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Press Release

Revision of the Industrial Emissions Directive – Livestock family farming will pay a high price

The European Commission published yesterday a revision of its 2010 Directive on Industrial Emissions. While only the largest EU livestock installations were considered under its scope over the past decade, the revision proposed to multiple by almost 10 the number of cattle, pig and poultry farms targeting family farms and categorising them as "agro-industrial installations". As it stands, this revision would force thousands of family livestock farms to comply with a costly emission protocol designed primarily for large companies. Only a few days after the institutions' communications on the EU's need for food strategic autonomy, this accounting, ideological and disconnected from the farm reality approach is felt as a blow across Europe by livestock farmers.

As part of the revision of its Industrial Emissions Directive (IED), the European Commission has decided to extend the scope of its proposal to cattle farms and to lower the thresholds for the pig and poultry sector already covered since 2010. In concrete terms, the Commission plans to include rearing pig, poultry, and cattle over 150 "livestock units". Behind this accounting jargon lies a very simple reality: many family farms will fall under the scope of this directive and are de facto classified by the Commission as "agro-industrial installations". According to the Commission, this would represent only "13% of the EU's largest livestock farms overall". This is a smart but misleading way of putting it. Here is another way to see the proposed threshold of "150 livestock units", in Germany and Finland more than 90% of the broilers production will be considered "agro-industrial installations" while the same share of the French pig, beef and dairy production will also be considered "agro-industrial installations".

This arbitrary threshold is shocking and shows a profound disconnection with farm realities on the ground. Taking such a numerical approach was the most simplistic way to address the question. Despite the Commission's impact assessment, the set threshold is a political arbitration that is an unbalanced and partial approach to sustainability. If the aim is to set deliberately low levels in view of the inter-institutional negotiations, does the Commission realise the catastrophic message sent to tens of thousands of farmers who struggle daily for the viability of their farms and the improvement of their practices?

Reacting to the publication, Christiane Lambert, Copa President declared, "*Despite the different crises that are piling up, livestock farmers are making significant efforts to evolve their practices and to best combine productivity and respect for the environment. The fact that the European Commission speaks today of "agro-industrial installations" to describe family farms shows that there is total confusion on what the reality of livestock farming is. Lowering the threshold so dramatically will severely hit the European model of family farming with additional costs and bottlenecks*".

The experience with the Industrial Emission Directive since it entered into force in 2010 has shown that its implementation is very costly and administratively burdensome. Extending it to most livestock farms would have unbearable consequences for the sector, rural areas and families of farmers.

Ramon Armengol, Cogeca President stated, *“How would livestock family farmers cope with the avalanche of requirements that the Commission is pushing for under the EU Green Deal (still with no global impact assessment)? How will this be done when none of our international trading partners are implementing such drastic measures and EU retailers are likely to refuse to transfer these costs? The Commission's answer to all these questions in the proposed revision is simple: none.”*

Copa and Cogeca are also concerned about the Commission's intention to regulate the scope and the thresholds of the covered sectors in the future by means of delegated acts, making the situation even more opaque and unpredictable.

Finally, this proposal raises questions about the overall coherence of the European Commission's approach when it comes to EU livestock. Whilst saying that livestock has a crucial role to play in developing a resilient and independent EU energy sector (REPowerEU action plan), this proposal is likely to affect both existing livestock farms and upcoming projects.

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Translation in DE, ES, FR, IT, PL, and RO will soon be available on the Copa-Cogeca website.

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