Date: 8 September 2021

Time: 9.30 – 11.30

Location: Webex

Lead speaker: Chief Negotiator for the trade negotiations with Australia and New Zealand, European Commission

Presentation of the state of play of the negotiations

The Commission opened the meeting and recalled earlier Civil Society Dialogue meetings on these two files, as well as the COVID environment that continuously imposed the remote format of these discussions.

The Commission provided a detailed state of play of both negotiating tracks, including the outcomes of the respective 11th negotiating rounds that were held in June/July 2021. As part of this summary, the Commission outlined the key areas of difficulty with both partners, as well as its expectations and ambitions in these areas. In this context, the Commission stressed the particular importance of the discussions on Trade and Sustainable Development, including with respect to the currently ongoing revision of the 15 Point Action Plan.

In the case of Australia, the Commission recalled the complex administrative environment that requires coordination with States and Territories on such files as services and investment, technical barriers to trade and government procurement.

In the case of New Zealand, the Commission provided a summary of discussion on market access for goods that both sides advanced during the 11th negotiating round, as well as the implications of these discussions on other negotiation areas that are key from the EU’s perspective.

Following the presentations on the state of play, the Commission recalled the Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA) reports that were prepared by an external contractor with respect to both negotiations, as well as the Position Papers summarising the Commission’s views and reactions to the contractors’ suggestions.
The Commission recalled that all SIA documents have been published on DG TRADE’s website, just as the Council’s negotiation mandate, round reports, and EU initial textual proposals as part of the Commission’s transparency policy.

Questions and Answers

**Eurogroup for Animals** inquired about the state of play of negotiations on Animal Welfare and Sustainable Food Systems, as well as the findings of the SIA reports in relation to the impact of the future agreements on biodiversity. **Human Society International** pointed to the upcoming revision of the Commission’s animal welfare strategy. The Commission confirmed that the discussions on Animal Welfare were advanced with both partners, and that it tabled proposals in relation to Sustainable Food Systems in spring 2021. As regards biodiversity, the Commission recalled that the Trade and Sustainable Development chapters with both partners will include related articles.

**Spirits Europe** requested more details about the state of play of discussions on Geographical Indications (GIs) and spirit standards, and the impact of the Australia-UK agreement. The Commission outlined the discussion on GIs, and recalled the existing Wine Agreement with Australia that already has a large coverage.

**Committee for European Construction Equipment** inquired whether construction machines are included in the scope of the negotiations with Australia, and whether related rules of origin have already been discussed. The Commission confirmed that the negotiation cover all industrial tariff lines.

**Bureau Européen des Unions de Consommateurs (BEUC)** inquired about the dates of the next negotiating round with Australia.

**European Services Forum** recalled the importance of discussions on data flows with both partners. The Commission confirmed that Australia and New Zealand are reluctant to deviate from the approach they adopted in the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). The Commission also recalled its adequacy decision in relation to New Zealand (but not Australia).

**European Trade Union Confederation** requested more details with respect to both partners’ commitments related to the ratification of a number of ILO Conventions, as well as the Commission’s position on sanctions. The Commission confirmed that its aim is to negotiate commitments in relation to all fundamental ILO Conventions. With respect to sanctions, the Commission stressed the importance of the ongoing revision of the 15 Points Action Plan.

**Beef and Lamb New Zealand** recalled high Animal Welfare standards in New Zealand and referred to the existing veterinary agreement.

**Syndicat du Sucre de la Réunion, European Association of Sugar Traders (ASSUC) and International Confederation of European Beet Growers** recalled that the Sustainability Impact Assessment report identified sugar as one of the sensitive sectors due to the possible impact of the future EU-Australia trade agreement on environment and trade flows. The industry interlocutors recalled the importance of ensuring consistency between the EU’s trade policy and the Green Deal, raised questions on the WTO apportionment on sugar after Brexit, and raised concerns regarding impacts for
outermost regions. The Commission confirmed that the discussions on market access for sensitive agricultural products with Australia have not started yet.

**Irish Farmers Association** recalled the recent UK-Australia agreement and reiterated the sensitivity of the sheep meat sector in the EU.

**Comité Européen des Entreprises Vins (CEEV)** requested more details in relation to discussions on Geographical Indications. The Commission elaborated on the wine annex negotiations.

**The European Pet Food Industry (FEDIAF)** requested more information on the state of play of the negotiations on Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary measures.

**COPA-COECA** (European Farmers and Agricultural Cooperatives) recalled the need to ensure the overall balance of the agreement and the cumulative impact, and underlined that Geographical Indications and good consumer protection constitute an important part of the package. In addition, COPA-COECA stressed the need to preserve the value of the EU’s market to ensure that farmers are able to invest in sustainability.