



Council of the
European Union

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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: First Forum on the EU rice sector (Milan, 20 February 2017)
- Information from the Italian delegation

Delegations will find in Annex a note from the Italian delegation on the above subject to be presented under "Any other business" at the Council ("Agriculture and Fisheries") on 6 March 2017.

First Forum on the “EU Rice sector” Milan, February 20th 2017

On 20th February 2017, the "First Forum on the EU Rice sector" was held in Milan.

The forum was characterized by an interesting and effective format. It was attended by the stakeholders of the EU producers Member States (growers, industries, the rice group President of COPA and FERM) and also by representatives of the Ministries of Agriculture of the 7 rice growing Member States (Bulgaria, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Spain).

The meeting represented the occasion for a careful examination of market situation and a consequent discussion about the main concerns that the rice sector is facing in these years, in particular the constant increase in import of rice at zero duty from EBA Countries and the continue liberalization of rice import within bilateral agreements.

The increase of the imports is of +65% compared to 2008/2009 of paddy rice and milled rice, the latter with a constant increase in small packaging.

This kind of scenario has caused a constant decrease in the rice surface for “indica” (-40%) and meanwhile an increase of “japonica” surface (+14%) with a consequent production increase of the latter and an increase of the current stocks.

In this context, it would be worth to note that the recent study “Cumulative economic impact of future trade agreements on EU agriculture” drawn up by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) that focused on the effect caused by free trade negotiations on EU markets shows that the rice sector will be among the most affected sectors, in particular with a strong reduction in production and prices.

During the meeting the stakeholders agreed on the following problematics to be considered as topics, asking to the EU Institutions to consider them at the utmost importance for the future of the sector:

- a real recognition of “sensitivity” of the sector by the European Commission in negotiations for the establishment of free trade agreements;

- to consider the possibility for an effective enforcement of the safeguard measures for imports from LDCs and other GSP origins;
 - the establishment of reciprocity in phytosanitary and commercial matters, in order to promote a fair market in respect of social and workers' rights;
 - to consider the importance of the high level of quality of the European rice production in terms of food safety and security, environmental sustainability and for social and workers' rights;
 - to take into account the “specificity” of the rice sector in the next CAP, in particular for the great added value of the rice for the environment, biodiversity and water management;
 - to consider the possibility to improve promotional initiatives with EU financial support aimed at increasing consumption of rice grown in the European Union.
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