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NOTE

From:	Presidency
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Acceleration of Sustainable Plant Protection - <i>Endorsement of the implementation plan (including the recommendations)</i>

Delegations will find in Annex a note from the Netherlands Presidency on the above mentioned subject to be dealt with at the meeting of the Council (Agriculture and Fisheries) on 27-28 June 2016.

AGRIFISH Council meeting on 27 and 28 June 2016: Acceleration of Sustainable Plant Protection

Results of the expert group

1. Introduction

At the AGRIFISH Council meeting on 22 October 2015, the idea put forward by the Netherlands to establish a temporary expert group with the aim of delivering a plan to accelerate sustainable plant protection was broadly supported by Member States.

The Commission agreed to set up this group, composed of 19 Member States delegates¹ and EFSA, which met five times between December 2015 and May 2016. During the last meeting of the expert group on 11 May 2016, the 19 participating Member States agreed on the attached plan and to submit it to the Council of Ministers. On 15 June 2016, at a Working Party of Agricultural Attachés, Member States have unanimously expressed their support for the implementation plan and its recommendations.

2. Summary of the plan

The plan acknowledges the progress the EU has already made to date and identifies actions to be taken by the Commission, Member States and stakeholders with the aim of increasing the availability of low-risk plant protection products and speeding up the implementation of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) in the EU.

¹ AT, BE, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FR, HR, IE, IT, LT, LV, MT, NL, PL, SE, SK, UK.

With regard to low-risk product availability the expert group recommends actions such as:

- expediting administrative processes for the approval of low-risk active substances and the authorisation of low-risk plant protection products, while maintaining the high standards of risk assessment,
- considering measures to guide and stimulate businesses to apply for authorisations to place their products on the market,
- identifying low-risk substances already on the market and
- clarifying certain regulatory requirements such as the criteria for low-risk substances and products and the assessment of their efficacy.

It should be noted that applicants also play an important role by ensuring they submit high-quality and complete dossiers.

Looking beyond the current regulatory framework, the expert group further recommends several options to accelerate the placing on the market of low-risk products and increase the availability of other alternatives, such as basic substances, to be explored in the upcoming review process of the plant protection regulation.

With regard to accelerating the implementation of IPM, the expert group reaffirms the need for research and innovation to develop new methodologies and alternatives to protect against current and future pests and reduce reliance on pesticides. It draws attention to the importance of practical research and demonstration farms to develop and introduce new IPM methodologies to farmers and recommends that this should be a continued priority for EU research programmes. The group recommends in particular that Member States actively promote applications in response to upcoming calls for these programmes, such as under Horizon 2020.

It recommends further progress in sharing information on IPM between Member States through EU training initiatives and the internet.

Finally, the expert group recommends that the Member States and the Commission follow up on the implementation of the plan (before the end of 2017) by discussing its progress in the expert group, the Standing Committee and the Council.

The Presidency wishes to inform the Council on the implementation plan prepared by the expert group, including its recommendations, and the support it received up to now and invites Member States and the Commission to confirm their support for it.
