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3202nd Council meeting

Agriculture and Fisheries

Brussels, 28 and 29 November 2012

President **Mr Sofoclis ALETRARIS**
Minister for Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment of Cyprus

P R E S S

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Main results of the Council

As regards agriculture, ministers held public debates on ***direct payments****, the* ***single CMO*** *and* ***rural development*** *within the framework of the common agricultural policy (CAP) reform. Some specific issues discussed were:* ***equivalence to greening practices, sugar quotas and vine planting rights.***

No agreement was reached in favour of or against a proposal for a regulation on the use of ***lactic acid*** *to reduce microbiological surface contamination on bovine carcasses.*

The ministers reached political agreement on fishing opportunities for certain ***deep-sea stocks for 2013 and 2014****. They also exchanged views on the* ***annual consultations between the EU and Norway****.*

Finally, the ministers were briefed on the ***error rate in rural development,*** *the* ***EU-Morocco agreement on agriculture****, a* ***new EU food model,*** *the* ***Norway pout*** *stocks and the* ***EU-Mauritania fisheries agreement****.*

Ministers had a discussion over lunch on ***the current state of play on CAP reform.***

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PARTICIPANTS

Belgium:	
Ms Sabine LARUELLE	Minister for the Middle Classes, SMEs, the Self-Employed and Agriculture
Mr Olivier BELLE	Deputy Permanent Representative
Bulgaria:	
Mr Miroslav NAYDENOV	Minister for Agriculture and Food
Ms Petia VASSILEVA	Deputy Permanent Representative
Czech Republic:	
Mr Petr BENDL	Minister for Agriculture
Ms Jaroslava BENEŠ ŠPALKOVÁ	Director General for the External Relations, Ministry of Agriculture
Denmark:	
Ms Mette GJERSKOV	Minister for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries
Germany:	
Ms Ilse AIGNER	Federal Minister for Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection
Mr Robert KLOOS	State Secretary, Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection
Estonia:	
Mr Clyde KULL	Deputy Permanent Representative
Ireland:	
Mr Simon COVENEY	Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine
Mr Tom MORAN	Secretary General, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
Greece:	
Mr Dimitrios MELAS	Secretary General for Rural Development and Food
Spain:	
Mr Miguel ARIAS CAÑETE	Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Environment
France:	
Mr Stéphane LE FOLL	Minister for Agriculture, the Food Processing Industry and Forestry
Mr Frédéric CUVILLIER	Minister with responsibility for Transport, Oceans and Fisheries, attached to the Minister for Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy
Italy:	
Mr Mario CATANIA	Minister for Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policy
Cyprus:	
Mr Sofoclis ALETRARIS	Minister for Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment
Ms Androula GEORGIOU	Director
Latvia:	
Ms Laimdota STRAUJUMA	Minister for Agriculture
Lithuania:	
Mr Kazys STARKEVIČIUS	Minister for Agriculture
Luxembourg:	
Mr Romain SCHNEIDER	Minister for Agriculture, Viticulture and Rural Development, Minister for Sport, Minister with responsibility for Economic Solidarity
Ms Michèle EISENBARTH	Deputy Permanent Representative
Hungary:	
Mr Sándor FAZEKAS	Minister for Rural Development
Mr Olivér VÁRHELYI	Deputy Permanent Representative
Mr György CZERVÁN	State Secretary, Ministry of Rural Development

Malta:	
Mr George PULLICINO	Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs
Mr Patrick R. MIFSUD	Deputy Permanent Representative
Netherlands:	
Mr Co VERDAAS	Minister for Agriculture
Austria:	
Mr Nikolaus BERLAKOVICH	Federal Minister for Agriculture, Forestry, the Environment and Water Management
Mr Harald GÜNTHER	Deputy Permanent Representative
Poland:	
Mr Stanisław KALEMBA	Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development
Mr Kazimierz PLOCKE	State Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
Portugal:	
Ms Assunção CRISTAS	Minister for Agriculture, Maritime Affairs, the Environment and Regional Planning
Mr José DIOGO ALBUQUERQUE	State Secretary for Agriculture
Mr Manuel PINTO DE ABREU	State Secretary for Maritime Affairs
Romania:	
Mr Achim IRIMESCU	State Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
Mr Cristian BADESCU	Deputy Permanent Representative
Slovenia:	
Mr Franc BOGOVIČ	Minister for Agriculture and the Environment
Mr Uroš VAJGL	Deputy Permanent Representative
Slovakia:	
Ms Magdaléna LACKO-BARTOŠOVÁ	State Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
Finland:	
Mr Jari KOSKINEN	Minister for Agriculture and Forestry
Mr Risto ARTJOKI	State Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
Sweden:	
Mr Eskil ERLANDSSON	Minister for Rural Affairs
United Kingdom:	
Mr Owen PATERSON	Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Mr David HEATH	Minister of State for Agriculture and Food
Mr Richard BENYON	Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Mr Richard LOCHHEAD	Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment (Scottish Government)
Mr Alun DAVIES	Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and European Programmes (Welsh Assembly Government)
Ms Michelle O'NEILL	Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nothern Ireland)

