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REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL

Mid-term evaluation of Regulation (EU) No 652/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down provisions for the management of expenditure relating to the food chain, animal health and animal welfare, and relating to plant health and plant reproductive material, amending Council Directives 98/56/EC, 2000/29/EC and 2008/90/EC, Regulations (EC) No 178/2002, (EC) No 882/2004 and (EC) No 396/2005 of the European Parliament and of the Council, Directive 2009/128/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council and Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council and repealing Council Decisions 66/399/EEC, 76/894/EEC and 2009/470/EC

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Mid-term evaluation of Regulation (EU) No 652/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down provisions for the management of expenditure relating to the food chain, animal health and animal welfare, and relating to plant health and plant reproductive material¹, amending Council Directives 98/56/EC, 2000/29/EC and 2008/90/EC, Regulations (EC) No 178/2002, (EC) No 882/2004 and (EC) No 396/2005 of the European Parliament and of the Council, Directive 2009/128/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council and Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council and repealing Council Decisions 66/399/EEC, 76/894/EEC and 2009/470/EC

1. Introduction

Regulation (EU) No 652/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council entered into force at the end of June 2014 and established a **Common Financial Framework (CFF)** in the fields of food chain, animal health and animal welfare, plant health and plant reproductive material (hereinafter: the "CFF Regulation").

The present report is prepared under article 42 ("Evaluation") of the CFF Regulation itself, which requires the Commission to establish and present to the European Parliament and to the Council a midterm evaluation report covering the following spending measures:

- **veterinary eradication, control and surveillance programmes** (hereinafter : "veterinary programmes") implemented by the Member States, which aim to progressively eliminate animal diseases and zoonoses and to implement disease control measures;
- **phytosanitary survey programmes** concerning the presence of pests in the Union territory;
- **veterinary and phytosanitary emergency measures**, which aim to timely cope with emergency situations related to, respectively, animal health and plant health;
- **European Union Reference Laboratories (EURLs) activities**, which aim to ensure high-quality, uniform testing in the EU and to support Commission activities on risk management in the area of laboratory analysis;
- **Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF) programme**, which is a training initiative addressing national authority staff involved in official controls in the areas of food and feed law, animal health and welfare and plant health rules.

Under the current Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), the amounts allocated for the set of activities listed above represent almost the entire budget in the food chain area.

¹ OJ L 189, 27.6.2014, p. 1.

The present report describes the outcome of the mid-term evaluation exercise, based on the external supporting study² and on the internal assessment conducted at Commission level. It is accompanied by a Staff Working Document (SWD), which provides an overview of the technical and financial implementation of the CFF activities, and summarises the findings of the external supporting study.

The EU spending programme provides financial support to achieve the objectives of the EU food and feed legislation. Its contribution to the achievement of the objectives is intrinsically correlated with the contribution of national spending and measures that legally require Member States to take action.

The scope of the mid-term evaluation covers the implementation of the CFF Regulation in 2014, 2015 and, based on preliminary data available, in 2016. The partial data available for 2016 is a limitation for the present evaluation.

2. Background and objectives of the CFF Regulation

The CFF Regulation was established in order to improve the functioning of the spending for the activities implemented within the food chain area, as well as to focus on EU funding priorities providing real added value. It modernised and rationalised the pre-existing financial provisions under a single framework, with harmonised procedures, standardised payment rates, clarified eligible costs and measures.

From the operational point of view, most of the activities and measures were already supported before 2014. **New measures were introduced** in the phytosanitary area, namely the possibility to co-finance the implementation of survey programmes concerning the presence of plant pests in the Union territory.

The general policy objective of the CFF Regulation is to contribute to a high level of health for humans, animals and plants along the food chain and in related areas, by preventing and eradicating diseases and pests and by ensuring a high level of protection for consumers and the environment, while enhancing the competitiveness of the Union food and feed industry and favouring the creation of jobs.

