

## Conclusions of the Chair – (of Barroso's Sherpa group)

The chair thanked all delegates for a discussion which on substance and quality went beyond expectations.

- Regarding the legislative framework, he noted the agreement not to change the existing framework but to seek improvement of management notably as regards speeding up of the authorisation process based on robust assessments so as to reassure the public. Large consensus exists also on the need to strengthen EFSA, a body for which no alternative exists, while also seeing some scope for subsidiarity elements which however had to respect the rules of the internal market. Further, the chair noted the need to better synchronise approvals with third trading partners.
- On the issue of rising food prices, the chair concluded that the group recognizes the need to keep an eye on future developments given the potential political risks involved for all leaders. Yet the more the approval process is accelerated and improved the better the Union can face this issue. In any case price concerns should not overrule the science based approach nor diminish the relevance of a strict science based assessment being crucial to ensure consumer confidence. The rise in food prices calls for a new role of technology, science and research. The EU has the knowledge and the capacity to remain leader in helping the world to feed itself.
- With respect to the WTO panel, the chair noted the suggestion forwarded by some delegates to approach the US and to explain the EU approach. He further recalled the position expressed at large that sanctions would be counterproductive and not in the mutual interest. The slow pace of the process however is seen as a root cause. The EU needs to give clear signals that it wants and is able to decide and is perceived as being active and efficient while of course remaining firmly based on a scientific approach.
- On consumer perception the chair pointed to the national examples provided by some delegates on how best to deal with public opinion and the principle agreed that top down campaigns are not the best way to deal with this. He invited the delegates to widely share their experience in leading an

emotion-free, fact based dialogue on the high standards of the EU GMO policy. He saw merit in the examples provided in opening an informal dialogue with all stakeholders and emphasised the role of industry, economic partners and science to actively contribute to such a dialogue.

With regard to the procedural follow up the chair mentioned the possibility to share informally his notes on the discussion and suggested a second meeting in the first half of October. The exact date and agenda shall be communicated to the delegates as soon as possible.

As possible topics for the next discussion the following ideas were flagged by the chair:

- How can EFSA – from a practical point of view – best be supported with input from national experience and how can such support be mobilised?
- How to approach from a political – not technical – point of view the issue of gaps in the authorisation procedure regarding e.g. thresholds or asynchronous approvals?
- Keeping an eye on public opinion: how to share best national experience on dialogue with all stakeholders and how to bring this if need be on a European level?

The chair closed the meeting by emphasising once again the need to provide the leaders with a global vision. He underlined the excellent cooperation with the French Presidency on this file. He also recalled his intention to give the President of the European Commission, on the basis of the work of this group, a global picture on where the EU stands on GMOs and on how he could take the discussion further with his political counterparts.