

Vergaderjaar 2020–2021

35 710

Mededeling van de Commissie aan het Europees parlement, de Raad, het Europees Economisch en Sociaal Comité en het Comité van de Regio's – EU-biodiversiteitsstrategie voor 2030 – De natuur terug in ons leven brengen (COM(2020)380)

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BRIEF VAN DE COMMISSARIS VOOR MILIEU, OCEANEN EN VISSERIJ

Aan de voorzitter van de commissie Economische Zaken en Klimaat/
Landbouw, Natuur en Voedselkwaliteit, Eerste Kamer

Brussel, 27 juli 2021

The Commission would like to thank the members of the standing committee for Economic Affairs and Climate Policy/Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality of the Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal for their additional questions in relation to the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 {COM(2020) 380 final}. The Commission would like to refer to the attached annex providing responses to these concrete questions, and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue in the future.

Virginijus Sinkevičius

Annex

The Commission has carefully considered the additional questions raised by the members of the parliamentary GroenLinks and the parliamentary Partij voor de Dieren and is pleased to offer the following clarifications and responses.

1. Can the European Commission give a further appraisal of the Arcadis report after studying it in more detail? The members of the parliamentary GreenLeft Alliance would be especially interested to learn the Commission's opinion on the design and application of the instrument of environmental impact assessments (EIAs) in relation to the requirements of the EIA Directive and the Aarhus Convention. They are curious to know how the Commission views the report generally and, in particular, how it views the EIA assessments of the intensive livestock farming projects to which reference has previously been made. Can the European Commission state whether it sees a connection with the ongoing infringement procedure regarding the application of the EIA Directive in the Netherlands? These members also wonder whether the Commission could indicate when it expects to take the next step in this procedure.

The above mentioned infringement procedure looks into whether the modified EIA Directive (following Directive 2014/52/EU) is correctly transposed in the Dutch national legal order (a so-called non-conformity procedure). This infringement case does not raise problems of transposition regarding projects involving intensive livestock installations. Neither does the said Arcadis report point at such transposition problems. It rather focusses on how the legal requirements are applied in practice. It is for the Netherlands to draw any conclusions from the Arcadis report as regards the application of the legal framework in practice.

It has not yet been decided when a next step may be taken in the infringement procedure, taking into consideration the entry into force of the new Dutch Environment Act (Omgevingswet) foreseen for 2022.

2. The members of the parliamentary Animal Rights Party understand from the answers that the European Commission has every confidence that – given strong will on the part of the political policymakers – the Biodiversity Strategy can bring about a real breakthrough in tackling the loss of biodiversity and climate change. The European Commission mentions the promotion of sustainable consumption as one of the additional measures to enable transformative change to take place. Against this background, how does the Commission view EU campaigns to promote meat-eating, such as the campaign targeting families with young children to promote chicken consumption, the campaign to convince consumers of the sustainability of the dairy industry and the health benefits of dairy consumption, and the campaign to promote foie gras consumption? Does this mean, in the opinion of the European Commission, that the political policymakers lack the necessary strong will? If not, the members of the parliamentary Animal Rights Party wonder how the Commission reconciles these EU campaign subsidies with the biodiversity strategy?

The promotion campaigns mentioned were selected through competitive calls for proposals organised in 2019 and 2020 under the framework of the EU agri-food promotion policy, based on Regulation (EU) No 1144/2014.

The general objective of the information provision and promotion measures is to enhance the competitiveness of the Union agricultural sector. With the exception of tobacco products, the regulation does not exclude promotion of other products or categories of products.

Under the current regulatory framework, proposals for promotion campaigns from the meat and dairy sectors that highlight the positive

attributes of EU quality schemes, standards, products and production methods are therefore eligible to apply, and if selected, to benefit from co-funding for information provision and promotion measures.

In 2021, the European Commission will allocate € 182.9 million to fund promotion activities for EU agri-food products at home and abroad. Following the adoption of the Farm to Fork Strategy, which aims to achieve a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system and to facilitate a shift to healthy and sustainable diets, and the Biodiversity Strategy, the EU agri-food promotion policy's annual work programme for 2021 earmarked € 86.1 million for topics supporting the goals of these strategies, of which € 49 million for the promotion of organic production.

As foreseen in the Farm to Fork Strategy, the promotion policy is currently being reviewed to enhance its contribution to sustainable agricultural production and consumption in line with evolving diets. In relation to meat, the Farm to Fork Strategy announced that the upcoming promotion policy review should focus on «how the EU can use its promotion programme to support the most sustainable, carbon-efficient methods of livestock production».

As stated in the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan¹, the Commission is undertaking a review of the promotion policy for agricultural products to enhance its contribution to sustainable production and consumption. This is in line with the shift to a more plant-based diet, with less red and processed meat and other foods linked to cancer risks, and more fruit and vegetables.

As foreseen in the Farm to Fork Strategy, the EU school scheme is currently being reviewed in the light of sustainable food consumption principle. The EU school scheme, applying since 2017, supports the distribution of fruit, vegetables, milk and milk products to children, to increase their consumption, together with educational activities to reconnect children with agriculture and teach about healthy eating habits. After the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU, the total EU budget for the scheme amounts to € 220,8 million per school year of which up to € 130,6 million for fruit and vegetables and up to € 90,1 million for milk.