This general objective is crystallised into four specific objectives, one for each of the four spending areas covered by the CFF Regulation itself, namely: food safety, animal health and welfare, plant health, official controls.

The specific objectives are accompanied by six specific performance indicators, also set out in the CFF Regulation, which provided a basis to conduct a sectorial evaluation of the measures implemented under each of the four covered spending areas.

To achieve its objective, a maximum total ceiling for expenditure of EUR 1 891 936 000 for the seven-year period 2014-2020, covered by the present MFF was set aside for the CFF Regulation.

² Mid-term evaluation of Regulation (EU) No 652/2014 prepared by IBF International consulting (see attached staff working document).

The CFF expenditure primarily consists of direct co-financing to the Member States, which are the almost exclusive beneficiaries of the EU spending in this area. The Member States receive a reimbursement for the eligible costs incurred to carry out the eligible measures. The Union financial contribution mainly takes the form of a grant.

3. Outcome of the mid-term evaluation of the implementation of the CFF Regulation

In accordance with the provisions of Article 42 of the CFF Regulation, the mid-term evaluation report covers the following aspects:

- the achievement of the CFF objectives (Article 2(1)), as regards the efficiency of the use of resources and its added value, at Union level;
- the scope for simplification;
- the continued relevance of all objectives;
- the contribution of the measures to the Union priorities of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

It takes into account evaluation results on the long-term impact of the predecessor measures.

The evaluation takes account of the progress made by using the six CFF indicators listed in Article 2(2)³.

3.1 Achievement of CFF Regulation objectives: efficiency and EU added value

The general policy objective presented in the background of this report is complemented by **four specific objectives**, one for each of the four covered spending areas.

- **Animal health:** to contribute to achieving a higher animal health status for the Union and to support the improvement of the welfare of animals.
- **Plant health:** to contribute to the timely detection of pests and their eradication where those pests have entered the Union.
- **Official controls:** to contribute to improving the effectiveness, efficiency and reliability of official controls and other activities carried out with a view to the effective implementation of and compliance with the Union rules (in the areas covered by the CFF Regulation).
- **Food safety:** to contribute to a high level of safety of food and food production systems and of other products which may affect the safety of food, while improving the sustainability of food production.

³ Table 1 of the staff working document accompanying the present report

These specific objectives are accompanied by the six CFF Regulation indicators referred to above, which provide a general approach to follow up the progress of the spending in this area. In order to concretely monitor and measure the performance of the CFF activities, the Commission services further translated those indicators into a comprehensive set of twenty-one operational technical indicators, defining specific targets for each of them⁴ for 2017 and 2020. This set of indicators provides information on the technical performance of the CFF measures, but it does not allow the assessment of the cost-effectiveness of the programme. Particularly, the absence of available cost-effectiveness indicators limits the evaluation of the efficiency of the CFF measures.

3.1.1 Animal health

Achievements of objectives

The implementation of veterinary measures represents the largest part of the expenditure under the CFF Regulation budget, with the veterinary programmes alone exceeding 75% of the total spending in 2014 and 2015. Payments for veterinary programmes in 2014 amounted to EUR 136 Million, out of EUR 180 Million and in 2015 amounted to EUR 148 Million out of 194. This budgetary relevance is also reflected in the fact that 12 out of the 21 technical indicators monitored in this context relate to this spending area. The chosen indicators focus on the priority animal diseases and zoonoses; they allow to monitor the geographical evolution of the EU areas which are free from specific animal diseases, and to measure technical parameters such as the prevalence, the incidence and the number of cases. The analysis of these indicators for the period 2014-2016 reveals a positive epidemiological trend for all priority diseases receiving EU financial support under the veterinary programmes, with a growing number of Member States or regions becoming free from animal diseases, and an overall reduction in all monitored parameters. A significant example is represented by the EU programmes addressing Rabies: this disease has been almost eradicated in the EU in wildlife (complete eradication is expected by 2020) and the number of cases has fallen from 80 in 2014 to only 18 in 2016, hugely reducing a significant risk to health and enabling free movement of cats and dogs within the EU. Another good example is the increased number of Member States free from bovine brucellosis: at the end of 2016, two out of the five Member States having a EU co-funded programme during the period considered, became free of this disease; in the remaining three Member States, the main performance indicator, monitoring the evolution of herd prevalence, has decreased by 25% over the same period, showing a positive trend towards the complete eradication of the disease. However, it should be noted that there are still some areas where the situation has not improved as expected, such as the cases of bovine *tuberculosis* (in 1 Member State out of the 5 with a EU co-funded programme) and ovine and caprine *brucellosis* (in 1 Member State and in a few regions of another Member State out of 6 with EU co-funded programmes). While indicators on salmonellosis and brucellosis in animals show progress, indicators in humans have not yet shown expected results of a yearly 2 per cent decrease of cases, over the three-year period under evaluation.

