



**COUNCIL OF
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NOTE

from:	General Secretariat of the Council
to:	Delegations
Subject:	Partial summary record of the meeting of the European Parliament Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI) held on 17 December 2013

– Items 6 and 7 on the agenda

The meeting was chaired by Mr DE CASTRO (S&D, IT).

Item 6 on the agenda

Information provision and promotion measures for agricultural products on the internal market and in third countries

AGRI/7/14631

***I 2013/0398(COD) COM(2013)0812 – C7-0416/2013

Rapporteur: Esther Herranz García (PPE)

Responsible: AGRI –

Opinions: CONT –

IMCO –

- Exchange of views

The rapporteur on this file, Ms HERRANZ GARCIA (EPP, ES), welcomed the proposal which was aimed mainly at laying down the necessary measures to improve information provision and enable targeted actions to promote European products in the EU and in third countries. She said that it was difficult for European products to compete with products originating from third countries and she pointed to trade negotiations with the US, Canada and Mercosur which were also bound to put more pressure on producers in the EU. In order to ease this situation, it was vital to establish a strong image for the European agricultural and food sector.

One way to increase the competitiveness of European products was to better inform consumers of their added value, such as high quality, food safety and responsible environmental management. With regard to the budget, the rapporteur considered the current figure of 75% allocated to external markets as too high. While she acknowledged that external markets offered a great potential for growth, she asked for the internal markets not to be neglected. Consequently, she requested that this figure be reconsidered.

In relation to the promotion of wine, the rapporteur called on the Commission to allow for exclusive wine campaigns. She regretted that in the current drafting eligibility was limited to campaigns which, in addition to wine, also covered another agricultural or food product (e.g. cheese). On the internal market wine programmes would be limited to informing consumers of the European quality schemes relating to geographical indications.

Ms HERRANZ GARCIA believed that the inclusion of the promotion of brands and origin in the proposal responded to one of the greatest demands of the whole sector. At the same time the rapporteur asked the Commission how the indication of brands could be made visible.

Finally, she expressed her concern over the elimination of co-financing at national level which could give rise to discrimination among Member States.

In the debate that followed Mr NICHOLSON (ECR, UK) expressed his satisfaction with the end of the co-financing system. This would lead to both simplification and greater efficiency. He stressed that the current diversity of agricultural products in Europe should be preserved while appropriate support and promotion should be allowed for existing unique brands.

Ms GARCIA PEREZ (S&D, ES) did not fully agree with the elimination of co-financing. While the objective of simplification could be achieved, the system might be important in some cases and should therefore be maintained in some way.

Mr DORFMANN (EPP, IT) believed it was important to promote high-quality European goods and to better position European labels marking 'organic' produce on the markets.

Mr AGNEW (EFD, UK) pointed to the difficulty and complexity of defining the word 'European' products and asked for caution when it came to financing their promotion.

In reply, the Commission representative stressed that it was of the utmost importance to further develop and protect the EU's agricultural and food sector on the world market. To that end third countries played an important role as they provided an excellent potential for growth. While internal markets were not to be neglected, the Commission considered the 30% of the budget currently allocated to external markets as too low.

Talking about brand and origin, the Commission representative said that it was a requirement in promotion campaigns to send a generic European message. While brands could remain visible, they should not be the main message and there should be also other brands visible on the product. With regard to the mention of origin, he said that it could be secondary to the European message. On third country markets, the origin could be the main message provided that the European message was on the same level.

Item 7 on the agenda

Presentation by the Commission on the "A new EU forest strategy: for forests and the forest-based sector"

The Commission representative presented the Communication which was intended to replace the existing forest strategy dating back to 1998. He explained that while DG AGRI was in the lead, this communication was supported by six Commissioners (AGRI, ENV, ENTR, CLIMA, ENER and RTD) and as a result, a holistic approach to forest management could be ensured. This approach aimed at creating more synergies between the sectors involved, at covering the multiple benefits of forests and at addressing the whole forest value chain.

The Commission representative said that the new strategy assigned an important role to forests from a socio-economic and environmental point of view while it also followed other key EU policy objectives, such as EU 2020 and 2050 targets.

The Commission representative highlighted the three key principles of the new strategy which were: sustainable forest management; resource efficiency; and global forest responsibility.

In terms of the next steps, the Commission representative said that Council Conclusions were being prepared in the relevant Council Working Party while the implementation phase had already started. A review to assess the progress made was expected to be carried out in 2018.

Following the presentation, Ms KÖSTINGER (EPP, AT) welcomed the fact that the new forest strategy covered the whole forest value chain. At the same time she asked for account to be taken of forest management outside the EU as well. Furthermore, she believed it was disproportionate to make forest management mandatory and it could lead to more bureaucracy.

Mr HÄUSLING (Greens/EFA, DE) was critical about the new forest strategy as he found it too general and it did not give specific guidance for the future. He explained that there was also a contradiction between the energy use of wood and the protection of forests. Since in some regions in Europe there was considerable competition over forest use, sustainability targets could easily come under threat. Mr HÄUSLING also pointed out that regional and national differences should be taken into account when defining the new forest strategy. He mentioned in particular the South of Europe which was more exposed to forest fires than other parts of Europe and needed therefore particular reconstruction measures after such incidents.

Mr OLJENICZAK (S&D, PL) called for the introduction of a common insurance scheme to reimburse land owners in the case of forest fires resulting in high financial loss. He also proposed to establish forests in such areas which were marginalised or not in use.

Mr DORFMANN (EPP, IT) on the other hand was opposed to a regionalised approach and favoured a comprehensive strategy covering all areas. He disagreed with Mr HÄUSLING concerning the overutilization of forests and indicated that in some mountainous areas forests could even be underutilised. He was also sceptical about an insurance scheme to cover forest fires and was of the view that the EU should be cautious about providing financial assistance for this purpose.

The Chair, Mr DE CASTRO (S&D, IT) announced that as the AGRI Committee was not yet authorised to draw up an own-initiative report on this dossier, the Parliament would not be in a position to finalise work on this file before the end of its term.

- **Date of the next meeting:**

20 - 21 January 2014 (Brussels).
