



“Working Together to Make Trade Work”

NAEGA MAP Trip Report – COCERAL Transition Meetings - Brussels, Belgium 21-22 February, 2018

Names of Travelers:

Katy Lee, Secretariat, International Grain Trade Coalition (IGTC)

Dates of Travel:

February 21-22, 2018

Purpose of Travel:

Consistent with advancing NAEGA UES objectives Katy Lee, Secretariat of the IGTC, travelled to Brussels, Belgium on February 21-22, 2018. In Brussels, Ms. Lee met with COCERAL’s new Secretary General Iliana Axiotiandes and Head of Regulatory Affairs Kevin Bosc. At these meetings, Ms. Lee will transition the new COCERAL leadership following the departure of IGTC vice-president and COCERAL secretary general Teresa Babuscio. COCERAL is a key member association of the IGTC and currently holds a position on the Management Council. During a full day of meetings, Ms. Lee and COCERAL discussed IGTC policy positions on plant breeding innovation, maximum residue limits (MRLs) and electronic documentation; the leadership role of The Netherlands in the *International Plant Protection Convention’s (IPPC)* ePhyto pilot project; and the support of the EU Commission in identifying regulatory frameworks to support implementation of the ePhyto initiative. COCERAL’s leadership of the Policy Teams and position on the IGTC Management Council was also reviewed.

Summary of accomplishments:

Ms. Lee was present for the transition of the new COCERAL leadership following the departure of IGTC Vice President and COCERAL Secretary General Teresa Babuscio as Iliana Axiotiades took the helm of the organization. COCERAL is a unique member association of the IGTC, providing crucial experiences and expertise from the point of view of the European cereals, oilseeds, oils, fats and agro-supply sectors. The COCERAL leadership remains supportive of the IGTC’s efforts to become a stand-alone entity in 2018 and one fully supported by its member associations.

Regarding specific policy matters, the following items were discussed:

- **Plant breeding innovation**

COCERAL will continue to provide the leadership of the IGTC’s Policy Team on plant breeding innovation. The immediate key challenge in 2018 is to engage in effective and constructive dialogue with the plant breeding community. In particular, ways forward must be found with the seed industry on the provision of accurate and timely information about the specific innovative plant breeding techniques being developed for commercial use in food and feed crops. Whilst it is important for a modern value chain to foster sustainable innovation, it is also important to work on mechanisms for notification and ongoing consultation with the supply chain in order to manage new innovations.



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- Maximum residue limits (MRLs)
The IGTC survey on the trade impacts of MRL official practices is currently being written up and the IGTC Secretariat was able to have a fruitful conversation about how to use these results to support the IGTC mission, objectives and MRL policy paper. COCERAL was thanked for having helped to circulate the MRL survey among grain trade practitioners from November 2017 to February 2018.
- Electronic trading documentation
The European Commission is in a pivotal position to support the transition from paper to electronic phytosanitary certificates and is working with the government of The Netherlands, the only EU Member State to be involved in the pilot project at present. COCERAL is a member of the IGTC’s Working Group on electronic trading documentation and is also working with external IGTC partners across agri-food value chains to hear their experiences of how digitization is being implemented.
- Implementation of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC)
Over the past number of years, IGTC has collectively called for a common-sense approach in the drafting of a new International Standard for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPM) on the movement of grain. Example issues that the IGTC has worked on include: foreign material; “pests” versus “quarantine pests”; and the push from some governments to widen the scope of the phytosanitary standard to include contractual or quality-related issues. An example IGTC advocacy template letter from 2017 is here. COCERAL has been instrumental in this effort, both in the sharing of expertise and experiences from a European perspective, and in the outreach that it has conducted with European governments in this regard. As a result of the IGTC’s coordinated efforts, the ISPM for grain has been (temporarily) put on hold in the first half of 2018, and IPPC governments have been asked to consider what is the real need or purpose of an international “commodity standard”. Grain-specific concerns are cited consistently in the IPPC’s preparatory documents for the upcoming annual “Commission on Phytosanitary Measures” (CPM) meeting that will take place from April 16-20 in Rome. The key document is attached: “Conceptual challenges in commodity standard development”.

Recommendations:

- IGTC Secretariat should continue to develop the geographical diversity of IGTC representation, concentrating not only on European grain trade stakeholders but also those from around the world, particularly underrepresented regions such as Asia and Africa.
- IGTC Secretariat should notify Management Council of the availability for its European member association to provide for leadership via the Vice President role. Management Council consultations should take place throughout the month of March 2018 and finish no later than April 15th.



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- IGTC Secretariat should ensure a smooth transition of the new COCERAL leadership of the plant breeding innovation Policy Team. This includes provision of adequate briefing material for the Team Lead.
- NAEGA should continue to identify areas of mutual beneficial cooperation with COCERAL as it works to reduce trade frictions and enhance the contribution of the grain trade to global food security and economic development.
- IGTC should work towards the next milestone in the process on the IPPC’s ISPM for grain – the “Commission on Phytosanitary Measures” (CPM) in Rome from April 16-20. IGTC should understand from its member associations and Corporate Stakeholders what is the likely approach of governments at this meeting.

Attachments:

- *COCERAL press release: “Iliana AXIOTIADES announced as new COCERAL Secretary General”*