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Agriculture and Fisheries

Brussels, 21 February 2011

President

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Main results of the Council

*Ministers held their third policy debate on the communication on **the CAP towards 2020**.*

*The Council was then briefed on the outcomes of the **multi-stakeholder meeting on the welfare of laying hens** and the **9th session of the United Nations Forum on Forests**.*

*The Council adopted also its first-reading-position on a draft regulation on **food information to consumers**.*

CONTENTS¹

PARTICIPANTS	4
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ITEMS DEBATED

The CAP towards 2020	6
ANY OTHER BUSINESS	8
Outcome of the multi-stakeholder meeting on laying hens and update on the implementation by the Member States.....	8
Processed animal proteins in animal feed	8
United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF)	9
28th Conference of directors of EU paying agencies	9
Zero-duty tariff quota for raw sugar	10

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED*AGRICULTURE*

– Food labelling: adoption of the Council's first-reading position	11
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FISHERIES

– Partnership agreement between the EU and Mozambique - Negotiations on renewal	11
– EU -Morocco fisheries agreement	12
– Use of alien species in aquaculture.....	12

TRANSPORT

– Interoperability of the European rail system - operation and traffic management	13
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INTERNAL MARKET

– Metrology	13
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- Where declarations, conclusions or resolutions have been formally adopted by the Council, this is indicated in the heading for the item concerned and the text is placed between quotation marks.
 - Documents for which references are given in the text are available on the Council's Internet site (<http://www.consilium.europa.eu>).
 - Acts adopted with statements for the Council minutes which may be released to the public are indicated by an asterisk; these statements are available on the Council's Internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

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ITEMS DEBATED

The CAP towards 2020

The Council held a third policy debate on the Commission communication *The CAP towards 2020: Meeting the food, natural resources and territorial challenges of the future* ([16348/10](#)).

The debate, structured around a Presidency questionnaire ([6248/11](#)), focused on *balanced territorial development*, which is the third main objective for the future CAP identified in the Commission communication.

Member States agreed that maintaining a balanced territorial development constitutes a major objective for the future CAP. Many delegations noted that rural development policy would remain important for Europe's rural areas, but saw a need for more co-ordination and synergy with other EU policies such as regional and cohesion policy. In addition, the improvement of the rural economy should be based on diversification, development of local markets and other agriculture-related activities, particularly tourism and the production of renewable energies. Member States generally agreed that the vitality and potential of rural areas in the EU would continue to depend upon the presence of a competitive and dynamic farming sector. In this respect, many underlined the importance of creating the right conditions for keeping young farmers and their families in the rural areas.. These young entrepreneurs, which are key to enhancing innovation in the farming sector, could be attracted by a better visibility on their future, improvement of the rural infrastructures and potential incentives.

The Presidency will use the outcome of the three policy debates to prepare Council conclusions by consensus among delegations, for adoption in March 2011.

The first policy debate on the Commission communication at the December agriculture Council was centred on viable food production. For many delegations, in order to achieve this objective, the CAP would still need to provide some level of farm income support as well as a safety net of market measures to help farmers cope with crisis situations. CAP payments should also be seen as compensation for the fact that EU farmers have to meet higher standards than farmers in third countries. At the same time, the CAP needs to improve the competitiveness of the agricultural sector, in particular by promoting innovation, research and training. The value share of the farm sector in the food chain will also need to be improved. Finally, delegations considered compensation for production difficulties in areas with natural constraints necessary to maintain farming activity throughout the EU and to preserve the diversity of the agricultural landscapes.

During the second policy debate at the last agriculture Council, Member States acknowledged the general objective of developing sustainable management of European agriculture within the framework of CAP reform. Some delegations agreed with the Commission suggestion that the first pillar should be the main instrument for the "greening" of the CAP, while others preferred the environmental measures to be part of the second pillar and rural development. Delegations generally praised green growth through innovation and considered that precise measures would be needed to act to adapt and mitigate climate change.

