Food and Feed Chain speech at the workshop and reception on "Biotech Soy in the Americas and the EU - Today and the Future"
Highlights

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On behalf of the FFC

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good evening and thank you for inviting the Food and Feed Chain (FFC) coalition to take part in this workshop and reception. On behalf of the FFC I would like to sincerely congratulate the organiser and the hosting third country representations for making ourselves a part of this initiative. A warm welcome to Europe goes to the operators and colleagues from the Americas.

The FFC is a coalition bringing together the European supply chain representatives in the area of production, trading, processing and use of agricultural products.

Why are we here today?

To reply to this question I will use some key figures:

- **343 mt of grains** (cereals and oilseeds) are produced in the EU; of which
  - **25mt** of cereals are exported
- **30 mt of grains** (cereals and oilseeds) and **36mt of products derived thereof** are imported from third countries.

Europe "means" around **409 mt of grains and derived products**, catering for food, feed and industrial needs.

What do the figures point to?

- First, to the fact that Europe is an important agri-business player worldwide.
- Secondly, however, to the fact that ensuring food security in the EU means interdependency and constant tension between domestic and Third Country supply.
- Ultimately, it means that it is crucial for the EU to have access to multiple sources year round in order to meet the demand as well as to tap into surplus areas to cover its internal supply deficit.

Thus two dimensions are needed in the EU: domestic supply and access to third countries raw materials. Relating those needs to the fast moving world, Europe appears a steady continent especially in the area of green biotechnology.

Let's have a look at some other figures (*we like figures!)*

- In 2011 the commercial cultivation of GM crops reached a **global area of 160 million hectares;**

- More than **16 million farmers** in **29 countries** are "embracing" new technologies.

Recapping:

- Europe has to look also outside the continent to supply the internal demand for grains and oilseeds
- The world is fast in adopting biotechnology in agriculture
- Europe is steady

We have a problem. And we've had several already.

- The continuation of the current EU policies is problematic for the economic sustainability of EU food and feed operators and a threat to the uninterrupted supply of food products to consumers at competitive levels.

- The current EU ad-hoc management of GM-related matters has led to severe financial impact on many sectors, as well as the need for authorities to handle crises, most of would have been avoidable.

- There is a need for a more long-lasting strategic policy approach to address the opportunities and challenges posed by European and global developments related to GM products:

    - More efficient processing of GM applications through the EU authorisation system is needed to achieve better synchronicity with exporting countries. The existing legislation contains timelines which are regularly exceeded. Even more worrying issue is the implementing regulation being currently in the pipeline, which is threatening to make the risk assessment phase even slower. Rightly, the exporting countries are also worried.

    - Swift approaches should be considered as regards the difficulties faced by food and feed business operators. The "technical solution" for GM products not yet authorized in the EU in feed is a good first step. However, a rapid extension of the technical solution to include food is needed and a similar testing and sampling protocol for seed is equally required.

    - Policies able to deal with Low-Level Presence of EU unauthorized GM products in feed, food and seed are needed.

    - Cultivation in Europe should aim to improve the competitiveness of European agriculture and help to guarantee the freedom of choice for farmers through better access to new technologies in the framework of the single market.

In conclusion, Europe needs to reflect on the kind of agriculture for the future and how to supply the internal demand for food/feed and industrial needs. We believe that strictly science based policy processes are needed to be signed to withstand the test of time by anticipating trends.

Lacking this move, we may arrive to a point where – to say it with Kissinger - *There cannot be a crisis next week. My schedule is already full.*