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Agriculture and Fisheries

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¹ • 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

FISHERIES

Data collection in the fisheries sector

In public session, the Council took note of the progress made on a draft regulation aimed at aligning the current EU's data collection framework with the new Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), as well as simplifying the current system.

The presidency gave an overview of the key elements of a compromise text that was unanimously agreed by the Committee of Permanent Representatives (Coreper) on 23 March, and of the next steps needed to take the file forward.

The compromise text will serve as a basis for starting negotiations with the European Parliament, once the Parliament's position is known.

The compromise aims to align data collection provisions in line with the requirements of the reformed CFP.

These requirements include management by maximum sustainable yield and the move towards regionalisation.

Another key principle of the compromise is the need to achieve simplification by collecting only what is needed and avoiding duplication of data collection efforts.

In addition, the proposed compromise aims to achieve the right balance between transparency and data protection.

The delegations that took the floor indicated general support for the compromise text and its overall directions.

The Commission invited the Council to continue moving fast on this file, given that the current data collection programme expires at the end of 2016.

The proposal to update the current regulation concerning the establishment of a Union framework for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries sector and support for scientific advice regarding the CFP was presented by the Commission in June 2015 ([10143/15](#)).

Conservation of fishery resources and protection of marine ecosystems

In public session, the Council took note of a Commission presentation on a draft regulation aimed at improving the conservation of fishery resources and the protection of marine ecosystems through technical measures.

The Council instructed its preparatory bodies to start the technical examination of the file [\(7289/16\)](#).

Member states generally considered the Commission proposal a good basis for revising the current body of rules which contain technical measures.

Several delegations used this opportunity to highlight the priorities they will defend during the upcoming examination of the proposal.

The Commission explained that the proposal consists of two parts:

- firstly, the objectives, targets and common standards and rules
- secondly, the rules that can be adapted under regionalisation.

The draft regulation aims to update the current, scattered regulations containing technical measures in the field of fisheries by changing the whole governance structure rather than making changes to the measures themselves.

This simpler framework seeks to maintain the same level of conservation standards as the current rules, while creating scope for regional adaptation and empowerment of concerned stakeholders. This proposal introduces a result-based approach and gives flesh to two concepts that were pillars of the reform: regionalisation and simplification.

The Commission submitted the proposal on 11 March 2016 [\(6993/16\)](#).

AGRICULTURE

Market situation and support measures

The Council took note of updated information from the Commission on the latest developments concerning those agricultural sectors that are currently facing particular difficulties, including the pig meat, dairy and fruit and vegetables sectors ([7611/16](#)).

The Commission also provided information on the state of play concerning the implementation of the additional support measures agreed at the Agriculture Council meeting on 14 March, to improve the situation of European farmers.

On 14 March, the Council and the Commission agreed to take immediate decisive action by supplementing the existing anti-crisis aid package for European farmers adopted in September 2015, with a set of additional measures. At the end of that meeting, the President of the Council issued [conclusions on market situation and support measures](#).

Ministers and the Commission committed to paying close attention to evolutions in these markets. The Council also agreed to rapidly adopt a regulation doubling quantitative ceilings for buying-in butter and skimmed milk powder at fixed price in the context of public intervention.

A thorough debate, including on the assessment of the March package of measures, will take place at the meeting of the Agriculture Council in June.

As a consequence of the difficulties facing various sectors, in particular the dairy and pig meat sectors during the summer of 2015, and in connection with the continued Russian ban and lagging demand worldwide, in September 2015 the EU adopted a €500 million [aid package for farmers](#) and a series of measures to help overcome difficulties faced by farmers, stabilise markets and address the functioning of the supply chain.

The following "Any other business" items related to the market situation were also dealt with:

– ***Crisis in the dairy market***

The Lithuanian delegation drew the Council's attention to the difficulties facing the dairy sector, which is further deteriorating as Lithuanian milk producers have been particularly heavily hit by persisting difficulties in the EU and global dairy markets ([7635/16](#)).

– ***Support scheme for fruits and vegetables to counterbalance the Russian embargo***

The Polish delegation requested the Commission to ensure the continuity of the support mechanism for the fruit and vegetable sectors launched in autumn 2015 to compensate for the Russian embargo on these products. It also requested a number of modifications to the implementation of the mechanism ([7606/16](#)).

