Message 201

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Forwarding of the response of the Member State notifying a draft (Spain) to comments (5.2) of European Commission.

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4. 2024/0682/ES - C00A - AGRICULTURE, FISHING AND FOODSTUFFS

5.

6. Response to the comments received on the Draft Regulation governing the use of the certification mark for Sustainable Agricultural Production (Catalonia)

Reply to comments from the Commission

— Openness of the scheme to producers from other Member States

The Commission invites the Spanish authorities to clarify whether the certification mark is open to all producers, including those from other Member States.

As regards how to expand the Sustainable Agricultural Production (SAP) system to other Member States, there would be no problem in doing so, precisely because the system has been designed in such a way that it can be adaptable to other places.

The strength of the SAP lies in the fact that it is a sustainability assessment model which, based on some initial data and depending on their processing based on formulas set out in the sustainability calculator and on the consideration of some aspects collected and evaluated in a sustainability questionnaire, produces final results which are shown in a sustainability report. The calculations and algorithms involved in obtaining this report allow for specific modifications to

be adapted to each Member State, especially as regards the sectoral regulations applicable within each Member State.

The SAP promotes sustainable agricultural practices that are based on the most advanced scientific and technical knowledge currently available and could be promoted at European level in terms of sustainability.

For the development of the SAP, the guidelines established by the FAO within the framework of the Sustainability Assessment of Food and Agriculture systems (SAFA) have been followed and adapted to the territorial reality of Catalonia. This approach makes it possible to highlight the efforts already made by Catalan producers to comply with sectoral regulations in favour of sustainability.

The SAP system in itself provides all these items, which are perfectly transposable to the other Member States:

• Definition of sustainable agricultural practices;
• Design of an assessment system based on control points, which may or may not be normative;
• Objective sustainability measurement according to the degree of implementation of practices on each holding;
• Calculation of numerical indicators from the digitized information of agricultural and livestock holdings.
• Development of two sustainability calculators with integrated algorithms that allow for the assessment of the sustainability status of agricultural holdings.
• Identification system with a guarantee mark applied to products from sustainable holdings. In order to be able to use the mark, it is necessary to have prior certification, on a voluntary basis and if certain levels of sustainability are achieved.

As for the control points that refer to sectoral regulations, in the case of Catalonia, we have wanted to reward compliance since it represents an important effort for producers and it has, therefore, been decided that these aspects of sectoral regulations are to be part of the sustainability assessment. It is true that each Member State may have different specific regulations, but in this regard, for the SAP, we are open to working together to adapt the criteria and facilitate their implementation in other territories.

It would also be very valuable if the European Commission took the initiative to harmonise this model at Union level, defining the basic guidelines to be followed in terms of environmental, economic and social sustainability, which should be complied with the in relation to sectoral regulations, which each Member State could adapt, according to the specific situations of each Member State.

It is clear that, if the specific regulations of a Member State had a stricter criterion than that defined for the same concept in the SAP, the sectoral regulations of the Member State would have to be complied, that in the case of the SAP it would not be sufficient to comply with less strict criteria.

Catalonia is open to providing this initial model to the EU so that it can adapt it and make it its own, thereby generating a single sustainability assessment model that can be used by all Member States. We believe it would be very interesting and we are fully prepared to explore avenues for mutual collaboration.

— Food information to consumers

The comments received regarding the certification mark and consumer information have been taken into account in the new Draft Regulation governing the use of the certification mark for Sustainable Agricultural Production (SAP).

It should be noted that the products certified under this mark do not suggest to have a quality, properties or effects superior to those they actually possess. The objective of the certification is to assess sustainability and to ensure that SAP products come from agricultural and livestock holdings that apply sustainable practices in their production and management model.

In addition, the proposed Regulation for use has been adapted to ensure the correct application of Regulation (EU) No

1169/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council, clarifying any uncertainties regarding its implementation, in relation to the information provided to the consumer.

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