Commission:	
Mr Dacian CIOLOŞ	Member
Mr Tonio BORG	Member
Ms Maria DAMANAKI	Member

The Government of the Acceding State was represented as follows:

Croatia:
Ms Snježana ŠPANJOL — Deputy Minister for Agriculture

ITEMS DEBATED

AGRICULTURE

Reform of the common agricultural policy (CAP)

Ministers held three orientation debates within the framework of the common agricultural policy (CAP) reform. The discussions focused on:

- the proposal for a regulation establishing rules for direct payments to farmers (direct payments regulation) (*15396/3/11*);

- the proposal for a regulation establishing a common organisation of the markets in agricultural products (single CMO regulation) (*15397/2/11*).

- the proposal for a regulation on support for rural development (rural development regulation) (*15425/1/11*).

Direct payments

As regards greening of direct payments, many delegations acknowledged the great potential of an approach based on the notion of equivalence.

Many delegations considered that equivalence of alternative measures needed to be established in terms of benefit for the environment or climate. Member states also pointed out that assessment of equivalence needed to be simple, straightforward and efficient.

A large number of member states underlined the need for farmers and national administrations to have a clear picture of their obligations before using equivalent-type measures. These delegations saw an important role for the Commission in this respect, especially on *ex ante* validation of equivalent measures.

For those measures taken in the context of the agri-environmental/climate chapter of rural development, a number of delegations suggested that these measures could be deemed equivalent and validated by the Commission when it approves national rural development programmes. Some delegations underlined that overly complicated or cumbersome procedures should be avoided.

In this respect, particular attention needed to be given to the link between the greening in the first pillar (direct payments) and the baseline for agri-environmental/climate measures under the second pillar in order to avoid double funding. Some delegations believed that there was no problem with double funding and some suggested that greening should not be included in the baseline under the second pillar.

Single CMO

On the **sugar quota regime** due to expire on 30 September 2015, the Presidency noted that, a number of delegations opposed the end of this regime and would like it extended at least until 2020, whilst a number of other delegations supported the planned expiry.

As regards **vine planting rights** , a large number of delegations supported the Presidency view that it was more appropriate to await the recommendations of the High Level Group on vine planting rights before taking up the subject at Council level.

The High Level Group was set up by the Commission to examine the issue of vine planting rights and is expected to present its recommendations in December 2012.

Rural development

Among the issues on rural development considered in need of further discussion in the Council, the delineation of areas with natural constraints was a priority for a number of member states.

Several delegations also raised the topic of risk management in their priorities. While some wished to limit the scope of the measures and are opposed to the income stabilisation tool, others wished to maintain these measures as they considered them to be essential.

Several member states referred to simplifying the approval of rural development programmes in the framework of state aid procedures.

With regard to the postponement of the decision on the multi-annual financial framework (MFF) 2014-2020, some delegations highlighted the need to maintain the share of the budget devoted to rural development.

The CAP reform package was presented by the Commission at the Agriculture Council meeting in October 2011. Since then, the Council has held general policy debates on the CAP reform proposals almost monthly.

The Danish Presidency also presented a progress report highlighting the progress achieved during the first half of 2012 on key issues of the CAP reform proposals.

This debate was the fourth one at the level of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council under the Cyprus Presidency. In July the Council had an extensive discussion on exceptional support measures under the single CMO regulation, and on risk management under the rural development regulation. In September, the Council debated the issue of reference and intervention prices and their possible update (single CMO) and completed the discussion on the delimitation of areas with natural constraints (rural development).

In October the Council held a further debate on the reinforcement of producer organisations (single CMO) and then turned its attention once more to the regulation on direct payments. Ministers held a policy debate on the important issues of internal convergence and young farmers.

