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The Commission report on plant protein can create momentum to sustain further expansion of EU protein production

FEDIOL – representing the EU Vegetable Oil and Proteinmeal Industry – welcomes the report on the development of plant proteins in the EU, as it outlines concrete examples of positive developments in protein production in Europe and is meant to incentivise Member States in their attempts to enhance availability of EU-grown proteins.

FEDIOL member companies are committed to contribute to the development of EU protein supply chains by processing protein containing crops. In this context, FEDIOL stresses the inclusion of rapeseed, sunflower seed and soybean among the enlisted protein-rich plants. In particular, it welcomes the recognition of the fact that EU production of rapeseed has reached 20 million tonnes, mainly driven by the demand for biodiesel, with rapeseed meal being an important source of EU grown protein-rich feed. These fundamental volumes should not be put at risk by unaligned policy approaches, such as the implementation of the biofuel policy via the post-2020 Renewable Energy Directive.

The report should be used to trigger a positive momentum and FEDIOL agrees that, further to existing policy measures, the development will continue to be driven by growth in relative competitiveness of EU-grown protein crops versus other crops and non-EU plant proteins. This will require the availability of better performing varieties and better knowledge of specific agronomic practices. To that end, FEDIOL regrets the EU's decision under the Common Agricultural Policy not to allow the use of Plant Protection Products on Ecological Focus Areas, as these are necessary for adequate production growth.

Despite its declared ambition, the plan should not be used to mislead about Europe's ability to be self-sufficient. The EU can certainly grow more protein crops, but it should also be stated clearly that it is not realistic to consider that EU grown proteins will effectively replace imported protein. Hence, in the context of on-going discussions about reducing the impact of our sourcing on deforestation, the ongoing work on sustainability of imported protein crops should be recognised and continued.

FEDIOL, the EU vegetable oil and proteinmeal industry association, represents the interests of the European oilseed crushers, vegetable oil refiners and bottlers. FEDIOL members are 12 national associations and associated company members in 5 other EU countries. With about 180 facilities in Europe, the sector provides 20,000 direct employments. Its members process approximately 55 million tonnes of basic products a year, both of EU origin and imported from third country markets. The sector processes notably rapeseed, sunflower seed, soybeans and linseed into oils and meals for food, feed, technical and energy uses essentially on the European market.