– ***Extension of the final date for submission of aid applications***

The Polish delegation requested an extension of the final date for submission of aid applications or payment claims for 2016 by one month (i.e. until 15 June 2016) ([7605/16](#)).

The request constitutes a derogation from articles 13 and 15 of Commission implementing regulation 809/2014, which lays down rules for the application of regulation 1306/2013 on member states' obligation to protect the financial interests of the EU with regard to the integrated administration and control system, rural development measures and cross-compliance.

– ***Ban of pig meat exports to Russia***

The Austrian delegation requested the Commission to provide information on an ongoing dispute settlement procedure in the WTO concerning the ban of imports into Russia of EU pork products, as well as on the planned steps towards a partial opening of the Russian market for pork exports ([7646/16](#)).

European Fund for Strategic Investments

The Council heard a presentation by the Commission on the ways in which the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) could be used to help address the demand for finance in the agricultural sector.

The EFSI aims to provide €21 billion of financial guarantees in order to mobilise €315 billion of public and private investment in the economy, thereby seeking to fill 30% of the overall investment gap in all sectors.

The EFSI can also help to finance the unfulfilled demand for finance in the agricultural sector, which is estimated by the Commission to be between €2 and 9 billion.

Article 9 of EFSI regulation 2015/1017 sets out that financing and investment operations under the EFSI should be consistent with Union policies and support general objectives, including in the area of agriculture, such as:

- research, development and innovation
- financial support to SMEs and mid-caps
- development and deployment of ICT (broadband networks)
- environment and resource efficiency: environmental protection and management, eco-system services, rural development, climate change actions
- education and training

In the context of the EU objective to boost competitiveness, growth and jobs in the agricultural sector and rural areas through financing projects in areas such as precision farming, the bio- and circular economy, broadband infrastructure, water and irrigation infrastructure, and access to finance and innovation, the Commission and the European Investment Bank (EIB) are currently working on raising awareness amongst stakeholders, including member states' authorities, potential promoters, investors, financial intermediaries and potential beneficiaries, about the availability of the funds and to encourage full use of the EFSI.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

– *EU-Mercosur trade negotiations*

Austria, Cyprus, Estonia, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania and Slovenia, supported by other member states, opposed proposals of quotas on sensitive products in the European offer that will be passed on to Mercosur by the Commission in the coming months.

They requested EU ministers for agriculture to examine the subject before any decision is taken concerning a future exchange of tariff offer ([7629/16](#)).

The Commissioner responsible for agriculture and rural development, Phil Hogan, indicated that these concerns will be referred to the Commissioner responsible for trade issues.

– *Conference of EU Paying Agencies*

The Luxembourg delegation briefed the Council on the conclusions of the conference of directors of EU Paying Agencies that took place in Luxembourg from 11 to 13 November 2015 ([7586/16](#)).

The Netherlands presidency announced that the next conference of directors of EU Paying Agencies is to take place in Amsterdam on 26 and 27 May.

– *Outcome of the forum "Rethinking the food supply chain"*

The Lithuanian delegation briefed the Council on the outcome of the political forum entitled "Rethinking the food supply chain" that took place in Kaunas, Lithuania, on 31 March 2016 ([7654/16](#)).

– *Food fraud in the EU*

The German delegation drew the attention of the Council to the problem of food fraud, which damages EU industry and may endanger consumers' health.

It requested discussions and an intensification of suitable measures in the EU in order to carry out more pan-European control programmes, to quickly establish an EU reference centre for the authenticity and integrity of the food chain, and to step up cooperation between the police, customs and food inspection authorities at European level ([7576/16](#)).

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

AGRICULTURE

School scheme for milk, fruits and vegetables

The Council adopted a regulation aimed at promoting the consumption of milk, fruits and vegetables in schools.

By financing the supply of selected agricultural products to children in educational establishments, the EU seeks to promote healthy eating habits and the consumption of local products.

The new scheme will have an overall yearly budget of €250 million (milk products: €100 million; fruit and vegetables: €150 million).

The EU contribution is allocated to member states to finance the supply of these products in educational establishments.

For more information see the [press release](#).

FISHERIES

EU-Mauritius fisheries agreement - Renewal of protocol

The Council authorised the Commission to open negotiations with a view to the renewal of a protocol to the EU-Republic of Mauritius Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement, setting out the fishing opportunities and the financial contribution.

