

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Cabinet of Commissioner Dacian Cioloş
Head of Cabinet

30. 04. 2014

Brussels,
(2014) 1172926

Subject: The reform of the consultative committees by the DG AGRI

Dear Mr Baamonde,

Thank you very much for your letter dated 14 March 2014 addressed to Mr. Dacian Cioloş. He has asked me to reply on his behalf. You underline the importance attached by your organisations to the advisory groups. You also express your views on the set-up and composition of the future Civil Dialogue Groups and forecast working groups.

I have carefully examined your letter and seriously considered the arguments brought forward. I would also like to expressly reconfirm my commitment and the importance that my services and I attach to the dialogue with you and civil society at large, as foreseen in the Treaty of Lisbon. We want to hear your voices and give you the opportunity to exchange information, expertise, business and market data with the other stakeholders and with us. Rest assured that this is not going to change with the new groups.

Over the past few years the European Parliament repeatedly criticised Commission expert groups inter alia because it considered that the composition of some of these groups was unbalanced and that the non-economic interests were often underrepresented. As you know, the Parliament placed EUR 2 million in reserve on the EU budget for 2012, which it eventually decided to lift in exchange of a number of commitments and concrete initiatives from the Commission to improve its own rules on expert groups, including on composition of expert groups. The European Ombudsman is also following this issue very closely and announced that she would analyse all expert groups established after September 2012.

For agriculture the Commission has decided to review its advisory groups, also to adapt them to the structure of the reformed CAP. In particular, we have undertaken a genuine bottom-up approach with the involvement of all stakeholders in a survey in 2012 and a

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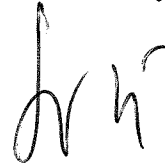
public consultation in 2013. At the end of this inclusive process, the Commission adopted its framework decision 2013/767/EU on 16 December 2013 which has entrusted the Director General of DG AGRI to decide about the set-up, size and composition of the new groups. As already mentioned, the new system should reflect the reformed CAP, and the economic and non-economic interests should be represented in a balanced way. In this context, let me mention that the decision contains a certain degree of discretion for the Commission for the implementation, taking into account the situation in each particular group.

I consider it is also important to mention the budgetary situation in which we are operating. The review of the advisory groups was not undertaken with a view to cut the budget. However, as you know the overall trend in the last years has been towards lower administrative budgets for all EU institutions. Indeed, the Commission's overall administrative budget was cut by about 5%. Under these circumstances you will understand that applying a tight budgetary discipline will be indispensable. This element has to be taken into account for the set-up and size of the new groups. The proposals of your letter must be analysed in this context of a budget which is at best stable and a need to rebalance the distribution of seats towards the non-economic interests.

As already communicated the calls for applications have been launched for each of the new groups on 1 April.

I hope this letter clarifies the process and addresses your questions. I am looking forward to your continued interest and cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Häusler', written in a cursive style.

Georg Häusler

cc: Mr Lorenzo Ramos, Secretary-General, UPA
Mr Pedro Barate, President ASAJA
Mr Miguel Blanco, Secretary-General COAG