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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: AOB item for the meeting of the "Agriculture and Fisheries" Council on 9 and 10 December 2024:
A harmonised terminology of "biological control" in plant protection and/or others similar approaches

- *Information from Denmark and Germany, supported by Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, The Netherlands, Portugal and Sweden*

The report on the Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture recommends the "development and use of biocontrol" as an alternative to conventional pest control and to help farmers to reduce their use of chemical pesticides. The authors of the report see the need for a "robust legislative framework for biocontrol products and approaches" that includes i.e. to prioritise fast-track authorisation processes for "biological control" and expands national administrative capacities and expertise to efficiently and safely handle biological control, natural substances and low-risk chemical PPPs dossiers. In the Farm to Fork Strategy as part of the Green Deal for Europe the EU Commission proposes to facilitate the placing on the market of "pesticides containing biological active substances and reinforce the environmental risk assessment of pesticides". In her mission letter to the Commissioner for Health and Animal Welfare, President von der Leyen reiterated the goal to improve the sustainability, safety and affordability of food production and consumption across the food chain, naming the accelerated use of "bio-controls" as one respective measure.

We strongly support the Commission to focus efforts on improving the tools for sustainable agriculture. In times in which farmers are challenged by new pests and diseases, the availability of a comprehensive tool box is crucial. In this context, approaches such as “biological control”; depending on its definition; can play an important part as they may offer the possibility for phytosanitary measures that are less harmful to the environment, when adequately risk assessed beforehand and applied correctly.

Currently a number of expressions are being used, partly synonymously, for such plant protection measures, substances and products. Neither of the aforementioned terms “biocontrol/biological control”; “bio-controls”; “natural substances”; or “pesticides containing biological active substances” are clearly defined.

In order to reach a common and clear understanding of the methods and substances in question and where the legal framework and/or technical guidance for risk assessment has to be improved to facilitate their environmental safety, availability and uptake, we strongly propose to take up discussions on a formal terminology, which also takes the heterogeneity of this group into account and make this part of the new EU Commission’s work programme. We acknowledge that there already has gone considerable thought into these definitions from the Commission, Member States as well as other stakeholders to complement existing definitions. Thus, together we need to find a common terminology in line with the sustainability goals in EU’s PPP legislation and a way to implement these definitions.

By doing so, the EU can lead the way in fostering a more sustainable and resilient agricultural system, benefiting the environment, economy, and public health; whilst at the same time providing new solutions for farmers across Europe. We therefore invite the new Commission to include this initiative in the announced Vision for Agriculture and Food.