The current protocol entered into force on 28 January 2014 and will expire on 27 January 2017.

Central Arctic Ocean – Prevention of unregulated fisheries

The Council adopted a decision authorising the Commission to open negotiations on an international agreement to prevent unregulated high seas fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean.

Central Bering Sea - Conservation and management of pollock

The Council adopted a decision ([7278/16](#)) authorising the opening of negotiations by Poland, in the interest of the EU, to seek the status of Regional Economic Integration Organisation for the EU, in order for it to become party to the [Convention on the Conservation and Management of Pollock Resources in the Central Bering Sea](#).

Amendments to fishing opportunities in 2016: sandeel, small-eyed ray and others

On 30 March the Council adopted by written procedure amendments to regulation [2016/72](#) as regards certain fishing opportunities for 2016 ([7273/16](#)).

Regulation [2016/72](#) fixes for 2016 the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks applicable to EU vessels in Union and certain non-Union waters.

The amendments relate to:

- the total allowable catch (TAC) for sandeel in EU waters of zones IIa, IIIa and IV on the basis of the scientific advice issued on 22 February
- a reduction in catches of small-eyed ray within ICES divisions VIIId and VIIe-k and of blonde ray within ICES subarea IV, following scientific advice
- the total catches for horse mackerel and associated by-catches in Union waters of ICES divisions IIa, IVa; subarea VI, divisions VIIa-c, VIIe-k, VIIIa, VIIIb, VIIId and VIIIe; Union and international waters of Vb; and international waters of subareas XII and XIV, which are fixed at 108 868 tonnes, thus allowing for an increased level of catches corresponding to the scientific advice
- a correction on by-catches in Greenland waters to allow for proper reporting of those by-catches
- the transfer to Norway of fishing opportunities for 25 000 blue whiting in exchange for Arctic cod and haddock, ling and some other species, following an agreement with the country
- the quota allocations for cod in ICES subarea I and division IIb is corrected to respect the quota distribution set out in decision [87/277/EEC](#)
- the inclusion of a reporting code for by-catches of orange roughy in SEAFO Sub-Division B1

- the inclusion of the TAC for jack mackerel, in accordance with the outcome of the 2016 meeting of the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation
- the correction of an error regarding the maximum allowable fishing effort in kilowatt days for the Netherlands in the North Sea for the regulated gear BT1
- the number of fishing authorisations to be granted to Venezuela for vessels fishing for snappers in French Guiana waters as well as the maximum number of vessels that may be present at any time

RESEARCH

Advisory bodies on joint programming and international cooperation

The Council updated the mandates of two advisory research bodies:

- the High Level Group on Joint Programming (GPC), which deals with issues related to joint programming in the European Research Area (ERA) ([6214/16](#)), and
- the Strategic Forum for International Science and Technological Cooperation (SFIC), which facilitates the development, implementation and monitoring of the international dimension of the ERA ([6213/16](#)).

Both bodies are dedicated configurations of the [European Research Area and Innovation Committee](#).

INTERNAL MARKET

Chemicals (REACH) - Testing methods on skin and eye irritation and toxicity

The Council did not oppose the adoption by the Commission of a regulation amending the REACH system as regards testing procedures on skin corrosion/irritation, serious eye damage/eye irritation and acute toxicity.

The new Commission regulation will amend annexes VII and VIII to the [REACH regulation](#) (regulation 1907/2006 on the registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals) ([5215/16](#) + [ADD 1](#)).

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

Chemicals - Classification and labelling

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption by the Commission of a regulation amending regulation 1272/2008 on classification, labelling and packaging of substances and mixtures for the purposes of its adaptation to technical and scientific progress ([6195/16](#) + [ADD 1](#)).

Article 37(5) of [regulation 1272/2008](#) provides for the possibility to introduce, update or delete a classification of substances and mixtures, following a thorough risk assessment.

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

TRANSPORT

Trans-European transport network - indicative maps

The Council decided not to object to a Commission delegated regulation which will update the indicative maps of the trans-European transport network (TEN-T) as regards certain neighbouring countries. In particular, the delegated regulation will adapt Annex III of regulation 1315/2013 containing the Union guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network ([5924/16](#) + [ADD 1-8](#)).

