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**Press Release**

## **THE EUROPEAN LIVESTOCK AND MEAT TRADES UNION (UECBV) HELD ITS AGM IN BRUSSELS ON 6<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2018**

**The UECBV shows no fear of tackling all today's challenges the sector faces**

**Brussels (Tuesday 11 December 2018).** On 6<sup>th</sup> December 2018, the European Livestock and Meat Trades Union (UECBV) held its annual general meeting (AGM) at the Residence Palace in Brussels. Under the theme: *"Think globally but act locally"*, the political and economic challenges of the European meat industry were tackled. The sector is boldly facing today's trends and evolutions in international trade, sustainability and crisis management, such as the African swine fever (ASF).

The day started with two political sessions and a speech by EU trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström, underlining the importance of trade agreements and asking for trust and confidence. Commissioner Malmström advocated for multilateralism and supported a World Trade Organization (WTO) reform by also taking into account the United Nations climate change commitment. Her speech was followed by the one of Patrick Van Gheel, Director of EU Trade Policy and WTO with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Belgium, who stated that opening markets was of paramount importance to the EU, in particular for Belgium, a relatively small country with a tremendous agro-food export philosophy.

During the second session, the attendees got a unique insight of the Japanese market by Hiromichi Matsushima, Japanese Vice-Minister for Agriculture, who pointed at the EPA adoption procedure that became effective the week before. The debate was further animated by Marc Tarabella, MEP, giving counterarguments for overreaching trade liberalisation, whilst Guillaume Van Binst from the Cabinet of the Belgian Minister of Agriculture Denis Ducarme stressed the key role that food safety plays in the opening of new markets. It became obvious that international trade has its clear advantages, but there is a need for pragmatic action as there are no two Free Trade Agreements alike. Finding lasting partnerships with complementary strengths benefits all parties involved. Finally, Margaret Boanas, UECBV Vice-President and Chairwoman of the International Meat Trade Association (IMTA, UK), underlined the importance of truly putting the Free Trade Agreements into practice. She also emphasised that international agreements are both challenges and opportunities for the meat industry. Trade means exporters and importers, and it is essential to think of it in these two ways.

As the morning sessions focused on trade policy and EU trade, the afternoon was dedicated to sustainability and crisis management. Professor Rollin (University of Liège) provided a clear and holistic picture of the significant role of livestock in the society and the ecosystems, underlining the differences between intensive and extensive farming systems in the framework of a sustainable future. The panel was completed by representatives of Sealed Air, the world leader in packaging solutions for the food industry. Jabier Ruiz (WWF) opened a debate about the carbon neutrality strategy and the societal efforts that the livestock value chain should pursue in the next 20 years. Finally, Todor Ivanov (EuroCoop) shared the EU consumer cooperatives' point of view about the perceptions on food quality, local food, transparency and vegetarian trends.

One of the main conclusions of these sessions is that regional and global stakes are compatible and even complementary. One does not exclude the other!

For the final session, the highly relevant topic of crisis management, with the ASF situation in Belgium as a case study, was discussed and, more especially, the consequences of ASF for the European pork exports, from different standpoints. Leslie Lambregts from the Belgian Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain (FASFC) shared the tactics that has been used in Belgium. Philippe Van Damme, president of the Belgian meat federation (FEBEV) and a meat industrialist, told the audience what the impact of ASF was on the national industry. Lastly, Derk Oorburg (Vion, Netherlands) explained the importance of preparedness for ASF both in at-risk countries and in companies. The panellists agreed that ASF was not a public-health crisis, but a geo-political trade crisis, and unity and cooperation between Member States and the EU Commission were fundamental to be able to provide trust to trade partners and minimise the trade impact of ASF, e.g. the acceptance of EU regionalisation. At every level, strong cooperation and preparedness are absolute necessities.



**About UECBV:**

*The European Livestock and Meat Trades Union (UECBV) is the EU voice of national federations representing livestock markets, livestock traders (cattle, horses, sheep, pigs), meat traders (beef, horse meat, sheep meat, pig meat), and the meat industry (slaughterhouses, cutting plants, meat preparation plants).*

*UECBV counts 53 national or regional federations in 24 out of the 28 Member States of the European Union, but also in Japan, Norway, Russia, Switzerland, Turkey and Ukraine. In total, some 20,000 firms of all sizes and over 230,000 jobs are represented within the UECBV and its national and international federations.*

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