The Council has discussed different aspects of the reform over five successive Presidencies. Since the Commission communication was published in November 2010, the Council has examined its content and impact at ministerial level, but also in the SCA and in specialized working parties, in order to allow in-depth scrutiny of the future reform of the CAP.

The Commission communication outlines options and launches the debate with the Council, the Parliament and stakeholders. On the basis of the outcome of the institutional debate, the Commission is scheduled to present its legislative proposals on the CAP towards 2020 in the second half of 2011.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Outcome of the multi-stakeholder meeting on laying hens and update on the implementation by the Member States

Ministers were briefed by the Commission on the outcome of the multi-stakeholder meeting held on 19 January 2011 on the implementation of directive 1999/74 on the protection of laying hens, where Member States representatives together with representatives from the industry, farming organisations and animal welfare organisations discussed the state of play of the implementation of this directive and available tools to ensure the smooth phasing out of conventional cages. ([6564/11](#))

Some Member States requested a limited extension to the deadline of 1st January 2012 foreseen in that Directive for phasing out conventional cages for laying hens, especially at a time when farmers have to cope with rising prices for feed. However, most delegations were opposed to prolonging the deadline because they considered producers had made huge efforts on this important animal welfare issue and delaying implementation would be unfair on these farmers. Several Member States noted that the EU had to ensure that imported products met the same level of standards. The Commission regretted the lack of sufficient information about the state of play on the implementation of this directive and asked Member States to provide the necessary information before 1st April 2011.

Processed animal proteins in animal feed

The Polish delegation briefed ministers on its request that processed animal protein (PAPs) should be allowed in feed for poultry and pigs, which would mean reviewing certain restrictive measures adopted to control transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs). The competitiveness of pig and poultry farming could be improved by reducing the EU's dependence on imports of plant proteins from third countries ([6619/11](#)).

While most of the Member States supported Poland's request, they also underlined that any review of the current ban should abide by the principles reflected in the Council conclusions on the TSE Road Map 2 adopted at the November agriculture Council ([13889/10 ADD 1 REV 1](#)). Such a review should be primarily driven by scientific advice and technical issues related to the control and enforcement of the new measures; it would also be linked to the availability of validated tests to distinguish between PAPs originating from different species and the channelling of the PAPs manufacture according to species.

The Commission announced that due to progress in development of technical solutions, a proposal based on the request of Polish delegation was being prepared and could be presented for adoption under the regulatory committee procedure once the necessary public health conditions were met.

United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF)

The Council was briefed by the Presidency on the outcome of the 9th session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) held in New York from 24 January 2011 to 4 February 2011 ([6559/11](#)).

This forum provided an opportunity to launch the International Year of Forests and to prepare future contributions, in particular to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012 and its preparatory process by highlighting the economic, social and environmental benefits of forests to people and the importance of sustainable forest management.

The UNFF is the global forum for forestry issues operating within the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC). The main theme of the 9th session of UNFF was “Forests for people, livelihoods and poverty eradication”. The next session of UNFF is scheduled for 2013 and may be organised by Turkey.

28th Conference of directors of EU paying agencies

At the initiative of the Belgian delegation, ministers were informed on the general conclusions of the 28th Conference of directors of EU paying agencies which took place in Namur from 27 to 29 October 2010 ([6626/11](#)).

The two main issues discussed were the financial systems currently used by paying agencies, which would need to be made more efficient, and paying agencies' increasing control workload, representing on average over a quarter of their internal resources. Various proposals for resolving this situation had been submitted for the consideration of the European authorities, such as a better co-ordination between audit bodies. Some Member States approved the idea of reducing the control workload.

Zero-duty tariff quota for raw sugar

The Portuguese delegation presented a request for an import tariff quota of at least 500,000 tonnes of raw sugar cane at zero duty to be opened for the 2010/2011 marketing year ([6671/11](#)). Exceptional measures would be needed for the sugar refining industry, to restore a level playing field between the sugar cane sector sugar beet sector.

The Portuguese request was supported by some delegations pointing to the lack of raw sugar for the refining industry, whereas others opposed the measure, explaining that priority should be given to European production.

