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Press Release

The European Livestock and Meat Trades Union (UECBV) sees today's Communication of the Green Deal as a recipe – the sector is part of the solution. It is so to say respectful and reliable delivering ingredients and would like to cook together a "Real Meal".

The "European Green Deal" including the "Farm-to-Fork-strategy" will be the key goal of the new Commission just having taken office on 1st December 2019 and launched its Green Deal [Communication](#) (and [Annex](#) thereto) today (11th December 2019).

The European Livestock and Meat Trades Union (UECBV) is fully committed to contributing to the objective of transforming the food system into a truly sustainable system, fit for the future based on economic, social and environmental pillars.

Based on the existing experience, the sector is looking forward to working. Livestock and Meat are part of the solution delivering ingredients and would like to cook together not only Fast Food but also "Real Meal – that should be the Deal".

So, in a nutshell, the "European Green Deal" will be a long journey which has to be based on sound and relevant science and stressing that livestock and meat are in a chain even providing a lot of different components to different products while meat is deeply entrenched in EU culture and eating habits, socialising with eating pleasure in a balanced diet. The sector contributes significantly to the EU economy including providing employment in rural areas. Stressing that it is a complex issue where it is prepared, the sector is looking forward to the next steps being included for initiatives and measurements on the basis of given long-lasting experience and already achieved improvement.

In this context, UECBV highlights the following main topics to work on not only the next hundred days but the next years:

The first goal of the Common Agricultural Policy in the [Treaty of Rome](#) must not be lost sight of: to produce safe food, in enough quantity to feed the EU, providing a fair income to the farmers and at affordable price for consumers but being always more sustainable from an environmental, economic and social point of view.

The EU livestock and meat sector is producing according to the [highest standards](#) when it comes to food safety and hygiene, animal welfare, animal health, sustainability, social rights. For many years, UECBV has been pro-active in advancing these areas through non-legislative initiatives like many guides to good practice - in particular in the field of animal welfare and meat hygiene. UECBV has worked collaboratively with the Commission over many years and feels that cooperation is the way forward.

The sector **contributes significantly to the EU economy** – it is nearly two hundred billion euros, and nearly half of total agricultural activity per year. The EU exports and employs across all parts of the EU, including providing employment in rural areas. Beyond the immediate employment and economic impact of the sector, the product produced by our sector provides employment in the restaurant, manufacturing, catering, retail and logistics sector. There are transport companies that specialise in transport of refrigerated cargo such as meat. Trade is vital for our sector, our industry used trade to ensure full utilisation of all products, a concept we call ‘carcass balance’.

Livestock and meat production contribute many positives to the **circular economy**. These are often not recognised and if ignored could see negative environmental impacts such as poorer soil quality. Carbon sequestration, sustainable and natural fertilisation of soils, biodiversity, production of biogas and “upcycling” of biomass resources, such as straw, grass and bran to animal feed are all examples of benefits of this sector to the environment. The benefits of the sector and its achievements must be taken on board when assessing sustainability. For example, over the years the GHG emissions from the EU livestock sector have been decreasing. At slaughterhouse level, important improvements in reducing meat loss and energy and water consumption have been achieved. Sustainable packaging is another focal area. This needs efforts of Research and Innovation which will play a key role, and has to be tackled as said for the next common steps which the sector is keen to work with the Commission to discuss further initiatives.

The EU livestock and meat sector plays a fundamental role in **managing rural areas** of the EU. Especially the beef, lamb and goat sector is part of the efforts and preserves millions of hectares of pastures, grassland and therefore also priority ecosystems in the framework of the Habitat Directive i.e. semi-natural dry grasslands.

UECBV, in cooperation with Australia and New Zealand, has created a harmonised, comprehensive and science-based **methodology to calculate the environmental performance** of the sector, called the **Red Meat Footprint Category Rules**. The methodology was published in September 2019 for supporting the EU meat industry to improve its environmental performances by identifying the processes hotspots. UECBV has engaged with its members and partners to improve the knowledge around the red meat industry Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) modelling. UECBV is part of the Technical Advisory Board (TAB) of the European Commission DG ENVI Product Environmental Footprint Category Rules. In addition, UECBV is member of the Steering Committee of the FAO Livestock Environmental Assessment and Performance partnership, a worldwide level initiative working today on its sustainable livestock guidelines road testing. Therefore, the sector is ready to provide feedback for a holistic and robust agricultural modelling.

The EU livestock and meat sector is the **core of a chain** of sectors. For instance, most of the beef within the EU origins from dairy cows. The livestock and meat sector is also providing a lot of components to products like pharmaceutical products, cosmetics, leather products, pet food, biodiesel, porcelain, isolation material, etc.

Meat is deeply **entrenched in our culture and eating habits**, socialising with eating pleasure. Meat provides consumer choice not only in the EU but in our key export markets where markets around the world have the opportunity to eat EU produced meat.

Meat plays a **key role in good health**. It is an important element in a balanced diet, due to its nutrient density. Meat is high in protein – which includes all nine essential amino acids required. From a micronutrient standpoint it is rich in various types of vitamin B, incl. B12, and minerals, like selenium, zinc and iron – and its low energy content. In the form of ‘haem’, in meat, iron is more readily absorbed. Calls to reduce meat consumption do not come with the caveat that in doing so there are requirements to consider what must be consumed to replace the nutritional benefits provided by meat. Red meat provides dietary benefits throughout an individual’s life. Designing an EU food system is very complex. It has to be based on sound science and evidence, with the right and fair EU reference figures.

In summary, the European livestock and meat sector is well-positioned to provide sustainable high-value products to meet future societal and citizen demands within and outside Europe. All EU legislation should take on board the sustainability goal, which should mean revision on some past. It has to be carefully checked what can be improved also from the angle of sustainability. As said, it needs further efforts of Research and Innovation which will play a key role and has to be tackled for the next common steps. The views of this sector must be given an equal hearing and it must be made sure that the involved ones were not divided. Today’s Commission Communication points out that the challenges are complex and interlinked. Furthermore, it is written that there will be a consultation beginning next year. The livestock and meat sector is now available for preparing the necessary steps together.

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UECBV is the European Livestock and Meat Trades Union. UECBV is an EU association representing in total, some 20,000 firms of all sizes and over 230,000 jobs are represented through its national member federations. The vast majority of these enterprises are small and medium enterprises (SMEs). **UECBV’s** core objective is to achieve an optimum business climate for the livestock and meat industry across the European Union and to strengthen the competitiveness of the industry as a whole. To achieve this goal the UECBV **represents and defends the meat** sector vis-à-vis the European Institutions, promotes **EU trade and international trade**, deepens the **internal market and fights against competition distortions**.