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OUTCOME OF THE COUNCIL MEETING

3607th Council meeting

Agriculture and Fisheries

Brussels, 19 March 2018

President **Rumen Porodzanov**
Minister for Agriculture, Food and Forestry of Bulgaria

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- Where declarations, conclusions or resolutions have been formally adopted by the Council, this is indicated in the heading for the item concerned and the text is placed between quotation marks.
- Documents for which references are given in the text are available on the Council's internet site (<http://www.consilium.europa.eu>).
- Acts adopted with statements for the Council minutes which may be released to the public are indicated by an asterisk; these statements are available on the Council's internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

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ITEMS DEBATED

AGRICULTURE

– *Communication on "The Future of Food and Farming" / Conclusions on the future CAP*

Ministers exchanged views on the [Commission's communication](#) on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

During the debate, a large number of member states expressed their support for presidency conclusions on the communication. These conclusions are intended to make a positive contribution to the debate that will lead to the drafting of legislative proposals on the future CAP (see [press release](#) of the Bulgarian presidency including the text of the conclusions).

An Any Other Business point on the joint declaration by Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland on the Commission's communication was considered together with the debate on the CAP (read below).

The Commission communication on the future of food and farming was adopted on 29 November 2017 and presented to the Council at its meeting on 11 December 2017.

The communication puts marked emphasis on objectives such as fostering a smart and resilient agricultural sector, bolstering environmental care and climate action, and strengthening the social fabric of rural areas. In order to achieve these objectives and unleash the potential of the agricultural sector, the existing two-pillar structure is maintained but major changes are also proposed, such as an enhanced role for member states in drafting their own strategic plan and the scrapping of greening rules in order to take a more targeted and more ambitious yet flexible approach.

At the January 2018 Council meeting the Council already had the opportunity to debate various elements of the communication such as the CAP's added value, the key objectives to be set at EU level and the appropriate level of subsidiarity, and at the February Council meeting it discussed direct support, environmental aspects and rural development.

FISHERIES

– *Proposal for a multi-annual plan for demersal stocks in the Western Mediterranean Sea*

The Commission presented to the Council its [proposal](#) establishing a multi-annual plan for fisheries exploiting demersal stocks in the Western Mediterranean Sea.

Demersal fisheries in the Western Mediterranean have a high commercial value and are currently managed by national management plans. These plans are complemented at EU level by a three-year discard plan adopted in 2016 to implement the landing obligation.

The new Commission proposal aims to address the high levels of overfishing in the area by introducing a multi-annual plan at EU level for the first time. The objective is to ensure that fishing activities in the area are environmentally sustainable in the long term and are managed in a way that secures economic, social and employment benefits.

The main elements of the proposal include:

- setting quantifiable fishing targets for the most commercially important demersal stocks: hake, red mullet, deep-water rose shrimp, Norway lobster, blue and red shrimp, and giant red shrimp
- simplifying fisheries management under one main regulatory framework
- reducing fishing activities in the first year of the plan in line with the scientific advice
- restricting trawlers from operating in sea beds up to 100m deep, from 1 May to 31 July each year, in order to reserve the coastal zone for more selective gears
- establishing regional cooperation among France, Italy and Spain.

In the debate that followed the Commission's presentation, the delegations that took the floor welcomed the proposal. Some asked the Commission to consider the specific features of the sea basin in question and others to guarantee a certain continuity with the measures already undertaken at national or regional level.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

– Joint declaration on the communication on "The Future of Food and Farming"

On behalf of LT, EE and PL, the Latvian delegation presented a [joint declaration](#) by their agriculture ministers which had been signed in Riga on 13 March 2018. The declaration concerns the Commission communication on "The Future of Food and Farming" and sets out the common position of the four member states on key elements of the CAP, including external convergence of direct payments.

– Working conditions and safety on board fishing vessels

The Commission briefed ministers on the progress made in the ratification and transposition of international instruments concerning working conditions and safety on board fishing vessels.

In particular the Commission encouraged member states to proceed swiftly with the ratification of the relevant international conventions that aim to ensure decent working and living conditions for seafarers in the fisheries sector, i.e.: the Work in Fishing Convention, or "C188" (ILO 2007), the STCW-Fisheries Convention (STCW-F, IMO 1995) and the Cape Town Agreement on safety of fishing vessels. The aim of a swift ratification process would be to avoid legal uncertainties and possible conflicts between different jurisdictions.

