



EUROPEAN UNION MINOR USES COORDINATION FACILITY

First Stakeholder Advisory Forum 25 January 2017, Brussels

The first Annual Stakeholder Forum of the European Union Minor Uses Coordination Facility (MUCF) took place on 25 January 2017, in Brussels. A total of 48 participants, representing governments of Member States, the EU Commission, growers, agri-food chain and industry associations, attended the event.

The MUCF, hosted by the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization (EPPO), was established in April 2015 and became fully staffed in November 2016. The first year was used to lay the foundations of MUCF. **Already excellent progress was achieved by the MUCF**, in areas such as communication with stakeholders, and organization of the work with Commodity Expert Groups (CEGs) and the Horizontal Expert Group (HEG). An improved minor uses database (EUMUDA) is under development. The new EUMUDA will be a central tool for minor uses in the EU, and its launch announced for March 2017. **The stakeholders welcomed the establishment of the MUCF and were satisfied** with the progress made to date.

The MUCF has **significant ambition to solve minor uses issues**, such as aiming to support a 'level playing field' for growers, focusing on non-chemical solutions, deconstructing regulatory hurdles, and guaranteeing continuity of the MUCF through a long-term funding.

The MUCF was originally funded by the European Commission and three Member States (France, Germany and the Netherlands). Funding is currently guaranteed for the first three years. The challenge is to ensure continuity of the MUCF. As a long-term funding strategy, the MUCF presented the option of **voluntary assessed annual contributions** where the funding by MS is proportional to the size of their population. The MUCF is planning to contact individual MSs for contributions. As an alternative strategy, it was proposed to **use the existing EU funding system** with an additional budget line for minor uses. The issue identified was not the amount itself, but the **political decision to acknowledge minor uses as a priority**. The next step will be to **discuss the strategy further in the Minor Uses Steering Group**. The Forum raised the issue that **minor uses go beyond plant protection**, and that in addition to DG Sante **other DGs could be involved** in the funding (such as DG Agri, Research, Growth).

The **benefits of the MUCF work needs to be clearly demonstrated** to all MSs, including the three original funders. It was acknowledged that **minor uses are important** for the sustainability of crop production, food security, human health and the environment. **All Member States are concerned by minor uses issues**.

The MUCF will **benefit from the outputs of C-IPM Eranet e.g. with the table of needs**. As the **funding of C-IPM Eranet expired** in December 2016 it is important to **make sure that research on IPM can continue**. It was suggested to create a **platform under the MUCF** to follow up and share information and benefit from ongoing and future IPM research.

The term '**speciality**' crops was found to be preferable to '**minor**' crops to reflect the importance of these crops more appropriately. A **unique definition of minor uses and a unique list of minor uses and speciality crops** would be welcomed by the growers' association Copa-Cogeca.

It was also suggested to promote **Pan-European authorisations** of plant protection products for minor uses and to consider **minor uses as part of the Refit** of Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009. It was stressed that the establishment of a European fund for Minor Uses, zonal and mutual recognition systems are in the legislation and should be respected.

To achieve its mission, **the MUCF work should be focused on coordination** rather than financing.

Industry (ECPA) expects the MUCF to be a **forum for stakeholder discussion**, to leverage **best practices from global programmes**, to encourage the use of **extrapolations and crop groupings** as well as to advocate more **standardisation** across EU 28 Member States. It should also be considered to **reduce the need for efficacy data**, where justified.

The biocontrol industry (IBMA) pointed out that **biological solutions should be first considered** by the experts among possible solutions, and be used by farmers. IBMA expects from the MUCF **evidence of deconstruction of (regulatory) hurdles**. A preferable option would be to allocate the MUCF with **additional and specific funding for projects**. IBMA could fund some specific projects.

Overall the forum stakeholders were **very positive about the work achieved by the MUCF**, and agreed that **this newly established structure should continue**. **Strong engagement and commitment** from MSs governments and EU Commission are expected. **Ambitious plans** are needed to solve minor uses issues!