



EUROPEAN UNION MINOR USES COORDINATION FACILITY

Workshop on “Minor Uses and Speciality Crops: The way forward in Europe”

18- 20 February 2020, Paris

ROADMAP for the FUTURE



Roadmap for the Future

Speciality crops represent a fundamental sector in agriculture for many European countries. These crops include most vegetables, fruit, nurseries, flowers, forest trees, seed production crops and some arable crops and are considered minor in terms of production scale when compared to the overall agriculture production.

It is estimated that overall speciality crops represent a value of more than € 70 billion per year, which equates to 22% of the total EU plant production value. It is estimated that direct impacts on the agricultural sector (i.e. crop production loss and additional growing costs for farmers) account for more than €1 billion per year. Furthermore, most Member States consider the minor uses to be so important that already today structural money and manpower amounting to approximately €8 million are spent to address the issue. The sustainable production of speciality crops is important for food security, food safety, biodiversity and human mental wellbeing – particularly as regards ornamentals– in Europe.

Minor uses of plant protection products are usually of low economic interest for the crop protection industry due to their small-scale use. This leads to a lack of authorised products on the market for farmers to use on these crops.

In the Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009, article 3, paragraph 26, ‘minor uses’ are defined as the use of a plant protection product on a crop which is not widely grown in a Member State or against pest problems which are not routinely encountered but may on occasions very damaging in major crops.

Different actors are involved in minor uses work: governments (representatives from Ministries and competent authorities), policy-makers, growers’ organizations, national minor uses experts, industry (conventional and biological), research centres, advisory services, European and international partners.

Growers play a key role in sustainable crop production but face increasing difficulties in having solutions available for speciality crops.

As the ultimate goal of minor uses work is to find solutions for the growers their expectations, and how growers can be more engaged in minor uses work was discussed at the Workshop on “Minor Uses and Speciality Crops: The way forward in Europe” that was held from 18th to 20th February 2020 in Paris. Other topics of discussion at the Workshop were how to come to a harmonized status of a crop in the EU and how to define the future organisation of the minor uses’ work in Europe.

This Roadmap contains a list of concrete actions regarding the future organisation for minor uses work, and the role therein of the EU Minor Uses Coordination Facility, European Commission, Member States and other stakeholders. This Roadmap takes into account the outcome of the discussions at the Workshop resulting in four platforms of future work.

PLATFORM 1

Obstacles in minor uses work

Different groups of stakeholders face different obstacles in their day-to-day work on minor uses.

For growers, one of the main obstacles is the lack of availability of solutions, e.g. plant protection products (PPPs) in combination with the uncertainty on the status of active substances and which PPPs will be available for the next growing season.

Complex procedures, national specific requirements and different interpretations of the regulatory framework lead to different decisions taken at Member State's level and thus creating an uneven level playing field for EU farmers.

In most Member States there is no authorisation possibility by Mutual Recognition of a minor crop if the PPP is not already authorised in that Member State, generally on a major crop. The development and application of a 'one zone concept' would be helpful for minor uses not just for the evaluation of the active substances, but also for the authorisation of plant protection products.

Different definitions of 'minor/major' are used in different regulatory structures. However, that leaves it up to the individual Member States to define what is considered a 'minor use/crop' in their respective national territory. This is considered a problem for further harmonisation, as it hampers the zonal procedure and mutual recognition. Setting a uniform status for a crop at EU or zonal level would greatly facilitate the authorisation of plant protection products for minor uses.

Actions:

- The term 'speciality crops' rather than minor crops should preferably be used as this better reflects the status/value of these crops.
- All relevant stakeholders should better implement the zonal system and more specific the mutual recognition of minor uses' authorisations between the Member States.
- Governments and regulatory authorities should limit the requests for national specific requirements and clarify and ease the risk envelop approach for minor uses. Furthermore, they should put more trust in each other's evaluations.
- Growers, with input from crop protection industry and regulators, should carry out forecast studies on the availability of active substances and PPPs.
- The MUCF should assist growers and farmers' organizations to find their way through complex regulatory procedures (e.g. by providing guidance and the preparation of a Q&A).
- The MUCF, together with the European Commission, should explore the possibility to link the work on minor uses to other policy initiatives (e.g. Green Deal, Farm-to-Fork Strategy, Horizon Europe) to facilitate the mid- and long-term funding of the MUCF.
- The MUCF should prepare a discussion paper, followed by a pilot project, on setting a harmonised status of a crop and the creation of a single EU or zonal list of major crops.
- The MUCF should prepare a discussion paper, followed by a pilot project, to explore the possibilities of a 'Pan-European authorisation' for minor uses products based on a 'one-zone concept' for minor uses.

PLATFORM 2

IPM research and implementation

‘Integrated Pest Management’ (IPM) means careful consideration of all available plant protection methods and subsequent integration of appropriate measures that discourage the development of populations of harmful organisms and keep the use of plant protection products and other forms of intervention to levels that are economically and ecologically justified and reduce or minimise risks to human health and the environment.

IPM emphasises the growth of a healthy crop with the least possible disruption to agro-ecosystems and encourages natural pest control mechanisms. IPM is a complex of measures that need more resources, communication and training, including a change of mindset compared to ‘traditional agriculture’.