– Joint declaration on the future development of freshwater aquaculture in the EU after 2020

On behalf of AT, HR, CZ, DE, FR, HU, PL, RO, SK, SI and ES, the Czech delegation briefed the Council on the joint declaration on the future development of freshwater aquaculture in the EU after 2020.

The declaration highlights the important role of freshwater aquaculture in the EU and its potential for enabling a sustainable growth in production and an improvement in food security. The declaration calls for adequate political and financial support in the post-2020 period, as well as for greater flexibility for member states to address their national needs and long-term objectives.

In the following debate, some delegations took the floor to support the joint declaration by the 11 member states. The Commission welcomed the initiative, underlined the importance of freshwater aquaculture for blue growth, and restated the Commission's commitment to the support of aquaculture in Europe.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

FISHERIES

Directive on the control of Newcastle disease

The Council authorised the Commission to enter into negotiations with Mediterranean and Black Sea third countries in order to draw up a regional plan of action on small-scale fisheries.

The regional plan would be a non-binding instrument to enhance the development of sustainable small-scale fisheries in both sea basins.

The Commission's intention is to prepare the plan in time for the high-level conference on small-scale fisheries, which will take place on 25 and 26 September 2018 in Malta.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

VAT - Hungary - Temporary employment

The Council adopted a decision allowing Hungary to apply a reversal of liability for the payment of VAT ('reverse charge mechanism') in order to prevent fraud in the temporary employment industry ([6919/18](#) + [6571/18](#)).

Until 31 December 2020, Hungary is allowed to provide that the person liable for the payment of VAT is the taxable person to whom supplies of staff are made.

VAT - Denmark - Business vehicles

The Council adopted a decision allowing Denmark to determine the taxable amount of VAT for the use of light goods vehicles for private purposes by reference to a flat rate ([6915/18](#) + [6555/18](#)).

The decision will apply until 31 December 2020.

TRANSPORT

International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) – insider threat

The Council approved a working paper on insider threat for the upcoming 29th meeting of the ICAO Aviation Security Panel (AVSECP). The meeting will take place on 19 to 23 March 2018 in Montréal.

ENVIRONMENT

Eco-management and EMAS audit scheme: environmental reporting

The Council decided not to object to a Commission regulation amending Annex IV to regulation No 1221/2009 on the voluntary participation by organisations in a Community eco-management and audit scheme (EMAS) ([6432/18](#) and [5642/18](#) + [ADD1](#)). This annex concerns environmental reporting, including environmental performance indicators.

This means that, unless the European Parliament opposes them, the Commission may adopt the proposed measures in accordance with Article 5a(3)(d) of Council Decision [1999/468/EC](#).

Eco-management and EMAS audit scheme: sectoral reference document

The Council decided not to object to a Commission decision concerning the sectoral reference document on best environmental practices, performance indicators and benchmarks of excellence for the public administration sector under regulation No 1221/2009 on the voluntary participation by organisations in a Community eco-management and audit scheme (EMAS) ([6431/18](#) and [5520/18](#) + [ADD1](#)).

This means that, unless the European Parliament opposes them, the Commission may adopt the proposed measures in accordance with Article 5a(3)(d) of Council Decision [1999/468/EC](#).

New passenger cars

The Council decided not to raise objections to a Commission regulation amending Annex 1 to regulation No [443/2009](#) concerning the evolution of the mass of new passenger cars registered in 2014, 2015 and 2016 ([6435/18](#) and [5653/18](#)).

The regulation is a delegated act pursuant to article 290 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU. It can now enter into force, unless the European Parliament objects.

RESEARCH

Morocco - Food and water projects - "PRIMA" initiative

The Council authorised the signing and provisional application of an agreement with Morocco with a view to setting out the terms and conditions for the participation in the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area ([PRIMA](#)) ([6532/18](#) and [6533/18](#)).

PRIMA aims to foster research and innovation capacities and to develop knowledge and common innovative solutions for improving the efficiency, safety, security and sustainability of agro-food systems and of water provision and management in the Mediterranean area.

On 30 May 2017, the Council authorised the opening of negotiations with Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Morocco to conclude agreements laying down the terms and conditions for their participation in the PRIMA programme ([9111/17](#)).

In order to participate in the PRIMA programme, international agreements have to be negotiated between the EU and any third countries which are not associated with the EU's research framework programme "Horizon 2020".

PRIMA is scheduled to run for ten years, starting in 2018.

APPOINTMENTS

European Court of Auditors

The Council appointed Ms Annemie TURTELBOOM (Belgium) as a member of the European Court of Auditors for the period running from 1 May 2018 to 30 April 2024 ([5662/18](#)).