The regulation is a delegated act pursuant to article 290 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU. This means that now that the Council has given its consent, the act can enter into force, unless the European Parliament objects.

Passenger ship safety rules

The Council decided not to oppose adoption by the Commission of a directive amending directive 2009/45/EC on safety rules and standards for passenger ships ([5895/16](#), [5895/16 ADD 1](#)).

The Commission directive is subject to the regulatory procedure with scrutiny. This means that now that the Council has given its consent, the Commission may adopt the directive, unless the European Parliament objects.

HEALTH

Regulation on the avoidance of trade diversion of certain key medicines - codification

The Council adopted a codified version of this regulation, which aims at avoiding trade diversion into the EU of certain key medicines ([PE-CONS 5/16](#)).

The new regulation replaces the various acts incorporated into regulation 953/2003 while fully preserving their content.

ENVIRONMENT

Sulphur in liquid fuels: adoption of new directive

The Council adopted a directive ([PE-CONS 24/15](#)) on the reduction in the sulphur content of liquid fuels. This directive lays down the maximum permitted sulphur content of heavy fuel oil, gas oil, marine gas oil and marine diesel oil used in the EU. The aim is to improve air quality and prevent problems such as acidification.

This directive is the result of a codification process, i.e. bringing together a legislative act and all its amendments in a single new act for the sake of clarity and rationality.

Hazardous substances: exemption for medical devices

The Council decided not to object to a Commission delegated directive ([6184/16](#) + [ADD 1](#)) regarding the use of hazardous substances in medical devices. This delegated act amends directive [2011/65/EU](#) (RoHS 2) to include an exemption for lead, cadmium, hexavalent chromium, and polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDE). The exemption refers to its use in spare parts recovered from and used for the repair or refurbishment of medical devices or electron microscopes. By allowing specific applications of otherwise banned substances, the purpose of the new act is to adapt to scientific and technical progress.

This new Commission directive is a delegated act. This implies that now that the Council has decided not to object, it can be published and enter into force, unless the European Parliament objects.

Directive [2011/65/EU](#) (RoHS 2), which the delegated act amends, restricts the use of certain hazardous substances in electrical and electronic equipment. It entered into force in July 2011.

Paris Agreement: decision on the signing

The Council has adopted a decision ([7106/16](#)) on the signing of the Paris Agreement on climate change. This decision authorises the signature of the agreement on behalf of the EU. The signature shall take place on 22 April 2016 or as soon as possible thereafter. The President of the Council can designate and authorised signatory.

The Paris Agreement was adopted at the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which took place in Paris from 30 November to 12 December 2015. The agreement will be open for signature by the parties to the UNFCCC between 22 April 2016 and 21 April 2017. A high-level signing ceremony will take place in New York on 22 April 2016.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Central African Republic - restrictive measures

The Council extended until 31 January 2017 the arms embargo, travel ban and asset freeze against the Central African Republic and made changes to the exemptions to the arms embargo as well as to the designation criteria.

The measures transpose UNSC resolution 2262 (2016) adopted on 27 January 2016.

Iran - Extension of restrictive measures due to human rights concerns

The Council decided to extend until 13 April 2017 its restrictive measures against 82 people and one entity in view of the human rights situation in Iran.

The decision will be published in the Official Journal of the EU on 12 April 2016.

[*EU restrictive measures against Iran*](#)

TRADE**Tunisia - Aid measures - Olive oil**

The Council approved a regulation on emergency trade measures for Tunisia.

The aim of the regulation is to support the Tunisian economy through exceptional and temporary trade measures in the wake of the terrorist attack against the country last year ([PE-CONS 4/16](#) and [7155/16 ADD 1 REV 1](#)).

The regulation opens an annual duty free tariff quota of 35 000 tons of untreated Tunisian olive oil for 2016 and 2017.

Customs duties on imports from the United States of America

The Council approved the Commission's delegated regulation amending Council regulation [673/2005](#) establishing additional customs duties on imports of certain products originating in the United States of America.

The delegated act will be published and enter into force in accordance with article 3(3) of regulation [673/2005](#), as amended, which empowers the Commission to adopt delegated acts in accordance with article 4 to make adjustments and amendments under this article.

