achieving them.

It places the onus on each MS to design an investment plan for agriculture and rural development in their regions. Every intervention has to be clearly explained and its economic rationale elaborated.

The Commission will sign off on the Plan and maintain a strong watchdog role, notably to ensure that the common EU objectives are met.

With a CAP less focused on rules, and more on performance, we will reduce the administrative burden for farmers and allow them to focus more on farming.

### Unfair Trading Practices

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We will also continue our work to strengthen the position of the farmer in the food supply chain.

In December, we reached a historic breakthrough when the 3 EU institutions for the very first time agreed on binding rules to outlaw certain unfair trading practices.

The practices to be banned include: late payments for perishable food products; last minute order cancellations; unilateral or retroactive changes to contracts; and forcing the supplier to pay for wasted products and refusing written contracts.

Other practices will only be permitted if they are subject to a clear and unambiguous upfront agreement between the parties: a buyer returning unsold food products to a supplier; a buyer charging a supplier payment to secure or maintain a supply agreement on food products; or a supplier paying for a buyer's promotion, advertising or marketing campaign.

This will provide significant protection for all EU farmers, their organisations as well as small and mid-range food businesses. They will now be protected against bigger operators who act unfairly and outside the rules.

### Conclusion

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In conclusion, ladies and gentlemen, we have made real progress as we approach the end of this decade. The first Green Week was held in Berlin in the Golden 20s. I hope that the discussions we have this week can play their part in making the next decade a new "golden 20s" for Europe. Thank you.