

Discussion paper on the way forward for the Collaboration Platform on Agriculture

This is a discussion paper on the Collaboration Platform on Agriculture (CPA) for the EU stakeholders and DG AGRI. It presents (and does not endorse) the outcomes of the survey administered by DG AGRI G.2. unit to all stakeholders that have been invited to the CPA events. The survey results and the guiding questions for the discussion at the end of the paper should serve as a launching pad for a brainstorming session on the future of the CPA.

CPA stakeholders survey results summary

The survey among the EU stakeholders provides important insights into their perception of the CPA's value and its effectiveness in promoting a better transatlantic cooperation in agriculture. It also gives a good overview of the suggestions for the future. The real value-added of the CPA that arises from the survey results can be best summarised in the words of one the respondents: "A couple of years ago we very discussing trade barriers; today we are talking about the green transition, how can we work together and help each other."

Twenty-five key EU stakeholders have participated, with two thirds coming from trade and business associations (among them more than half from the agricultural sector), followed by academia and NGO representatives. On the four-point scale from "very useful," "somewhat useful," "little useful" to "not useful", over ninety percent of respondents have rated the exchanges as "very useful" (over seventy percent of all respondents) or "somewhat useful" (over twenty percent of all respondents). Nobody sees the CPA as not useful at all. Over eighty percent of participants have found the CPA particularly useful for identifying opportunities for collaboration. In terms of formats, three quarters of participants ranked in-person exchanges with government officials and sector representatives as most effective, with an overwhelming preference for those leading to tangible results such as joint research work or common guidelines/best practice catalogues.

Overall, the participants agree that the CPA is of strategic importance (a "perfect forum") for the EU-US agricultural relations and should be continued. They believe that the CPA has facilitated a direct exchange of critical knowledge, policy approaches, best practices, challenges, and opportunities with the US policymakers as well as farmers in the areas under discussion. The CPA has also substantially contributed to deepening and strengthening the network of connections among EU and US colleagues on the technical level. Stakeholders also see the CPA as "a clear reference point" to improve coordination and alignment of respective EU and US initiatives in relevant sectors.

Many participants have appreciated the openness of the dialogues to controversial subjects where visions often diverge. They thus deem the CPA dialogues very useful in creating a better understanding of farming context/conditions, opportunities, and mutual interests. This, in their opinion, should lead to better engagement, reduced misunderstandings and possibilities of finding a common ground. For some the discussions have resulted in ideas to be presented to the EU authorities. Additionally, survey participants saw the CPA as an important practical tool for

defining common future projects, practical tools, sectoral guidelines, and sustainable production principles.

Trade organisations pointed to the importance of the CPA for fostering good communication between governmental authorities to help alleviate trade tensions and find solutions. One stakeholder has underscored how necessary and useful the CPA has been in rebuilding bilateral trust and dialogue after the sequence of trade retaliatory measures hitting EU and US agricultural products with additional tariffs.

Academic participants have pointed out value in having students and professors exchange during meetings, in receiving information about collaboration possibilities, including academic exchanges, and common research projects.

Suggestions for the future

Going forward, almost all participants would like to see the CPA continue to develop a more robust, long-term transatlantic dialogue on resilient and sustainable agricultural production and agri-food chain, which indirectly can enhance sustainable EU-US agri-food chain trade opportunities. The survey respondents believe that the CPA will be needed regardless of potential electoral changes on both sides of the Atlantic given the CPA's record of solidified competence at promoting partnerships and dialogue on the technical and the regulatory levels. Echoing that sentiment, some participants see most value added in specific thematic discussions rather than in general more political ones, but some would like to see events with a more general and wider topical scope.

There is a lot of support for more concrete outcomes linked to common standards development in sustainable agriculture, including better data and metrics. Some underlined the importance of AI in agriculture. Importantly, while acknowledging the specificity of the CPA in not tackling purely trade-specific topics, some respondents would see value in trade-related exchanges linked to market trends and not to market access concerns. An individual farmer participant would like to be better updated on and see the discussion of upcoming regulations that will affect the farming sector.

The survey results reflect the need for the CPA to continue to include a diverse range of participants, such as policymakers, local authorities, farm advisors, farmers (and their representatives), researchers, industry leaders, and civil society representatives from both the EU and US. Some also see value in including member state representatives and in better representing NGO perspectives (consumers side, public health, environment, etc). Others would like to welcome EU and US private sector and agri-food companies as the benefits of strengthening links with counterparts on the other side of the Atlantic should apply to everyone. Finally, some called for including "high level" participants.