The barriers that prevent the adoption of IPM tools and technologies are the limited number of tools and lack of information and knowledge to help growers implement IPM. IPM is often seen as complex and, generally, growers see access to chemicals as the solution to minor use problems. The use of IPM practices represents an economic risk for growers which is not always balanced by a corresponding increased market price. Other gaps include a lack of flexibility in legislative frameworks and regulatory processes to facilitate the registration of biological control agents and IPM-compatible PPPs.

Documents known as ‘IPM-profiles’ provide baseline information, for instance, per zone on crop production and IPM practices, and record the pest management needs and issues faced by growers could be useful tools to disseminate relevant information to growers.

A lot of research is ongoing on IPM, but minor uses and speciality crops are not always addressed sufficiently. Projects in EUMUDA are on individual plant protection products, which can be conventional or biological.

Actions:

- Research networks should specifically incorporate minor use needs as part of IPM research, development and implementation initiatives and programmes.
- Advisers should make farmers aware of the possibility of claiming CAP-payments in particular for the sustainable and reduced use of pesticides by applying the relevant general principles of IPM.
- Advisory services should develop useful tools (e.g. ‘IPM-profiles’) to disseminate relevant information to growers.
- The MUCF should develop a model for ‘IPM-profiles’ and provide this on its website to ensure harmonisation of these ‘IPM Profiles’.
- The MUCF should incorporate in future projects in EUMUDA other types of solutions than conventional or biological that may be useful for building blocks in IPM strategies.
- The MUCF should create an IPM research platform (e.g. a centralised website) that gathers information on activities and results of IPM research programmes.
- The MUCF should, together with Copa-Cogeca, organise a workshop with several research networks (instead of every research network having its workshop) to increase the value of these research programmes.

PLATFORM 3

Communication and awareness-raising

Awareness should be raised on the importance of speciality crops, minor uses, minor uses' work and the work of the EU Minor Uses Coordination Facility (MUCF). The effort should be increased to communicate what we do, why we do it, and the public benefits of the minor uses work.

This applies to all stakeholders that are involved in minor uses work: governments (representatives from Ministries and competent authorities), EU policy-makers, growers' organisations, national minor uses experts, industry (conventional and biological), research centres, advisory services, and international partners.

Advisors and advisory services play a key role in the communication between research and growers. To achieve sustainable funding for the work of the MUCF good communication on the benefits of the work of the MUCF for consumers and other stakeholders is a prerequisite.

Actions:

- The MUCF should enhance communication on the minor uses work by placing on its website a Guidance Document on Minor Uses, a Q&A document to address frequently asked questions, and links to relevant partners.
- The MUCF should improve the communication on the benefits of the work of the MUCF for governments and other stakeholders.
- The MUCF should display realized solutions in EUMUDA to make the results of the MUCF work more visible.
- The MUCF should set up a centralized website, covering research programmes in Europe, to improve the communication between growers, advisors and researchers on future minor uses needs and available knowledge.
- Advisors are the link between growers and research, and they can contribute to the early adoption of safe, innovative and effective solutions by farmers by arranging visits for growers to demonstration farms and pilot farms.
- Industry (conventional and biological) should proactively communicate, especially to growers, on the status of active substances and the availability of plant protection products to enhance for growers the predictability on the availability of PPPs.
- DG SANTE should be requested to put a link to the MUCF on its website.

PLATFORM 4

The future organisation of minor uses' work in Europe

There are eight Commodity Expert Groups (CEGs) operated by the MUCF: Fruits and Vegetables, Herbs, Hops, Mushrooms, Ornamentals, Rice, Seeds, Tobacco. Some CEGs are dealing with just one commodity whereas other CEGs are dealing with a group of commodities. The Horizontal Expert Group discusses general issues related to minor uses, aiming at harmonised procedures and at creating a level playing field among the Member States.

Many of the projects conducted in the framework of the Commodity Expert Groups are led by Central and Northern zone countries and France for the Southern zone.

The current operational structure works well. MUCF has a 'lighter' role in CEGs and focuses on horizontal and coordinating issues. Face-to-face meetings of CEGs and HEG are organised once a year all back-to-back. Other meetings can be more targeted project meetings (remotely, video- or teleconferencing). However, the MUCF should expand its activities as listed below and in the 'actions' of other platforms.

Actions:

- The MUCF, member countries and stakeholders should find a way to safeguard multi-annual funding of the MUCF, in order to create continuity and make more efficient use of the resources of the MUCF.
- The MUCF should have a more steering role in the preparation of the agendas and work plans of CEGs, e.g. by providing templates.
- The CEGs and HEG should prepare their agendas well in advance of the meetings so that potential participants can judge in advance the usefulness of the meeting for them.
- The CEGs should stimulate the participation of countries and project leaders, particularly from the Southern zone.
- The MUCF should become (more) involved in projects for data generation.
- The MUCF, together with Copa-Cogeca, should arrange for more growers to be represented in CEG-meetings.
- The MUCF should continue to organise plenary sessions for all CEGs and the HEG to discuss topics of common interest.
- The MUCF should prepare a discussion paper on organising Priority Setting Meetings (like IR4 in the USA and PMC in Canada) where the industry comes in and present what is in the pipeline and what active substances could be worked on.