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European Union

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NOTE

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| From: | General Secretariat of the Council |
| To: | Council |
| Subject: | Simplification and Innovation-Friendly Regulation in the Agri-Food Sector - <i>Information from the Danish delegation, supported by the Czech, Estonian, Finnish, Irish, Lithuanian, Portuguese and Spanish delegations</i> |

Delegations will find in annex an information note from the Danish delegation, supported by the Czech, Estonian, Finnish, Irish, Lithuanian, Portuguese and Spanish delegations, on the above-mentioned subject to be dealt with under “Any Other Business” at the session of the Council (Agriculture and Fisheries) on 27 May 2024.

Simplification and Innovation-Friendly Regulation in the Agri-Food Sector***Information from Denmark, supported by Czechia, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Lithuania, Portugal and Spain***

Against the backdrop of the open strategic autonomy and the objective to move towards a more resilient and competitive EU, it must be considered how the agri-food sector is best able to contribute. The agri-food sector can play a significant role, if regulation of importance to the sector promotes and supports efficiency and innovation. New solutions are needed to drive the green transition and to solve the combination of challenges facing the sector; climate change, biodiversity loss, and global competition. Furthermore, the land used for agricultural production in the EU has decreased by around 10 percentage points since 1970. In the future, land use will be under increasing pressure due to climate change, nature conservation, renewable energy projects and other purposes. Consequently, there is a great need to increase efficiency in the European agri-food sector.

At the Council (Agriculture and Fisheries) on 18 September 2023, Denmark raised the need for a stronger focus on simplification and better regulation. From the discussion, it was evident that Member States support the principles of better regulation and its application in EU policy making. To make this happen, there is a need for EU-regulation that supports and enables the development and deployment of innovations in the agri-food sector with the aim of producing more with less, by means of optimizing input use. To this end, the Commission's communication on boosting biotechnology and biomanufacturing in the EU from 20 March 2024 is welcomed. The initiative is an important first step in promoting biotech solutions in the EU.

Biotech solutions have great potential in reducing the climate and environmental impact of the agri-food sector without limiting the productive capacity or reducing the competitiveness of European farmers. However, to realize the benefits, there is a need for an EU regulatory framework that reduces time-to-market constraints, and to enhance the attractiveness of the EU when it comes to research and development, production, and post-production activities.

To this end, the Commission and the Council are called upon in the future to consider how to make the existing regulatory regime within areas such as new genomic techniques, feed additives, and biological plant protection products *simpler* and more *innovation-friendly*, without compromising safety. The Commission's anticipated study on how relevant EU-legislation can be further streamlined (expected mid-2025) could constitute a starting point for a reform of the regulatory framework. In addition, a cross-cutting administrative review should be carried out in order to reduce administrative burdens for farmers and national authorities. The reform shall aim at improving the competitiveness of the EU's agri-food sector, address climate and environmental challenges, and deliver benefits for farmers and consumers.