While largely supporting the current CPA set-up, many respondents would like to see better promotion, communication, dissemination, feedback and follow up efforts including a "roadmap

of future collaboration and longer-term goals.” Especially, with regards to the large in-person stakeholder events there is an appetite for better operationalisation of the outcomes to improve planning the next steps and setting objectives for future engagements. Some respondents go as far as suggesting that the EU and the US should be able to use the CPA to better align together in public and multilateral fora in support of global food security, environmental sustainability, climate, and economic prosperity. In practice, they believe the goal should be also to mutually prevent imposition of new tariffs on agricultural products, influence legislation, and ideally work towards developing similar production standards. Some respondents have called for developing case studies and creating working groups to discuss and potentially develop guidelines per topic together with sector specific conclusions. Some other ideas refer to sharing of scientific data and research together with contributing to potential joint declarations to help refute false messages in the media regarding the agriculture sector on both sides of the Atlantic.

As for concrete topics to be covered in the future, the participants proposed the following ideas to be properly evaluated following the discussions with the stakeholders, DG AGRI’s US counterparts, and internally in DG AGRI:

General and sustainability related (incl. organics):

- Future regulatory actions/approaches, policy developments;
- Sustainable farming habits; biocontrol strategies and carbon management as these topics are crucial for advancing sustainable agriculture and addressing climate change impacts collaboratively between the EU and US; how to support the green transition;
- Exploration of respective joint US/EU framework approaches on sustainable and resilient feed and livestock production by cooperating on common definitions and metrics & practical sectoral tools to help decarbonize livestock production systems;
- Soil related topics;
- Achieving taking up of environmental measures to reduce emissions among farmers;
- Definitions of sustainability that are adapted to each crop and to the different production systems;
- Promotion of organics, both in the EU and the US with a view to deepen the transatlantic cooperation to promote organics worldwide, as a way to take on the global challenge of sustainable food and climate change;
- Landscape sustainability and environmental ethics.

Trade/GIs related:

- Trade not to be skipped; discussions to focus on general agricultural trade benefits, not focusing necessary on trade irritants; ideally market access issues at some point in the future;
- Agricultural standards and how they impact trade; to create a common understanding of differences and commonalities on the technical level to help form an overall view on sustainability standards in the context of facilitating trade;

- Subjects where divergences are visible, such as geographical indications, where the interpretation of the concept of geographical indication is very different between the USA and the EU;

Cross-cutting including technology, food systems and economic sustainability:

- Training and education at farm level, R&D, ICT/digitalisation, AI, innovation and adoption of new technologies in agriculture;
- Animal welfare, food policies, food environment;
- Financing agriculture; food supply chain relationships regarding price definition all along the food chain; risk management
- Food security and how to be resilient and increase our commons goals on a worldwide perspective;

Opening up the discussion

The results of the survey show that the CPA is considered a crucial policy tool for EU stakeholders that works well but also holds a real potential to develop beyond its current set-up. As one participant put it, the CPA “clearly contributed to create a new ‘culture’ of open transparent dialogue on key sustainability and resilience challenges and opportunities for EU-US agricultural production systems.” As the analysis of results clearly shows the participants would like the CPA to contribute to concrete political and policy initiatives and outcomes that should somehow be able to expand to trade concerns. A corollary to that is that some stakeholders would then like the CPA to go beyond its current administrative and technical format by moving closer to the more political EU’s Trade and Technology Council (TTC) or the US’ AimForClimate type of initiatives.

Given the above we would like you to answer as concretely as possible the following guiding questions for our discussion:

1. Do you believe that the CPA is an important initiative as it has been originally conceived?
2. What worked well in the CPA to date? What would you like to focus on, improve, change or get rid of?
3. What are your key concerns and interests that the CPA can or should be able to address in the future?
4. What topics suggested by the survey participants would you prioritise? More specifically, what concrete aspects of the current US and EU farm policy you would like the CPA to exchange on? Would you consider AI, training, education and extension, and insurance/risk management as important topics to cover?
5. What drivers of change for the future of agriculture e.g. environmental/climatic constraints, consumer choices, food security, you would see as most important to focus on?
6. Should the CPA go beyond its current administrative agreement format? Do you see any additional space for the US and the EU to go for in a mutually informing discussion?