The products on which additional duties are to apply are identified by their eight-digit CN codes. The description of products classified under these codes can be found in annex I to regulation [2658/87](#) on the tariff and statistical nomenclature and on the Common Customs Tariff as amended by regulation [1810/2004](#).

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade - Agreement with the Eastern Republic of Uruguay

The Council adopted a decision authorising the signature of an agreement with the Eastern Republic of Uruguay pursuant to article XXIV:6 and article XXVIII of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994 relating to the modification of concessions in the schedule of Croatia in the course of its accession to the EU.

It also decided to forward the draft decision on the conclusion of the agreement to the European Parliament for its consent ([6870/16](#)).

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

Regulatory technical standards - six delegated acts

The Council decided not to object to the following Commission regulations:

- a regulation supplementing regulation 648/2012 with regard to regulatory technical standards on the clearing obligation ([6700/16](#))
- a regulation supplementing regulation 596/2014 laying down regulatory technical standards on the criteria, the procedure and the requirements for establishing an accepted market practice and the requirements for maintaining it, terminating it or modifying the conditions for its acceptance ([6579/16](#))
- a regulation supplementing regulation 596/2014 with regard to regulatory technical standards for the content of notifications to be submitted to competent authorities and the compilation, publication and maintenance of the list of notifications ([6701/16](#))
- a regulation supplementing regulation 596/2014 with regard to regulatory technical standards for the conditions applicable to buy-back programmes and stabilisation measures ([6946/16](#))
- a regulation supplementing regulation 596/2014 with regard to regulatory technical standards for the appropriate arrangements, systems and procedures as well as notification templates to be used for preventing, detecting and reporting abusive practice or suspicious orders or transactions ([6992/16](#))
- a regulation supplementing regulation 596/2014 with regard to regulatory technical standards for the technical arrangements for objective presentation of investment recommendations or other information recommending or suggesting an investment strategy and for disclosure of particular interests or indications of conflicts of interest ([7020/16](#))

The regulations are delegated acts pursuant to article 290 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU. They can now enter into force, unless the European Parliament objects.

BUDGETS

Mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for Sweden

The Council adopted a decision mobilising a total amount of €1.79 million under the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) to provide support for 647 workers dismissed by five Swedish enterprises manufacturing motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers. The redundancies are the result of a continuing structural changes in world trade patterns due to globalisation.

The Council also adopted a decision mobilising €380 000 under the EGF to cover technical assistance. This includes monitoring, information exchange, creation of a knowledge base, administrative and technical support, and conducting an evaluation of the EGF.

The EGF helps workers to find new jobs and develop new skills when they have lost their jobs as a result of changing global trade patterns, e.g. when a large company shuts down or a factory is moved outside the EU, or as a result of the global financial and economic crisis. The help of the EGF consists of co-financing measures such as job-search assistance, careers advice, tailor-made training and re-training, mentoring and promoting entrepreneurship. It also provides one-off, time-limited individual support, such as job-search allowances, mobility allowances and allowances for participating in lifelong learning and training activities.

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

Readmission agreements: Russia - Jordan

The Council adopted a decision on the position to be taken on behalf of the EU within the Joint Readmission Committee set up under the agreement between the European Community and Russia on readmission, concerning a recommendation with regard to readmission applications requiring the arrangement of interviews ([7081/16](#)).

The Council also adopted a decision authorising the Commission to negotiate a readmission agreement with Jordan ([6963/16](#)).

EU-Jordan visa facilitation agreement

The Council adopted a decision authorising the Commission to open negotiations for the conclusion of an agreement between the EU and Jordan on the facilitation of the issuance of short-stay visas ([7072/16](#)).

TRANSPARENCY

Public access to documents

On 11 April 2016, the Council approved:

- the reply to confirmatory application 05/c/01/16 ([6576/16](#)).

APPOINTMENTS

Judges appointed to the EU Civil Service Tribunal

By written procedure ended on 22 March 2016 the Council appointed the following persons as judges to the EU Civil Service Tribunal:

- Mr Sean Van Raepenbusch (Belgium)
- Mr Joao Sant'ana (Portugal)
- Mr Alexander Kornezov (Bulgaria)

Their term of office will end the day before the seven posts for judges of the EU Civil Service Tribunal are transferred to the General Court, which is scheduled for September 2016.
