

Minutes of 11th meeting of the Informal Working Group on Halloumi/Hellim
15 April 2026

The 11th meeting of the Informal Working Group on Halloumi/Hellim, i.e. the fourth meeting of its second assembly, was held on 15 April 2026 in the Home4Cooperation in Nicosia. The meeting was co-chaired by DG REGIO and DG AGRI (online) in the presence of eight members of the Working Group and two observers from Sustainable Food Systems Ireland. DG SANTE participated on-line in the meeting.

The Working Group adopted the draft agenda shared in advance of the meeting.

The members welcomed Ms. Aysun Önet İleri, who replaced Mr. Mustafa Erguven as a member of the Working Group.

Members welcomed the recent delegation by the Republic of Cyprus to Bureau Veritas France of the powers necessary to conduct inspections and controls needed to ensure compliance with Union animal health and food safety requirements in the chain of production of PDO Halloumi/Hellim in the Turkish Cypriot community.

They emphasised the urgent need to address the Foot-and-Mouth disease (FMD) outbreak on both sides of the Green Line, negatively affecting the dairy sector in Cyprus. Several members raised the need for an island-wide, coordinated approach in eradicating the disease. The role of the bi-communal Veterinary Sub-Committee, operating under the Technical Committee for Health, in developing and taking forward any agreed bi-communal FMD strategy was noted.

The lack of progress in establishing a bi-communal consensus on revised Halloumi/Hellim product specifications to come into force after the end of the transitional period in mid-2029 was acknowledged as a serious concern. The Commission confirmed its availability to support efforts to find bi-communal common ground, noting that the initiative for revised product specifications must come from the original PDO applicants. Members reiterated their dedication to bi-communal cooperation on proposed amendments to the product specification.

The observers proposed that a scientific colloquium, bringing together experts in the field, could further support the work on revised product specifications by offering a scientific basis for the discussion.

Ms. Pomoell-Segurola (DG REGIO) thanked members for their valuable contributions and cooperation.

The next meeting of the Working Group was tentatively announced for June 2026. The Commission reminded members of the possibility to arrange for earlier or ad hoc meetings, if there is sufficient interest among the members of the working group. The minutes will be posted on the Commission's website.

Annex 1: List of members participating in the 11th meeting of the Informal Working Group on Halloumi/Hellim:

Working Group Members:

- Alexandrou, Nasia
- Andrea, Christo
- Andreou, Andreas
- Erel, Metehan
- Konstantinou, Marios
- Önet İleri, Aysun
- Öztürk, Kemal
- Papademas, Photis

From the Commission:

- Pomoell-Segurola, Jutta, DG REGIO – Co-chair of meeting
- Cianfoni, Luca, DG AGRI (participating online)
- Bloemendal, Jan, DG SANTE (participating online)
- Castelló Corvillo, Javier, DG REGIO
- Buza-Vidas, Marina, DG REGIO

Observers:

- Barry, Michael, Sustainable Food Systems Ireland
- Parker, Michael, Sustainable Food Systems Ireland