The Commission, recognising the tight supply situation on the EU sugar market, announced its intention to propose measures through the management committee.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**AGRICULTURE****Food labelling: adoption of the Council's first-reading position**

The Council adopted its first-reading position on a draft regulation on the provision of food information to consumers ([17602/10](#) + [17602/10 ADD 1](#) + [17602/10 ADD 1 COR 1](#) + [5964/11](#) + [5964/11 ADD 1](#)). The Italian delegation voted against.

This new piece of legislation aims to ensure that food labels carry essential information in a clear and legible way, thereby enabling consumers to make balanced and healthier dietary choices.

For more details, see our press release [6238/11](#).

FISHERIES**Partnership agreement between the EU and Mozambique - Negotiations on renewal**

The Council adopted a decision authorizing the Commission to open negotiations on behalf of the European Union for the renewal of the protocol to the fisheries partnership agreement with the Republic of Mozambique.

The existing protocol has been in force since 1 January 2007 and will expire on 31 December 2011.

EU -Morocco fisheries agreement

The Council adopted by a qualified majority, with Germany and Finland abstaining and Denmark, Sweden and UK voting against, a decision authorising the Commission to open negotiations on behalf of the European Union for the renewal of the protocol to the fisheries partnership agreement with the Kingdom of Morocco.

By Regulation (EC) No 764/2006 of 22 May 2006, the Council concluded a fisheries partnership agreement between the European Community and the Kingdom of Morocco. The protocol on fishing opportunities and financial compensation attached to the said agreement offers fishing opportunities to the EU for a period of 4 years and will expire on 27 February 2011. This protocol is important for the EU's long distance fleets, originating from 11 Member States. The decision to authorise the opening of negotiations aims to avoid disruption of fishing activities by EU vessels in Moroccan waters. The mandate allows the Commission to negotiate an extension of the current protocol for one year subject to two conditions, namely adjusting fishing opportunities in line with the best available scientific advice and regular reporting on the implementation of sectoral policy, including the regional impact of the Protocol.

Use of alien species in aquaculture

The Council adopted at first reading a regulation amending regulation (EC) No 708/2007 concerning the use of alien and locally absent species in aquaculture. This proposal was previously adopted by the European Parliament ([61/1/10](#)).

This regulation establishes a framework governing aquaculture practices in relation to alien and locally absent species to assess and minimise the possible impact of these species on biodiversity and of any associated non-target species on aquatic habitats. The regulation includes provisions for the establishment of a permit system at national level.

The amendment aims to achieve the goal of the regulation by increasing the biosecurity of closed aquaculture facilities and listing possible exemptions from the permit obligation for the introduction and translocation of species for use in such facilities.

TRANSPORT

Interoperability of the European rail system - operation and traffic management

The Council decided not to oppose adoption by the Commission of a decision on the technical specification for interoperability relating to the "operation and traffic management" subsystem of the trans-European conventional rail system ([5156/11](#)). The act replaces Commission decision 2006/920 on the same subject.

The draft decision is subject to the regulatory procedure with scrutiny; now that the Council has given its consent, the Commission may adopt it, unless the European Parliament objects.

INTERNAL MARKET

Metrology

Following an agreement with the European Parliament, the Council repealed eight directives related to metrology ([67/10](#) and [6291/1/11 ADD 1](#)).

The following directives will be repealed because they are technically outdated, do not reflect the state of the art in measurement technology or concern instruments which are not subject to technological development:

- with effect from 1 July 2011, directive 71/349/EEC on the calibration of the tanks of vessels;
- with effect from 1 December 2015, directives 71/347/EEC on the measuring of the standard mass per storage volume of grain, 75/33/EEC on cold-water meters, 76/765/EEC on alcoholometers and alcohol hydrometers, 76/766/EEC on alcohol tables, 86/217/EEC on tyre pressure gauges for motor vehicles, 71/317/EEC and 74/148/EEC on accuracy weights.

The Commission will carry out an assessment to determine whether any of the measuring instruments of the repealed directives should be included in directive 2004/22/EC on measuring instruments in the future.