⁴

Details on both operational technical indicators can be found in Annex 4 to the SWD

The implementation of emergency measures in the occurrence of veterinary disease outbreaks also plays a key role in achieving a higher animal health status in the EU, as well as to protect the EU economy from a serious and large-scale veterinary crisis. Thanks to early detection and to immediate application of EU co-funded emergency measures, all recent epidemics have been successfully contained, and major economic consequences - such as trade restrictions and the block of exports - have been avoided. A recent example is the fight against the epidemic of Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD), an infectious viral disease of cattle transmitted via infected saliva or through insects, introduced in the EU from Turkey. In 2016, this disease affected seven countries in the South East Europe, including Greece, Bulgaria and the Balkan region. All these countries resorted to mass vaccination with support of the EU LSD vaccine bank set up immediately to face the emergency. This vaccination campaign resulted in the successful containment of the disease: no further Member States were affected in 2016 and the disease has not reoccurred in the vaccinated areas.

Efficiency

The improvement of the animal health status is accompanied by a progressive reduction of the financial resources needed in the area, that in the specific case of veterinary programmes dropped by 11 million euro over the three-year period under evaluation.

Less predictable is the spending for emergency measures, which varies from one year to the other as a consequence of factors difficult to anticipate and to control, including climate change and the globalisation of vectors, as well as the cyclical reoccurrence of some endemic diseases.

It has to be highlighted that a recent special report from the Court of Auditors⁵, published in April 2016, considers the Commission' strategy for animal diseases to be sound and well-developed, including a good framework for prioritising budget resources on priority programmes. According to its findings, the Member States programmes meet the required criteria, and are generally well designed and properly implemented. Moreover, Member States prove to have adequate systems to identify animal disease outbreaks and facilitate their eradication. It should be noted, however, that the report of the Court of Auditors also acknowledges a lack of available international standard models and economic indicators, which limits the possibility for the Commission to demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of veterinary expenditures.

EU added value

The achievement of a higher animal health status is the result of the legal measures put in place at EU level with the technical and financial support provided by the EU to the Member States. When a disease is suspected or confirmed, a number of prevention and control actions are immediately put in place under the emergency measures system, including the temporary closing of borders as regards the movement of susceptible consignments and the

⁵ http://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR16_06/SR_ANIMAL_DISEASES_EN.pdf.

regionalisation⁶ of the disease. The variety of measures to put in place to tackle animal diseases and the fact that many of the diseases ignore the borders, requires a centralised management system in order to properly coordinate and organise the implementation of specific actions in the Member States.