Lactic acid

No agreement was reached either in favour of or against the proposal for a regulation concerning the use of lactic acid to reduce microbiological surface contamination on bovine carcasses presented to the Council for adoption (*14571/12*).

The Commission proposal follows an application from the US Department of Agriculture to be able to use lactic acid to reduce surface contamination of bovine carcasses and meat. Since lactic acid is widely used by U.S. beef industry, the "lactic acid regulation" is informally linked to the 2009 bilateral memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the US and the EU on beef trade. On 1st July 2012, and in accordance with the second phase of the MOU, the EU opened an increased import quota (TRQ) for beef not treated with hormones. Authorisation of the use of lactic acid would allow the USA to fill this export quota.

On 26 July 2011 the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) adopted a scientific opinion on the evaluation of the safety and efficacy of lactic acid for the removal of microbial surface contamination from beef carcasses, cuts and trimmings. The EFSA concluded that this treatment would not be a safety concern provided that the substance used complies with the EU specifications for food additives.

At its meeting on 21 September 2012, the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health was unable to achieve the qualified majority necessary to deliver an opinion for or against the authorisation measure proposed by the Commission. In the absence of an opinion, the Council had two months in which to give its position following which the Parliament would also have an additional two months to give its position.

The Council noted that there was not a qualified majority either in favour of or against the proposal. In this case, the Commission is now entitled to finalise the procedure ("comitology")and to authorise the use of lactic acid to reduce microbiological surface contamination on bovine carcasses.

FISHERIES

Fishing opportunities for deep-sea stocks for 2013-2014

Ministers have reached a political agreement on fishing opportunities for certain deep-sea stocks for 2013 and 2014 (*14635/12*) on the basis of a Presidency compromise, drawn up in agreement with the Commission.

The Council will adopt this regulation, following finalisation by the legal/linguistic experts, at one of its forthcoming meetings. The regulation will apply from 1 of January 2013. The TACs and quotas for the deep-sea species are fixed at the EU level biennially since 2003.

This political agreement concerns certain stocks of deep water fish such as certain deep sea sharks, the black scabbardfish (*Aphanopus carbo*), roundnose grenadier (*Coryphaenoides rupestris*), alfonsinos (*Beryx spp.*) and forkbeards (*Phycis blennoides*).

Concerning deep sea sharks, no direct fishing will take place in 2013-2014. No by-catch quotas has been provisioned.

Total allowable catches (TACs) for blue ling (*Molva dypterigia*) in international waters of II, III and IV were previously part of the fishing opportunities for deep sea stock. They will be included, together with the TAC of blue ling in international waters of XII, in the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks in EU waters.

In instances where scientific advice has stipulated maximum sustainable yields (MSY) targets, a gradual approach towards MSY has been agreed by 2015 where possible.

The TACs agreed for the main deep species are set out in the table below:

Species (common name)	Species (Latin name)	ICES fishing zone	EC TACs 2012 (in tonnes)	Commission proposal on EC TACs for 2013 (in tonnes)	Council decision on EC TACs for 2013 (in tonnes)	Difference from EC TACs for 2012 (in %)	Commission proposal on EC TACs for 2014 (in tonnes)	Council decision on EC TACs for 2014 (in tonnes)	Difference from EC TACs for 2013 (in %)
TACs and quotas for 2013 and 2014 for certain stocks of deep water fish: Council decision and initial Commission proposal									
Deep-sea sharks		V, VI, VII, VIII, IX (EU waters and international waters)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Deep-sea sharks		X (EU waters and international waters)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Deep-sea sharks		XII (EU waters and international waters)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Black scabbardfish	*Aphanopus carbo*	I, II, III and IV (EU waters and international waters)	9	9	**9**	0%	9	**9**	0%
Black scabbardfish [(1)]	*Aphanopus carbo*	V, VI, VII and XII (EU waters and international waters)	2179	2615	**3051**	40%	3138	**3966**	30%
Black scabbardfish [(1)]	*Aphanopus carbo*	VIII, IX and X (EU waters and international waters)	3348	3515	**3700**	11%	3691	**3700**	0%
Black scabbardfish [(1)]	*Aphanopus carbo*	CECAF 34.1.2 (EU waters and international waters) - Madeira	3867	3094	**3674**	-5%	2475	**3490**	-5%
Alfonsinos [(1)]	*Beryx spp*	III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XII and XIV (EU waters and international waters)	328	305	**312**	-5%	280	**296**	-5%
Roundnose grenadier	*Coryphaenoides rupestris*	I, II and IV (EU waters and international waters)	13	13	**13**	0%	13	**13**	0%
Roundnose grenadier	*Coryphaenoides rupestris*	III (EU waters and international waters)	850	680	**680**	-20%	544	**544**	-20%
Roundnose grenadier [(1)]	*Coryphaenoides rupestris*	Vb, VI, VII (EU waters and international waters)	2546	4500	**4297**	69%	4500	**4297**	0%
Roundnose grenadier [(1)]	*Coryphaenoides rupestris*	VIII, IX, X, XII and XIV (EU waters and international waters)	3979	3350	**3581**	-10%	2850	**3223**	-10%
Orange roughy	*Hoplostethus atlanticus*	VI (EU waters and international waters)	0	0	**0**	0	0	**0**	0
Orange roughy	*Hoplostethus atlanticus*	VII (EU waters and international waters)	0	0	**0**	0	0	**0**	0

