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**NOTE**

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From: General Secretariat of the Council  
To: Council

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Subject: International Conference on the Future of Mountain Agriculture in the Alps  
- Information from the Austrian delegation

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Delegations will find in the Annex a note from the Austrian delegation on the above subject to be presented under "Any other business" at the Council (Agriculture and Fisheries) on 9 October 2017.

**International Conference on the Future of Mountain Agriculture in the Alps**

One of the priority topics of the Austrian Presidency of the Alpine Convention is Mountain Agriculture. To address the future challenges and possible developments in the field of EU Common Agricultural Policy 2020 the “International Conference on the Future of Mountain Agriculture in the Alps” took place in Sankt Johann im Pongau (Austria) on 13th and 14th of September.

The aim of the conference was to have an in-depth overview of and an open discussion on the challenges mountain agriculture is facing today and was an occasion to discuss about the perspectives of mountain agriculture within the framework defined by the future developments of CAP 2020. Mr Christian Schmidt, the German Federal Minister for Food and Agriculture as well as more than 200 relevant stakeholders and high-profile experts, ranging from mountain farmers, to associations and Chambers of agriculture, to representatives of local, regional and national governments followed the invitation of the current President of the Alpine Convention, the Austrian Federal Minister for Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management Mr Andrä Rupprechter. He emphasized the important role of multi-functional family farms which are the pillars of mountain farming and the basis for a continuing land management. The support of the mountain regions and the improvement of the value added of mountain products are essential objectives for securing sustainable agriculture in the Mountain and Less-favoured Areas. The conference was also attended by high-ranking representatives of the Member States of the Alpine Convention (France, Italy, Slovenia, Liechtenstein and Switzerland).

As one highlight of the Conference the “Memorandum of the Alpine regions on the development of Mountain Farming in the Context of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)” was adopted, a position paper for negotiations on the next CAP for the period 2020-2027. In this Memorandum the Alpine Regions call for far-sighted conditions in the next CAP period to ensure multifunctional mountain farming. The established agricultural measures such as direct payments are to be financed from Community funds, support for the Mountainous and Less-Favoured Areas requires greater scope for regional adaptation measures in rural development as well as joint funding by the EU and the Member States.

During its two-year term in office, the Austrian Presidency wants to implement the “Protect and Utilise” concept. Protection and development of the Alps go hand in hand and are not mutually exclusive. “Protect and Utilise” comprises the three key elements of sustainability: environment, economy and social concerns.

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