



C/2024/7412

5.12.2024

COMMISSION DECISION

of 4 December 2024

setting up the High-Level Group 'European Board on Agriculture and Food'

(C/2024/7412)

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

Whereas:

- (1) Article 38 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union provides that the Union is to define and implement a common agriculture policy (CAP).
- (2) In accordance with Article 11(2) of the Treaty on the European Union, the institutions are to maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society.
- (3) Commission Decision (EU) 2022/1368 ⁽¹⁾ provides for a framework for consultation of non-governmental stakeholders in matters related to agriculture and rural development, including the international aspects of agriculture. It allows the Commission to call upon the expertise of specialists in advisory bodies, namely the seven Civil Dialogue Groups, which account all together for 81 member organisations. Given the objective of inclusiveness, open and participatory approach towards stakeholders, as well as the thematic focus of these groups, they allow for a wide consultation of stakeholders. The Civil Dialogue Groups are regularly called upon by the Commission to provide technical advice in their respective area of expertise.
- (4) In September 2023, President von der Leyen announced in her State of the Union address the Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture which was launched in January 2024 and brought together major stakeholders from the European agri-food sectors, civil society, rural communities and academia to reach a common understanding and vision for the future of Union farming and food systems.
- (5) Based on the experience of the Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture, the Commission wishes to foster a new culture of cooperation and dialogue between stakeholders, with the aim of helping to build consensus among them as regards pathways and actions for the future of Union farming and food systems, including the common agricultural policy.
- (6) To this end, the Commission intends to call upon the expertise of a consultative body of stakeholder representatives to provide high-level and strategic policy advice of non binding nature. This would complement the specific and sectorial expertise already available, including from the Civil Dialogue Groups.
- (7) It is, therefore, appropriate to set up a high-level expert group composed of experts in the agri-food sector and to define its tasks and its structure, in compliance with Commission Decision C(2016) 3301 ⁽²⁾ establishing horizontal rules on the creation and operation of Commission expert groups.
- (8) The group should help to sustain a new culture of dialogue, trust and multistakeholder participation among the actors and with the Commission. It should contribute to the work on the vision for the future of agriculture and food and to the follow-up of the report of the Strategic Dialogue on the future of EU agriculture.

⁽¹⁾ Commission Decision (EU) 2022/1368 of 3 August 2022 setting up Civil Dialogue Groups in matters covered by the common agricultural policy and repealing Decision 2013/767/EU (OJ L 205 5.8.2022, p. 278, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2022/1368/oj>).

⁽²⁾ Commission Decision C(2016) 3301 of 30 May 2016 establishing horizontal rules on the creation and operation of Commission expert groups.

- (9) The group should be composed of maximum 30 member organisations representing the farming community, other actors of the food supply chain, or civil society (including in areas such as environment and climate, animal welfare or consumer issues). There should be a balanced representation of these three categories of stakeholders in this group.
- (10) Experts may be invited to take part in the work of the group on an *ad hoc* basis with the goal among others to provide scientific expertise with respect to a subject matter on the agenda.
- (11) Rules on the disclosure of information by members of the group should be laid down. Personal data should be processed in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽³⁾.
- (12) It is appropriate to fix a period for the application of this Decision. The Commission should in due time consider the advisability of an extension,

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

Article 1

Subject matter

The Commission expert group called European Board on Agriculture and Food ('the group'), is set up.

Article 2

Tasks

The group's tasks shall be:

- (a) to provide high-level advice to the Commission on strategic policy developments in relation to the vision for agriculture and food and the follow up on the report of the Strategic Dialogue on the future of EU agriculture;
- (b) to foster dialogue and exchange of experience among its members on the fields referred to in point (a), with particular attention to the coherence and synergy of Union policies and their consistency with private sector initiatives;
- (c) to advise the Commission in the preparation of policy initiatives in the fields referred to in point (a);
- (d) to deliver an opinion on specific matters upon request by the Commission and within the time limits set in that request.

Article 3

Consultation

The Commission may consult the group on any matter relating to agriculture and food, defining the timespan in which advice is needed.

⁽³⁾ Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 and Decision No 1247/2002/EC (OJ L 295, 21.11.2018, p. 39, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2018/1725/oj>).

*Article 4***Membership**

1. The group shall be composed of maximum 30 members.
2. The members of the group shall be stakeholders' organisations, operating and representing stakeholders at Union level. The organisations shall represent the farming community, other actors in the food supply chain, or the civil society.
3. The organisations shall demonstrate the broadest relevant competence and expertise in areas relevant to agriculture and/or food at Union level and display the widest geographical representativeness across Member States.
4. Each member organisation shall nominate one high-level representative, i.e. holding the position of President, Secretary-General, Director-General or equivalent in their organisation, and shall be responsible for ensuring that their representative provides a high level of expertise.
5. Members who are no longer capable of contributing effectively to the expert group's deliberations, who, in the opinion of the Commission department concerned, do not comply with the conditions set out in Article 339 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union or who resign, shall no longer be invited to participate in any meetings of the group and may be replaced for the remainder of their term of office.

*Article 5***Selection process**

1. The selection of the group's members shall be carried out *via* a public call for applications, to be published on the Register of Commission expert groups and other similar entities ('the Register of expert groups') referred to in Decision C(2016) 3301. In addition, the call for applications may be published through other means, including on dedicated websites. The call for applications shall clearly outline the selection criteria, including the required expertise and the interests to be represented in relation to the work to be performed. The minimum deadline for applications shall be four weeks.
2. The selection criteria shall ensure a balanced representation of the three categories of members, referred to in Article 4(2), second sentence. The organisations shall represent the widest collective and Union interest and shall demonstrate their significance, including geographical representativeness, at Union level in the area of agriculture and/or food.
3. Registration in the Transparency Register ⁽⁴⁾ is required in order for organisations to be appointed.
4. The members of the group shall be appointed by the Director-General of the Commission's Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development ('DG AGRI') from applicant organisations with proven and relevant competence and experience in the areas referred to in Articles 2 and 3 and who have responded to the call for applications, to attend the meetings of the group.
5. Members shall be appointed for a 5-year term of office.