Budget limitations in some Member States, especially those struggling with economic crisis or other constraints, may limit or delay the implementation of measures necessary to contain the outbreak of a disease. Therefore, the EU financial contribution supports the EU crisis-management system in the event of an outbreak. A good example of EU coordination is the recent management at EU level of the African swine fever outbreak, which reached the EU from Russia in 2014. Since the very early stages of the epidemics - for which no vaccine is available - the Commission has proactively promoted a common strategy amongst affected Member States, neighbouring third countries and bordering Member States at risk based on EU legislation and the best scientific knowledge. The Commission has given technical and financial support for specific targeted measures to support the policy. This coordinated action resulted in the containment of the disease under the period covers by the current evaluation and has limited costs for both the EU and the national budgets. It has also avoided major trade disruption, both within the EU and with non-EU countries.

3.1.2 Plant health

Achievements of objectives

While the EU financial support for the implementation of plant health emergency measures has been provided for many years, the funding of plant health survey programmes is still at an initial phase.

Survey programmes were established for the first time in 2015; the evaluation of their results has therefore been limited due to the short timeframe and the absence of predecessor measures. Nevertheless, the EU Member States have welcomed their introduction since the very first year, with 17 EU countries presenting a programme in 2015 and 22 in 2016. In 2015, the implementation of surveys programmes has allowed the detection of a number of new emerging risks in the Union territory such as the plant bacterium *Xylella fastidiosa*.

The budget available to support the implementation of emergency measures and survey programmes concerning the presence of pests represents a limited part of the total expenditure under the CFF Regulation budget. In 2014, spending to implement emergency measures amounted to EUR 7.7 Million and in 2015 to EUR 12.2 Million while spending on surveys programmes amounted to EUR 4.2 in 2015.

To follow up the results of the implementation of phytosanitary emergency measures, the Commission monitors the number of cases for a selection of priority pests, including some devastating pathogen such as the *Xylella fastidiosa*. In the plant health area, the eradication objective in case of outbreak is possible only if decisive measures are put immediately in

⁶ Regionalisation is a recent methodology for disease control through the separation of disease free and affected areas on the basis of epidemiological criteria.

place and not when a pest is already endemic in the area. Difficulties in achieving eradication may result from a lack of effective treatment solutions, the high number of susceptible plant species, population dynamics and lifecycle of pests and their vectors present in forests, parks and plantations with high economic, social and environmental value. In cases where eradication is not feasible, containment is the only alternative in the present state of science. This highlights the importance of early detection to be achieved through survey programmes.

Efficiency

The implementation of the survey programmes aims to detect the presence of priority pests in the EU territory. In this view, a progressive increment of the financial resources is foreseen under the current MFF, supporting the objective to increase the coverage of the Union territory by those surveys by 2020.

As in the case of veterinary emergency measures, the spending for phytosanitary emergency measures is variable and less predictable due to emerging risks as effect of climate change, global trade and movement of travellers around the world. Over the years 2014-2016, it mostly concerned four major pests only: the emergency measures addressing Pinewood nematode and *Xylella fastidiosa*, together with *Anoplophora glabripennis* and *Pomacea insularum*, which were responsible for almost all payments (91%). During the period under consideration, the EU financial support for the implementation of emergency measures has contributed to prevent the further introduction and further spread into the rest of the Union territory of the above mentioned pests.

EU added value

The EU intervention supports the management of plant health outbreaks, where the EU provides the financial contribution needed at Member State level to implement emergency measures with the aim to prevent further spread of the relevant pests into the rest of the Union territory.

Moreover, a Union support facilitates the coordination among Member States with a view to survey plant pests deserving a closer attention due to their economic, environmental and social impact.

Overall, the implementation of EU co-financed surveys programmes and emergency measures in the EU territory contributes to preserving agricultural production through plant health protection, as well as protection of biodiversity and forests, together with agricultural competitiveness.

3.1.3 Official controls

Achievements of objectives

The EU financial support to the official controls system addresses two major instruments, covering almost 100% of the eligible costs incurred: the testing activities carried out by the network of 43 EURLs, and the trainings provided in a number of food safety priority areas by

both the EURLs, and in the context of the BTSF initiative. Four operational indicators⁷ have been developed to monitor the performance of the main measures co-funded in the official controls' area.

