



Council of the
European Union

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PV CONS 6
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PECHE 50


DRAFT MINUTES
COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
(**Agriculture** and Fisheries)
19 February 2018

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1. Adoption of the agenda

The Council adopted the agenda set out in 5855/18 + COR 1.

2. Approval of "A" items

Non-legislative list

5919/18

The Council adopted the "A" items listed in 5919/18. Statements related to these items are set out in the Addendum.

For the following items, the related documents should read as follows:

Agriculture

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Sugar levies for 1999/2000 and 2000/2001
<i>Adoption</i>
approved by SCA on 12.02.2018 | C | 5608/18
5620/18
<u>+ COR 1 (de)</u> |
|---|---|---|

EU positions for international negotiations

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 6. Decision on Western Balkans Transport Community Treaty
<i>Adoption</i>
approved by Coreper, Part 1, on 14.02.2018 | C | 5806/18
5438/18
<u>+ COR 1 (de)</u> |
|--|---|---|

Non-legislative activities

- | | | |
|---|----|---------|
| 3. <u>Communication from the Commission on "The Future of Food and Farming"</u>
<i>Information from the Commission</i>
<i>Exchange of views</i> | P2 | 6066/18 |
|---|----|---------|

On the basis of the questions proposed by the Presidency in 6066/18, the Council exchanged views on the Commission Communication on "The Future of Food and Farming" focusing on direct payments, environmental protection, climate action and rural development. The Council took note of the information provided by Commissioner Hogan on the main aspects of the Communication concerning these topics. Within this agenda item, the Council also addressed two AOBs, tabled respectively by the Visegrad Group (supported by Croatia) and Poland. At the end of the session, the Presidency concluded the agenda item delivering the oral conclusions of the debate as follows:

1. Ministers stressed the importance of direct payments but considered that there was scope to improve their design by targeting them in a way which would allow to achieve a fairer and more effective outcome for farmers across the EU.
2. To this end support should be directed to genuine farmers by focusing on those who are actively farming to earn their living as well as on young farmers, small and medium sized farms, areas with natural constraints and regions lagging behind.
3. Many Ministers found it worth exploring mechanisms such as redistributive and degressive payments as well as capping of direct payments. They stressed that such mechanisms should remain voluntary with discretion left to Member States.
4. The principle of equality between Member States in the distribution of direct payments was widely considered as an important element of fairness. All relevant aspects should be taken into account.
5. Many Ministers emphasised the importance of voluntary coupled support as an efficient tool to support sensitive sectors, in particular in the light of increasingly open markets and the conclusion of a series of free trade agreements. To better contribute to the CAP's objectives, some Member States supported the extension of voluntary coupled support to further sectors and purposes, while others said that care should be taken to avoid any risk of distorting competition.
6. Ministers highlighted the current contribution of farmers to the protection of the environment and the mitigation of climate change. They called for a higher environmental ambition of the CAP through common objectives to be set at EU level, without undermining the level-playing field. Farmers should receive appropriate incentives and be adequately rewarded for their provision of public goods.
7. With regard to the proposed new conditionality, combining in one layer the cross compliance and greening, Member States called for revising and streamlining the current requirements, particularly concerning greening.


8. Member States shared the view that the environmental and climate measures envisaged under the second pillar should remain voluntary. They also stressed the synergy and the complementarity between the interventions funded by both pillars, avoiding duplications.
9. Many Ministers supported a result-oriented delivery of the policy and called for simplification and reduction of administrative burden. In order to achieve that, the complexity of the current "green architecture" of the CAP should be significantly reduced. At the same time, Member States and regions should enjoy greater flexibility in the design of measures to allow tailor-made solutions according to local specificities and needs.
10. Ministers emphasised the need to maintain vital and resilient rural areas, in particular by creating jobs, promoting growth and favouring generational renewal in the farming sector. Many Ministers stressed that rural development measures should aim at improving the conditions of rural regions as a whole, making them more attractive for living and offering more opportunities to young people. In this regard, coordination and synergies with other EU policies and other structural funds are important for the integrated development of these areas.
11. Most Ministers pointed to the complexity of current Rural Development Programmes, calling for a simpler programming in the future and a timely approval of the proposed CAP Strategic Plans by the Commission. EU rules related to rural development policy should be simplified and relevant legislation should be approved on time to allow Member States to prepare their programming documents without delay
12. Many Ministers agreed on the crucial need to stimulate generational renewal in the agricultural sector by improving the current instruments available under both pillars of the CAP and enhancing their complementarity with other EU and national measures.
13. The Council took note of the joint declaration of the Ministers of Agriculture of the Visegrad Group and Croatia on the Commission's Communication on "The Future of Food and Farming", as well as of the comments by Member States and the Commission.

14. The Council took note of the information from the Polish delegation on the contribution of cohesion policy and other EU policies after 2020 to rural development, as well as of the comments by Member States and the Commission.


The Council also addressed the following non-legislative discussion items (4-5).

4. **Revision of the EU Bioeconomy Strategy and the role of the agricultural sector** 5757/18
Exchange of views
5. **EU Protein Plan** 5841/18
Information from the Commission

Any other business

6. a) **Joint declaration of the Ministers of Agriculture of the Visegrad Group and Croatia on the Commission Communication on the Future of Food and Farming**  6060/18
Information from the Hungarian delegation, supported by the Czech, Croatian, Polish and Slovak delegations


Item 6 a) was addressed under item 3.


- b) **Contribution of cohesion policy and other EU policies after 2020 to rural development, as a complement to support under the CAP**  6151/18
Information from the Polish delegation

Item 6 b) was addressed under item 3.

The Council addressed the following any other business item. (6c)

- c) **Task Force for Rural Africa – strengthening our partnership in food and farming** 6115/18
Information from the Commission

 Public debate proposed by the Presidency (Article 8(2) of the Council's Rules of Procedure)

 Item based on a Commission proposal