*Article 6***Chair**

The group shall be chaired by the Commissioner for Agriculture and Food.

⁽⁴⁾ https://transparency-register.europa.eu/index_en.

*Article 7***Operation**

1. DG AGRI shall provide secretarial services.
2. The group shall act at the request of the Chairperson in consultation with other relevant Commission services, in compliance with the horizontal rules.
3. The group shall meet at the request of DG AGRI in consultation with other relevant Commission services, in compliance with the horizontal rules.
4. In principle, the group shall meet between two and six times a year. The chair may convene the group for additional meetings when urgent advice is needed.
5. Meetings of the group shall, in principle, be held on Commission premises or virtually, depending on the circumstances.
6. Commission officials with an interest in the proceedings may attend meetings of the group.
7. In agreement with DG AGRI, the group may, by simple majority of its members, decide that deliberations shall be public.
8. Minutes on the discussion on each point on the agenda and on the opinions delivered by the group shall be meaningful and complete. Minutes shall be drafted by the secretariat under the responsibility of the Chair.
9. As far as possible, the group shall adopt its opinions, recommendations and reports by consensus. In the event of a vote, the outcome of the vote shall be decided by simple majority of the members. Members who have voted against or abstained shall have the right to have a document summarising the reasons for their position annexed to the opinions, recommendations or reports.

*Article 8***Sub-groups**

DG AGRI may set up sub-groups for the purpose of examining specific questions on the basis of terms of reference defined by DG AGRI in consultation with other relevant Commission services. Sub-groups shall operate in compliance with the horizontal rules and shall report to the group. They shall be dissolved as soon as their mandate is fulfilled.

*Article 9***Invited experts**

DG AGRI, in consultation with other relevant Commission services, may invite experts with specific expertise with respect to a subject matter on the agenda to take part in the work of the group on an ad hoc basis.

*Article 10***Observers**

1. Organisations and public entities other than Member States' authorities may be granted an observer status, in compliance with the horizontal rules, by direct invitation.
2. Organisations and public entities appointed as observers shall nominate their representatives.

3. Observers' representatives may be permitted by the Chair to take part in the discussions of the group, and its sub-groups, and provide expertise, taking into account the need in expertise and to preserve the interactive nature of the discussion. However, they shall not have voting rights, and shall not participate in the formulation of recommendations or advice of the group.

Article 11

Rules of procedure

On a proposal by and in agreement with DG AGRI, in consultation with other relevant Commission services, the group shall adopt its rules of procedure by simple majority of its members, on the basis of the standard rules of procedure for expert groups, in compliance with the horizontal rules. Sub-groups shall operate in compliance with the group's rules of procedure.

Article 12

Professional secrecy and handling of classified information

The members of the group and their representatives, as well as invited experts and observers, are subject to the obligation of professional secrecy, which by virtue of the Treaties and the rules implementing them applies to all members of the institutions and their staff, as well as to the Commission's rules on security regarding the protection of Union classified information, laid down in Commission Decisions (EU, Euratom) 2015/443 ⁽⁵⁾ and (EU, Euratom) 2015/444 ⁽⁶⁾. Should they fail to respect these obligations, the Commission may take all appropriate measures.

Article 13

Transparency

1. The group and its sub-groups shall be registered in the Register of Commission expert groups and other similar entities ('the Register of expert groups').

2. As concerns the group's composition and sub-groups', the following data shall be published in the Register of expert groups:

- (a) the name of member organisations; the interest represented shall be disclosed;
- (b) the name of organisations' representatives;
- (c) the name of observers.

3. All relevant documents, including the agendas, the minutes and the participants' submissions, shall be made available either on the Register of expert groups or *via* a link from the Register of expert groups to a dedicated website, where this information can be found. Access to dedicated websites shall not be submitted to user registration or any other restriction. In particular, the agenda and other relevant background documents shall be published in due time ahead of the meeting, followed by timely publication of minutes. Exceptions to publication shall only be possible where it is deemed that disclosure of a document would undermine the protection of a public or private interest as defined in Article 4 of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽⁷⁾.

⁽⁵⁾ Commission Decision (EU, Euratom) 2015/443 of 13 March 2015 on Security in the Commission (OJ L 72, 17.3.2015, p. 41, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2015/443/oj>).

⁽⁶⁾ Commission Decision (EU, Euratom) 2015/444 of 13 March 2015 on the security rules for protecting EU classified information (OJ L 72, 17.3.2015, p. 53, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2015/444/oj>).

⁽⁷⁾ Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2001 regarding public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents (OJ L 145, 31.5.2001, p. 43, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2001/1049/oj>).

*Article 14***Meeting expenses**

1. Participants in the activities of the group and sub-groups shall not be remunerated for the services they offer.
2. Travel and subsistence expenses incurred by participants in the activities of the group and sub-groups shall be reimbursed by the Commission. Reimbursement shall be made in accordance with the provisions in force within the Commission and within the limits of the available appropriations allocated to the Commission departments under the annual procedure for the allocation of resources.

*Article 15***Applicability**

This Decision is applicable as of the date of its adoption and shall apply until 31 December 2029. The Commission shall in due time consider the advisability of an extension.

Done at Brussels, 4 December 2024.

For the Commission
Christophe HANSEN
Member of the Commission