The EURLs have contributed, inter-alia, to the continuous update of diagnostic tools for the timely identification of pathogens. This is critical to uniform implementation of controls throughout the EU as it ensures confidence in the reliability of test results and a level competitive playing field. An average success rate of 85% by the participating laboratories in the proficiency tests⁸ performed by the EURLs network shows the successful application of testing methods of reference laboratories throughout the EU. Through continuous training, with an annual workshop organised by each EURL, National Reference Laboratories (NRLs) involved in the official control could upgrade their expertise. The average satisfaction rate of participants, as regards the training contents, was above 87%.

The BTSF training initiative has covered, for the three years considered, 52 topics of key importance for the CFF areas. The programme was considered to be useful by the participants, in both the EU Member States and in third countries, with a satisfaction rate above 90% for all years considered. Also the success rate of the tests performed by the participants after the training is very high, at about 88%. The trainings have provided support to a common understanding across Member States of their obligations and how best to enforce relevant EU legislation. The BTSF programme has also proven to be helpful in responding to new needs, notably during crisis events, when it contributed to both prevention and crises-preparedness. A concrete example is the BTSF training on foodborne outbreak investigations, which was organised during all three years considered and focused on subjects such as outbreak preparedness, outbreak management, and crisis communication, addressing national teams of public health, veterinary and food safety authorities.

Efficiency

Those 2 activities are financed at 100% by the EU, and each have an annual cost of about 15 million euro for the EU budget. This limited cost has, nevertheless, allowed the EURLs to perform high-level testing activities and to train hundreds of NRLs per year and the BTSF have trained per year some 6000 officials of national competent authorities involved in official controls.

EU added value

The EU added value provided by the EURLs activities and the BTSF programmes is linked to the nature of those activities: the network of laboratories ensures that all EU Member States work within a consistent and uniform regulatory framework and the EU training programme promotes a common approach towards the implementation of EU legislation. This

⁷ Annex 4 to the SWD

⁸ Proficiency testing determines the performance of individual laboratories for specific tests or measurements and is used to monitor laboratories' continuing performance. It is also called inter-laboratory comparison. As this term implies, proficiency testing compares the measuring results obtained by different laboratories.

contribution towards the harmonisation of rules at Union level and the sharing of knowledge and expertise in the food safety and related areas is a major example of positive interaction within the EU, which could not be achieved through isolated efforts at national level and without the EU financial support.

3.1.4 Food safety

The achievement of the food safety objective has to be seen from an integrated perspective, being a horizontal goal resulting from the implementation and enforcement of the legislative framework in combination with the contribution of the EU and national spending programmes. Animal health, plant health, and official control activities all contribute to having a high level of safety of food and of food production systems, in the interest of all EU citizens. The safety of food requires safe and healthy animals and plants as well and a high-standard system of controls. There is therefore a direct and binding link with the achievement of a high level of animal health, plant health and official controls to meet this requirement.

The effective enforcement of EU requirements in the above areas within the EU, and in non-EU countries exporting animals, plants and products to the EU, is key to maintaining high levels of food safety.

The EU's high standards both facilitate intra-EU trade and create opportunities for European businesses to compete on the global market. High levels of safety are fundamental to stable markets and consumer confidence and also protect Europe from the economic and human costs of disease outbreaks.

In the period covered by the evaluation, around 200 audits and inspections have been carried out per year by the Commission services. Those have contributed to several key priorities of the Commission, notably: a regulatory environment which facilitates jobs, growth and investment by ensuring high levels of safety supported by sound control and enforcement systems; a deeper and fairer internal market by providing a level playing field where citizens and businesses can be confident in uniform and high levels of safety and transparent information on the state of implementation of controls in Member States and non-EU countries which in turn informs policy makers on the effectiveness of regulation in the relevant sectors.

Through its audit experience, the Commission provides important feedback on the effectiveness, impact and added value of EU legislation and activities.