(1) Analytical TAC for these species will facilitate interannual flexibility.

Species (common name)	Species (Latin name)	ICES fishing zone	EC TACs 2012 (in tonnes)	Commission proposal re EC TACs for 2013 (in tonnes)	Council decision on EC TACs for 2013 (in tonnes)	Difference from EC TACs for 2012 (in %)	Commission proposal re EC TACs for 2014 (in tonnes)	Council decision on EC TACs for 2014 (in tonnes)	Difference from EC TACs for 2013 (in %)
TACs and quotas for 2013 and 2014 for certain stocks of deep water fish: Council decision and initial Commission proposal									
Orange roughy	*Hoplostethus atlanticus*	I, II, III, IV, V, VIII, IX, X, XII, XIV (EU waters and international waters)	0	0	**0**			**0**	
Red seabream (1)	*Pagellus bogaraveo*	VI, VII and VIII (EU waters and international waters)	215	172	**196**	-9%	138	**178**	-9%
Red seabream (1)	*Pagellus bogaraveo*	IX (EU waters and international waters)	780	624	**780**	0%	500	**780**	0%
Red seabream (1)	*Pagellus bogaraveo*	X (EU waters and international waters)	1136	909	**1022**	-10%	727	**920**	-10%
Forkbeards (1)	*Phycis blennoides*	I, II, III and IV (EU waters and international waters)	31	25	**31**	0%	20	**31**	0%
Forkbeards (1)	*Phycis blennoides*	V, VI and VII (EU waters and international waters)	2028	1622	**2028**	0%	1298	**2028**	0%
Forkbeards (1)	*Phycis blennoides*	VIII and IX (EU waters and international waters)	267	214	**267**	0%	171	**267**	0%
Forkbeards (1)	*Phycis blennoides*	X and XII (EU waters and international waters)	54	43	**54**	0%	35	**54**	0%

(1) Analytical TAC for these species will facilitate interannual flexibility.

Background information

Deep-sea stocks are fish stocks caught in waters beyond the main fishing grounds of continental shelves. They are distributed on the continental slopes or associated with seamounts. These species are slow-growing and long-lived, which can make them particularly vulnerable to fishing activity. Scientific knowledge on the longevity and growth of these species, although still partial in the assessment of the stock status, is improving. Accordingly, it is easier to target proposed measures more effectively.

In order to ensure the sustainability of the resource, fishing for deep-sea species has been regulated by the EU since 2003 through total allowable catches (TACs) per species and area, and maximum fishing effort deployable in the North-East Atlantic. The fishing opportunities for deep-sea species are decided on a bi-annual basis on the strength of scientific stock assessments.

The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) provides a review of the biological status of deep-sea stocks every two years. The latest advice was given in June 2012. This proposal for fixing fishing opportunities is based on the further review undertaken by the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) in July 2012, following the work of ICES. The advice from both sources indicates that most deep-sea stocks are in a precarious situation, and that fishing opportunities for those stocks, in order to assure their sustainability, should be reduced until the evolution of the stock sizes shows a positive trend. This year, for the first time, scientific advice was available for most stocks covered by the proposal fixing fishing opportunities for certain deep-sea fish stocks. For some stocks it has been possible to identify levels of fishing that could bring the resource to maximum sustainable yield (MSY). For other important species the advice is based on trends, but it provides an indication on how to achieve MSY in 2015.

