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*Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development  
The Chair*

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17.7.2023

Ms Anna Cavazzini

Chair

Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection

BRUSSELS

Subject: Opinion on the Commission proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) 2019/1009 as regards the digital labelling of EU fertilising products (COM(2023)0098 – C9-0030/2023 – 2023/0049(COD))

Dear Madam Chair,

The Committee on Agriculture and Rural development has been authorised to draw up an opinion to your committee, under Rule 56, on the Commission proposal for a Regulation amending Regulation (EU) 2019/1009 as regards the digital labelling of EU fertilising products (COM(2023)0098 - 2023/0049(COD)).

The AGRI committee has decided to submit its opinion in the form of a letter and nominated its Member Dan-Ștefan Motreanu as rapporteur. His draft opinion was discussed and agreed with the AGRI Shadow rapporteurs, and was put to the vote and adopted during the AGRI committee meeting of 30. I was tasked to forward this opinion to you with the present letter.

The rapporteur wishes to highlight the points below:

Fertilising products are indispensable for food security, for safeguarding the income of farmers and for ensuring the agricultural productivity objective of our CAP, enshrined in TFEU (Article 39). Information relating to the use, safety and agronomic efficiency of fertilising products is vital for reaching these targets. While Regulation (EU) 2019/1009 substantially modified labelling requirements for fertilising products, it lead, in certain situations, to labels that are costly to produce and overloaded with non-essential information.

The AGRI Committee welcomes the Commission's proposal to establish voluntary digital labelling requirements when placing on the market fertilising products to economic operators or end-users (Article 11a) and calls on the IMCO committee to maintain these provisions together with the definition for packaging (Article 2). The possibility of having a digital label contributes to the digital and green transformation in Europe, reduces packaging waste and could lead to a reduction in fertiliser prices, which would benefit farmers.

The AGRI committee calls on the IMCO committee to keep the reference to “end-users” as proposed by the Commission. Introducing a distinction between professional and non-professional end-user categories to extend the scope of digital labelling would be counterproductive as:

- farmers tend to belong to more advanced age groups<sup>1</sup>, with lower digital skills <sup>2,3</sup>.
- rural areas, and in particular remote and less developed rural regions, can experience significant digital connectivity challenges.
- farmers may face fluctuating signal in the field/on the farm, power outage, discharged battery, equipment malfunctioning or other technical difficulties.

By maintaining the provisions laid out in Article 11a together with the derogations referenced in Annex III of the proposal, it will be ensured that farmers will have access to the basic information of the purchased products anywhere and at any time.

The AGRI committee welcomes the requirements proposed for digital labels (Article 11b), but considers that these can be improved by ensuring that the digital information shall be easily and freely accessible to users in the Union through widely used digital technologies compatible with all major operating systems and browsers, as well as by ensuring that access to the label does not require any password, registration, nor any specific application and taking into account the needs of vulnerable groups.

Additionally, paragraph 3, point e) should be amended to set the availability of the digital label at minimum of 5 years from the moment the EU fertilising product is placed on the market, but preferably, until the expiry date of that product.

In order to ensure the optimised use of fertilising products, the AGRI committee advocates for the introduction of provisions concerning voluntary additional recommendations via the digital labels, providing advice for different crops, examples of best practices to prevent nutrient loss, or stressing the opportunities of digital solutions such as FaST<sup>4</sup> for soil mapping.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?oldid=431368>

<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20230320-2#:~:text=In%202021%2C%20more%20than%20three,a%20lower%20share%20\(71%25\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20230320-2#:~:text=In%202021%2C%20more%20than%20three,a%20lower%20share%20(71%25))

<sup>3</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Being\\_young\\_in\\_Europe\\_today\\_-\\_digital\\_world&oldid=566905#Digital\\_skills](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Being_young_in_Europe_today_-_digital_world&oldid=566905#Digital_skills)

<sup>4</sup> <https://fastplatform.eu/>

The AGRI committee would be grateful if the IMCO committee could take into account the above considerations in view of the adoption of its report on the Commission proposal in question.

Yours sincerely,

Norbert Lins