If the achievement of the sectorial objectives analysed in the previous sections contribute to a positive assessment of the general food safety situation at EU level, the reputation of the EU food products needs no introduction. The EU agri-food productions are globally appreciated for their quality as well as for the high-level safety standards, representing the largest manufacturing sector in Europe and a leading player worldwide. In this context, the EU food safety budget plays a crucial role in contributing to their competitiveness.

3.2 Simplification

In line with the Communication 'A Budget for Europe 2020'⁹, the CFF Regulation was envisaged to modernise and simplify the pre-existing financial provisions. Simplification and rationalisation were addressed by:

- replacing the previous legal framework, over-complex and often out-of-date, with a single piece of legislation covering the whole food chain area;
- rationalising the funding rates, with the definition of three standard rates only, namely: 50%, 75% and 100%;
- aligning the procedures in the phytosanitary and veterinary fields under a harmonised framework to ensure clarity, transparency and a sound regulatory environment;
- reducing the use of Comitology and Commission Decisions in order to short the time for contract and payment,

An additional step towards the overall simplification of the system was the introduction of a unit cost system used for reimbursing the activities carried out to implement veterinary programmes. It covers about 50% of the eligible costs and is currently under revision in view of further extending it to other areas. The new system was perceived by both the Commission and the Member States as facilitating the request for funding and for reimbursements.

As concerns reporting requirements, some Member States perceived them as disproportionate for the smallest veterinary programmes and emergency measures only.

3.3 Contribution to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth

According to the last EUROSTAT data, in 2015, the output of the whole agri-food industry in the EU is estimated at more than 410 billion euro, representing the largest manufacturing sector in Europe and a leading player worldwide, with a continuous increase of the exports of its agricultural products. Overall, this sector provides some 44 million jobs in the EU, of which 22 million are employed in farms.

The competitiveness of European food production depends on its reputation, with the EU food safety budget playing a crucial role in contributing to the safety and quality of European food products.

But aspects such as the globalisation of trade, climate change, and the demands of trade partners as well as of consumer behaviour in case of food crises, present challenges to the EU system of production. In this changing world, the Europe 2020 growth strategy¹⁰ wants the EU to become a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy. These three mutually reinforcing priorities should help the EU and the Member States deliver high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion.

⁹ COM(2011) 500 final of 22.06.2011.

¹⁰ COM(2014) 130 final of 19.3.2014.

In the agri-food field, these goals could only be achieved if a high level of health for humans, animals and plants along the food chain and in related areas is guaranteed, and if actions to actively prevent and eradicate diseases and pests are implemented.

3.4 Relevance

In line with the guiding principle of the Declaration of Rome¹¹, the CFF measures contribute to a safe and secure Europe, where citizen can access high quality food, respecting the strictest international standards; risks related to human and public health are contained thanks to the long-term intervention of the EU in this area, as well as to its timely reaction in case of emergencies. When preventing the occurrence or the spread of epidemics in the Union territory, the food chain measures play a key role in protecting the EU economy, where veterinary, phytosanitary, and food crises can have a devastating impact, potentially generating enormous costs for both public budgets and for the whole agri-food sector. This impacts the social dimension of Europe, having a positive effect on the protection of the interests of all EU citizens, from initial producers to final consumers. Eventually, this system makes its contribution to a stronger EU agri-food industry on the global scene, by creating the economies of scale of the internal EU market, which in turn supports the exports of EU agricultural products.

3.5 Long-term impact of the predecessor measures

Most of the activities currently covered by the CFF Regulation were already co-funded under the previous legislation. Many of them, especially animal health measures, require by their nature a long-term investment to achieve success.

Among the main achievements resulting from the long-term impact of the measures implemented before 2014, the eradication of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy in cattle, a fatal disease which is transmissible to humans through the consumption of contaminated beef products, is a good example. The long-term EU co-financing against this disease played a key role resulted in a drop in the number of positive cases from more than 2000 in 2001 to 5 cases only in 2016: close to the eradication. This in turn has allowed a range of costly protective measures to be withdrawn and the creation of new trade opportunities.