According to Article 43(3) of the Treaty, the Council, needs to adopt measures on a proposal from the Commission on the fixing and allocation of fishing opportunities for deep-sea stocks.

EU/ Norway - annual consultations for 2013

The Council held an exchange of views on annual consultations between the EU and Norway under their bilateral fisheries agreement. Ministers were briefed on the results of the first round of consultations for 2013, which took place in Brussels from 19 to 23 November this year . They discussed the preparation of the second round which will take place in Norway from 3 to 7 December.

Most of the delegations recognised the interest of this agreement with Norway but would favour a cautious approach from the EU on the level of TACs and other associated measures for the main jointly-managed joint stocks in the North Sea. They would recommend also a cautious approach for other stocks identified and used for the reciprocal exchange of quotas.

As regards the management of mackerel stock in the North-East Atlantic, the Commission reported on the failure of negotiations with Iceland and the Faroe Islands. These negotiations also concern directly Norway and the EU. Several member states pointed out the need for trade measures as provided by the instrument adopted by the Council in October this year.

The main issues for the consultations this year are the following:

- Detailed management arrangements for jointly-managed fish stocks (cod, haddock, plaice, whiting, herring, saithe) in accordance with the long-term management plans, involving in particular the establishment of the TACs and quotas for the respective parties;

- Agreement on exchanges of reciprocal fishing possibilities, which will enable the continuation of a number of important fishing operations for both parts including fishing opportunities for Arctic cod in Norwegian waters, as well as other measures in fisheries of mutual interest.

- Cooperation with Norway as regards the issue of mackerel management in the framework of negotiations with the other two coastal states, Iceland and the Faroe Islands.

The 1980 bilateral fisheries agreement between the EC and Norway covers joint stocks in the North Sea, some jointly managed, others not. Annual TACs are set jointly by the EC and Norway for the jointly managed joint stocks. There are joint long-term management plans for cod, haddock, herring and saithe and basic principles for a long-term management plan for plaice, based on the EU long-term management plan for sole and plaice in the North Sea (regulation 676/2007). A ten-year agreement with Norway on mackerel was agreed in January 2010, including mutual access in the North Sea. This agreement is contingent on a satisfactory overall bilateral agreement. There needs to be an overall balance in the reciprocal exchange of quotas in the agreement.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Increased error rate in rural development

The Commission briefed the Council on reasons for the increased error rate under the "rural development" chapter of the CAP and potential corrective or preventive actions to be taken (*16585/12*).

The 2011 annual report of the European Court of Auditors estimates the most likely error rate (MLE) for the whole chapter “rural development, environment, fisheries and health” to amount to 7.7%. This underlines that rural development expenditure is much more prone to errors than direct payments.

The relatively high error rate for rural development policy must be understood in the context of the specificities of this policy. Rural development applies highly targeted solutions to the significantly varied challenges faced by rural areas around the EU, and is therefore intrinsically more complex than direct payments.

The specific working group assessing these errors established their main root causes. On this basis, the Commission envisages corrective and preventive actions. As rural development is a shared responsibility between the EU and the member states, the Commission intends to take steps already during the current programming period, either by providing more information to member states regarding measures with high error rates or by scheduling more targeted audits. The most important corrective action will be the preparation for the programmes of the next programming period avoiding from the outset those root causes identified.

EU-Morocco agricultural agreement

The Spanish delegation briefed the ministers on the implementation of the EU-Morocco agricultural agreement with regard to the tomato sector.

Many member states supported the Spanish delegation which detailed the difficult situation in the tomato sector owing to the low prices prevailing on the EU market, and expressed doubts about the functioning of the "entry price" system provided for in the EU-Morocco agreement on agriculture. The Commission should ensure the correct implementation of the system.

The Commission pointed out that to monitor the system, it is largely dependent on data provided by the custom services in the member states. Recent data provided does not reflect the market situation described by Spain. Therefore, the Commission invited the member states to verify their data with their national custom authorities.

The EU-Morocco agreement concerning reciprocal liberalisation measures on agricultural products, processed agricultural products, fish and fishery products entered into force on 1 October 2012 . This agreement recognises that tomatoes (fresh or chilled) are sensitive products and to this end the agreement maintains a system of entry prices (at 46.1 EUR/100 kg). The system provides that complementary fees are to be applied when products reach the border at prices below the entry price.

