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PRESS STATEMENT ON THE CJEU RULING ON THE EMERGENCY USE OF BANNED NEONIC INSECTICIDES

CEFS, the European Association of Sugar Manufacturers, CIBE, the International Confederation of European Beet Growers, and COPA-COGECA take note of yesterday's decision of the Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU). This ruling interprets Article 53 of the European Regulation on placing of plant protection products on the market in a very restrictive manner, prohibiting the use of seeds coated with banned pesticides – even through the use of national derogations and in emergencies.

Quick and effective solutions are needed for beet growers to avoid risking substantial losses of yield caused by outbreaks of serious pests (such as beet weevils and/or beet flea beetles) and/or aphids spreading a serious plant disease called virus yellows. Virus yellows represents a serious threat to the European beet sugar sector. For example, in 2020 French beet growers reported a decline of 30% in yield on national level caused by virus yellows and lack of access to neonicotinoids.

Sugar beet research institutes and stakeholders from the sector are working intensively to find solutions but more time is needed and no effective alternatives are available yet. These alternatives are crucial to uphold the sustainability of a sector that contributes to European food security and sovereignty, which is under increasing pressure.

CIBE Director Elisabeth Lacoste stated: *"This incomprehensible decision marks a divorce between legal interpretation and the agronomic reality facing growers. It pushes many of them in an unprecedented situation a few weeks before the start of the sugar beet sowing season and leads to an extreme uncertainty and chaotic situation. There is therefore an urgent need to get out of this deadlock".*

CEFS Director General Marie-Christine Ribera said: *"Sugar beets are the only way to produce sugar in continental Europe. If farmers can't grow them, sugar production will be unviable. Factories will close and industrial jobs lost in some of the EU's most vulnerable rural areas. And Europeans will be dependent on imports of less sustainable and more emitting sugar from overseas."*