Another good case is related to an important zoonosis such as Rabies that has been almost eradicated in the EU in wildlife (complete eradication is expected by 2020) with the number of cases falling from 726 in 2010 to only 18 in 2016, enabling free movement of cats and dogs within the EU.

A decrease of the infections in poultry population (such as laying hens) by *salmonella spp.* has been reported following the implementation of EU co-funded *salmonella* control programmes. This has lead also to benefits in terms of human health, being *salmonellosis* an important zoonosis and one of the main causes of human contamination is the consumption of eggs. The incidence of confirmed human cases, analysed over a period longer then the timeframe under evaluation, has decreased from 105.450 in 2010 to 94.600 in 2015. However,

¹¹ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/05_the_rome_agenda_en_web.pdf

yearly peaks of human cases can be observed due to several factors such as the interruption of the eggs cold chain.

3.6 Area of further consideration

Under the EU 2014-2020 budget, the reserve for crises in the agricultural sector is not available for the food and feed programme. In the event of outbreaks of large-scale veterinary and phytosanitary epidemics, such as the recent case of avian influenza¹², whose budgetary impact might not be accommodated within the current programme, the financial support to implement eradication activities and to timely contain the spread of these epidemics could be difficult.

The funding of plant health activities is still at an initial phase and further consideration will need to be given to properly respond to the needs in this area, e.g. in terms of integration between survey programmes and emergency measures. In the meantime should be noted that the effectiveness of plant health emergency measures deserves particular attention. In this respect, it is important to consider that the achievement of the eradication of certain pests is often more complicated than in the animal health area due the high number of host species, latency of symptoms and their presence of vectors. In cases where eradication is no longer possible, a containment approach is still an effective way to prevent further spread of the pest into the rest of the Union territory.

Some adjustments were introduced to adapt the financial tools used in these spending areas to the provisions of the current Financial Regulation¹³, notably the grants. However, experience shows that, taking into account the characteristics of the food safety expenditure (non-competitive funding consisting of reimbursement to the Member States), grants are not always the best tool in the specific area of veterinary and phytosanitary measures.

As regards financial support for other activities, reflections should be carried out on how grants aimed at supporting a more sustainable behaviour of certain actors in the food chain contribute to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as referred to in the Communication "Next steps for a sustainable European future". Available options should be further examined how the option of donating food that is safe for consumption could be supported by extending grants to organisations which are active in the redistribution of safe food, as suggested in the Special Report "Combating Food Waste" of the European Court of Auditors,

4. CONCLUSIONS

The EU framework on food safety, animal and plant health has been generally recognised as uniform and largely consistent in its application and enforcement in all the Member States. This ensures in turn that both citizens and businesses are confident that this framework is fair and effective in promoting high safety standards in a key sector of the EU economy. The EU

¹² The epidemic started in 2015 and has not extinguished yet. To date, provisional costs exceed EUR 110 million.

¹³ Regulation (EU) No 966/2012 (OJ L 298, 26.10.2012, p. 1).

investment in surveillance, disease and pest control and eradication, contributes to the safety and trade in the entire food chain. The mid-term evaluation of the CFF Regulation shows that the present financial framework is functioning well within its policy context: all activities receiving EU financial support in this area serve the CFF Regulation general and specific objectives, namely the improvement of human, animal and plant health, as well as the overall Commission's priorities, including the functioning of an effective internal market and the support to trade with non-EU countries.

The CFF Regulation financial instrument has also proven to be flexible to address emerging needs for co-financing especially in the occurrence of outbreaks. The activities funded under the CFF Regulation provide a support to the EU food and feed framework which contribute to an EU which is safe and secure, prosperous and sustainable, social, and stronger on the global scene.