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Press Release

COPA-COGECA MEETS CIOLOS TO OUTLINE VIEWS ON OLIVE OIL ACTION PLAN

In a meeting with EU Agriculture Commissioner Ciolos today, Copa-Cogeca welcomed as a good starting point the EU Commissions' Action Plan to improve the viability and competitiveness of the EU Olive Oil Sector. We now need to work on concrete measures to implement in the sector.

Speaking at the meeting, Chairman of Copa-Cogecas' Olive Oil Working Party Rafael Sanchez de Puerta said "This action plan is positive and identifies key issues that need to be addressed in the sector". Outlining detailed measures, Mr Rafael Sanchez de Puerta said actions must include more efficient tools to better manage and regulate the market, especially an update of the reference price for activating private storage aid to take into account increased production costs. Current prices are not representative of the market reality. Activation of the private storage mechanism also needs to become automatic and take better account of the quantities and period for storage".

He continued: "Member States must ensure that funds under EU rural development policy are made available for the restructuring and modernization of farms which have become less competitive in view of generation renewal and growing competition from the new producing countries. Agri-environmental support is also needed for farms in less favoured areas (LFAs) of the EU. This should be a priority within the rural development programs of the main producing countries of the EU – Spain, Italy, Greece, Portugal, France with adequate co-financing. Actions must also include measures to concentrate supply by further developing and enhancing the size of producer organizations, like cooperatives, to help farmers market and add value to their produce and to re-balance the power in the food chain".

Copa-Cogeca Secretary-General Pekka Pesonen said "Promotion measures must also be enhanced and focus on promoting the healthy and nutritional qualities of olive oil. It is also important to set up a scheme promoting olive oil and table olives for school children. Finally, evaluation methods and controls need to be stepped up. Research into the different types of oil are needed and lines of research into improving controls on olive oil quality and purity are required. Blends of olive oil and other vegetable oils should be prohibited until methods of analysis have been developed which allow the information contained on the labels of these blends to be verified and the use in catering industries of packages that cannot be re-used should be compulsory".

Concerning the panel test, its functioning needs to be harmonised within the EU. It is also important to strengthen the role of the International Olive Oil Council as regards the unification of the quality standards at international level. We hope to work together with the Commission in implementing these actions as soon as possible.

Experts of the Copa-Cogeca Working Party on Olive Oil also confirmed at their meeting that there will be an important decrease in EU olive oil production during the next campaign, notably in Spain and in Portugal and a slight decrease in Italy. These figures demonstrate that the production of olive oil remains dependent on climatic conditions.

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