New European food model

The Council was briefed by the Austrian delegation supported by Latvian delegation on a new European food model (*16821/12*).

A large number of delegations agreed with the holistic approach proposed by Austria for the food chain, which is centred around the principle of sustainability and takes into account the following aspects: food security, food safety, food quality, regional supply, diversity, value and appreciation of food.

On 26 January 2012 in Vienna, the Austrian Ministry of Agriculture and the Austrian Association of Food Industries organised a joint workshop in Vienna on the topic "A New European Food Model: Challenges and Opportunities". Speakers included representatives of the government, the education system, research, trade, interest groups and civil society. The conclusions of this workshop were taken as the basis for the proposed approach.

Norway pout stock

Ministers were briefed by the Danish delegation on the management of Norway pout stock in the framework of the fishing opportunities 2013 in the EU waters.

Some member states supported Denmark in its request for a long term management plan for the Norway pout. The Commission will examine whether such a change in the management plan could be initiated for 2013.

The Danish delegation indicated that there is a long delay between the scientific advice, the establishment of preliminary TACs and the beginning of the fishing season for short lived species such as Norway pout in the North Sea. This means that the fleet fishing this stock has to stay in harbours waiting for the opening of this fishery without any hope to be compensated later on due to seasonality and the short lived nature of this species.

Denmark would promote a faster procedure for fisheries' opening when fishing opportunities follow the scientific advice. Moreover, a long term management strategy should be put in place providing for more stability in the exploitation of the Norway pout stock.

EU-Mauritania fisheries agreement

The Dutch delegation briefed the Council on the EU-Mauritania fisheries agreement.

Several delegations shared the concerns highlighted by the Netherlands about a possible underuse of the protocol to this agreement. They would like a joint EU-Mauritania technical committee to discuss the technical conditions of this protocol. The Commission agreed to the establishment of such a joint technical committee.

In their request, the Netherlands asked about the assessment of the effective use of the protocol and appropriate measures to be taken in line with article 5 of the protocol. This provides that the protocol could be terminated if it is estimated that its effective use will be less than 75% of what was originally agreed.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

AGRICULTURE

Steering board for the European Innovation Partnership on agriculture

The Council adopted conclusions with regard to the representatives on the steering board for the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) "Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability" (*16598/12*).

On 18 June 2012 the Council adopted conclusions on the EIP "Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability". Members of the Commission responsible for Agriculture and Research asked the Council to nominate three ministers with expertise in agricultural research and innovation to the steering board of this EIP.

The Council decided to nominate to the steering board of the EIP:

- Ms Mette GJERSKOV, Minister for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries of Denmark;
- Mr Athanasios TSAFTARIS, Minister for Rural Development and Food of Greece; and,
- Mr. Daniel CONSTANTIN, Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development of Romania,

FISHERIES

Partnership agreement between the EU and Madagascar - Renewal of the protocol

The Council adopted a decision on the signing on behalf of the EU, and on the provisional application of the protocol setting out fishing opportunities and the financial contribution provided for in the fisheries partnership agreement (FPA) between the EU and the Republic of Madagascar (*14158/1/12 REV 1*).

The partnership agreement in the fisheries sector between the EU and Madagascar was concluded in 2007. The main objective of the protocol to this FPA is to define the fishing opportunities offered to EU vessels as well as the financial contribution due, separately, for access rights and for sectoral support. Following negotiations, a new protocol was initialled on 10 May 2012, with the previous protocol due to expire on 31 December 2012. In order to allow EU vessels to carry on fishing activities, the new protocol should be applied from the date of its signature on a provisional basis, pending completion of the procedures for its formal conclusion.

In addition tothe signing and the provisional application of this new protocol, the Council adopted also a regulation concerning the allocation of fishing opportunities between member states (*14151/1/12 REV 1*).

GENERAL AFFAIRS

Appointment of Tonio Borg as commissioner for health and consumer affairs

The Council appointed by common accord with the President of the Commission, José Manuel Durão Barroso, and in accordance with article 246 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU Tonio Borg as new commissioner for health and consumer affairs for the remainder of the current term of office of the Commission (31 October 2014).

Tonio Borg is a Maltese national and has been Deputy Prime Minister of his country since 2004 and Minister for Foreign Affairs since 2008. He replaces John Dalli.