



Council of the
European Union

Brussels, 28 September 2016
(OR. en)

12666/16

AGRI 507
AGRIORG 78
AGRILEG 137
CONSOM 226

NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: Ministerial Conference "The consumers have the right to be informed", 19 August 2016, Maribor
- Information from the Slovenian delegation

In view of the "Agriculture and Fisheries" Council of 10 October 2016, delegations will find attached a document provided by the Slovenian delegation on the above-mentioned subject, that will be presented under the agenda point "Any other business".

In the margins of 54th International Fair of Agriculture and Food AGRA, a ministerial conference “The consumers have the right to be informed”, in organisation of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food of the Republic of Slovenia, took place on 19 August 2016 in Maribor, Slovenia.

The conference was attended by Ministers, State Secretaries, Directors-General and other senior representatives of the ministries from 13 EU Member States and the Western Balkan countries (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia). A representative of the European Commission and a Member of the European Parliament also participate in the conference. The guest of honour was on behalf of the Chairman of the EU Agriculture and Fisheries, Mr. Jozef Kamenicky, State Secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic.

The objective of the conference was to exchange views on the issue of providing information about the place of origin/country of origin and additional information through various quality schemes, in views of consumers and producers. Discussion at the conference focused on three key areas: (1) Mandatory or voluntary labelling of the origin and provenance of food and agricultural products, (2) quality policy and (3) Understand the various indications by consumers and their right to choose.

Participants from 11 countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, Latvia, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) signed a joint declaration (see Annex) that provides guidance and some concrete proposals for developing a model that will address changing consumers’ expectations regarding information on the country of origin or place of provenance for certain foods, quality of food and respective agriculture practices. This model represents an opportunity and added value to the competitiveness of European agriculture and food sectors, which is especially important in the context of globalization and liberalization of trade in food and agricultural products.

Under the initiative of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food of the Republic of Slovenia, Ministers, responsible for agriculture, or their representatives, met on 19 August 2016 in Maribor, Slovenia, to address changing consumers' expectations regarding information on the country of origin or place of provenance for certain foods, quality of food and respective agriculture practices.

They exchanged views on whether and to what extent current policies, both at the EU as well as the national level, address expectations of contemporary consumers by means of legislative provisions regarding labelling of food and agricultural products and providing additional information through various quality schemes and indication of sustainable, environmentally and animal friendly agricultural practices for European agriculture. The aspect of the impact of globalization and liberalization of agricultural products trade on labelling and quality policy was also encompassed. They discussed the benefits and costs of increasing the scope of mandatory labelling of origin for certain foods and presented their plans in relation to informing and raising the awareness of consumers regarding the data on the place of provenance of basic ingredients. Furthermore, the potential of quality schemes and the possible need of introducing new ones related to sustainable agricultural practices and supporting local production were discussed.

With the aim to contribute to development of a model that will address changing consumers' expectations regarding information on the country of origin or place of provenance for certain foods, quality of food and respective agriculture practices, the participating representatives of Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, Latvia, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia adopted the following conclusions.

We

1. ACKNOWLEDGE that our task is to ensure the sustainable development of agriculture and production of quality food by providing consumers' with relevant information on the country of origin or place of provenance for certain foods, quality of food and respective agriculture practices and to adequately respond to changing consumers' preferences in this respect.

2. RECOGNISE that the current EU legal framework already covers many aspects of consumers' expectations within the food information and quality policy whereby more action at all levels is needed to help the consumers make informed choices on the food they eat.
3. WELCOME in this respect current initiatives, both at EU and national levels, on improving the provisions on voluntarily labelling of country of origin with the aim to reduce misleading practices, in particular misleading origin indications; and ACKNOWLEDGE the recently adopted European Parliament's Resolution of 12 May 2016 on mandatory indication of the country of origin or place of provenance for certain foods in which the European Commission is called to implement the mandatory indication of country of origin or place of provenance for all kinds of drinking milk, dairy products and meat products, and to consider extending the mandatory indication of country of origin or place of provenance to other single-ingredient foods or those with one main ingredient.
4. STRESS the need of thorough assessment of extension of scope of mandatory indication of country of origin or place of provenance with regard to additional costs imposed to the food operators and relating to the functioning of the common market.
5. UNDERLINE the importance of the food quality policy as a tool to help highlight to the consumers the qualities and tradition associated with registered products and help producers market their products better, while providing them with legal protection from misuse or falsification of a product name.
6. NOTE the increasing attention of consumers in respect of labelling and quality of food and agricultural products, also in the context of globalization and liberalization of agricultural products trade.
7. EMPHASISE that in respect of quality policy the new development have emerged, namely changed consumers' expectations regarding food produced locally and on the basis of sustainable practices additionally to organic farming (i.e. climate- and environment-friendly practices, animal welfare); and CONCLUDE that further discussion on a possible EU legal framework may be useful and regarding the latter UNDERLINE the importance of including the consumers in this discussion.

8. LOOK FORWARD to future cooperation and putting additional efforts to finalise joint policies and standards in the field of food labelling information and quality policy.
9. AGREE that the conclusions of this conference are to be presented at the Council of the European Union (Agriculture and Fisheries).

Adopted in Maribor, on 19 August 2016.
