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THE EUROPEAN SUGAR-BEET SECTOR ASKS THE COMMISSION TO BE CONSISTENT AND TO RESPECT ITS COMMITMENTS

On the one hand the European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development said recently that she was: "pleased to say that the sugar reform has been a success". But on the other hand the European Commissioner ignored the enormous effort made by the European Community and by the European sugar-beet sector in economic, human, and financial terms, as well as the real conditions for a success of this reform.

The renunciation of 5.8 million tonnes of quota led to the closure of 80 factories, the loss of 25,000 direct jobs in rural areas, the end of sugar-beet cultivation for a total of around 140,000 farmers in all European producing countries, and a decrease in sugar beet area by 700 000 ha. Moreover, from a position of being the second largest net world sugar exporter, since 2007, the European Union has become the second largest net world sugar importer.

But the Commission is currently putting this effort in danger by being inconsistent in its management of the Common Market Organisation for Sugar, and by not respecting the spirit and the commitments of the reform. Therefore CIBE and CEFS ask the Commission:

- To strongly safeguard the European sugar outlets by using export refunds, in particular for non Annex 1 products. There is more than enough money available for this purpose: the sector pays 12 €/t sugar per year, which is levied for the European Budget.
- To take account of the fact that the European sugar market should not systematically have to resort to more imports and that the European sugar-beet sector is capable to increase its production if necessary; consecutively to be extremely cautious in the management of imports.
- Therefore to reject any additional opening up of the market and new trade concessions which will call into question the success of the reform, i.e. no more additional TRQs (import quota) should be conceded, in particular at WTO or to any trade partner (for example Central America, India, Ukraine, Asia).
- To make sure that the imports of sugar from ACP and non-LDC countries do not exceed the fixed thresholds and guarantee an efficient control of import quantities so as not to exceed the import concessions already foreseen in the reform.
- To re-consider its position as regards the financing and the use of the Sugar Restructuring Funds; it is sending a very wrong signal if the Commission deliberately ignores, as it intends to do, the current difficult economic context and the significant financial amount paid by the sector to achieve this reform.

These are the conditions to be respected for the pursuit of a long-term sustainable and competitive EU sugar sector aimed for by the Commission and for the real and complete success of the sugar reform.