

13931/17

(OR. en)

PRESSE 57  
PR CO 57

## OUTCOME OF THE COUNCIL MEETING

3571st Council meeting

### Agriculture and Fisheries

Brussels, 6 November 2017

President **Tarmo Tamm**  
Minister of Rural Affairs of the Republic of Estonia

# P R E S S

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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>).
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## **ITEMS DEBATED**

### **Sustainable use of pesticides**

The Commission informed the Council about the main findings of its report on the sustainable use of pesticides.

The report focuses in particular on member states' national action plans (NAPs) and on the progress achieved in the implementation of directive [2009/128/EC](#) on the sustainable use of pesticides. It recognises that member states have made substantial progress, particularly with regard to training pesticide users, controlling aerial spraying, controlling the handling and storage of pesticides, and reducing pesticide use in specific areas. At the same time it also highlights significant gaps in the drafting and implementation of NAPs, notably on the assessment of integrated pest management (IPM) use and the gathering and use of information on pesticide poisoning. One of the most critical points highlighted in the report is the absence of specific and measurable targets in NAPs.

During the debate that followed the presentation, ministers shared ideas on current and future measures to achieve the objectives of the European directive on the sustainable use of pesticides, and on how to speed up the implementation of the integrated pest management principles.

Ministers agreed that the most important measures for achieving the objectives of the directive included: exchanging information, training users of plant protection products, effectively implementing the IPM principles, controlling plant protection equipment, and simplifying the placing on the market of plant protection products.

They also considered that in order to accelerate the implementation of the IPM principles, the following actions were important: improving the use of low-risk plant protection products, creating adequate monitoring systems for pests, providing adequate financial support, increasing the use of non-chemical methods, training and controlling users of plant protection products, and developing a common network of risk indicators.

Sustainable plant protection had already featured on the agenda of the Council in June 2016, when the Council supported an implementation plan on increasing low-risk plant protection product availability and accelerating integrated pest management implementation in member states ([10041/1/16 REV 1](#) + [ADD 1](#)).

## **Trade-related agricultural issues**

The Council was given an update by the Commission on trade-related agricultural issues.

In its presentation the Commission emphasised the good state of EU agri-food exports. It also reported on the EU efforts to open up new world markets and promote EU agricultural products, as well as the progress made on a number of free trade agreements. Particular attention was given to ongoing free trade negotiations, e.g. with the WTO, Mexico and Mercosur, and on the substance, state of play and possible outcome of those negotiations.

Ministers welcomed the work carried out by the Commission but also expressed concern about the possible impact of certain free trade agreements, e.g. the one with Mercosur, on sensitive agricultural products such as beef, ethanol and sugar. They also encouraged the Commission to involve member states more closely in the negotiations. Reciprocity and the balance between defensive and offensive interests were mentioned as some of the principles that should guide negotiations.

Various ministers were also concerned that negotiations within the WTO could touch on the blue and green boxes, i.e. subsidies that are tied to programmes that limit production, thereby prejudicing negotiations on the future CAP post-2020.

The last Council discussion on trade-related agricultural issues had been held in July 2017.

## **Sustainable soil management**

The Council held an exchange of views on sustainable soil management on the basis of the following questions:

- 1) How should the current high level of agricultural production be maintained - or in some cases increased - while ensuring that agricultural soils are managed sustainably? What policy measures are needed to achieve that goal?
- 2) What are the best strategies for protecting valuable agricultural soils and avoiding soil sealing, at both the EU and Member State levels?

Ministers stressed that sustainable soil management plays a key role in increasing productivity, ensuring food security and contributing to climate objectives. They explained that soil-related problems vary in different member states (e.g. in the north they may be caused by rainfall, while in south by drought) and therefore flexibility is needed in finding the right solutions and mix of instruments. Although ministers underlined that the current CAP already provided a sufficient policy framework for sustainable soil management (cross-compliance, greening and support under the rural development programmes), they were open to consider further improvements through: innovation, new technologies, knowledge transfer, awareness raising and additional incentives for farmers.

Overall, ministers were of the view that the future CAP should include the principles of sustainable soil management and contribute to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, as well as of the climate targets set out in the Paris agreement. To cover all these possible improvements, adequate budget should be ensured.

Ministers also addressed the specific issue of soil sealing and loss of agricultural land, acknowledging that the solutions would depend largely on specific national circumstances and that the exchange of best practices should be encouraged.

The presidency also reported on the outcome of the [high-level conference](#) on 'Soil for sustainable food production and ecosystem services' took place in Tallinn on 5-6 October 2017, and focused on policy measures, climate change, soil data, and communication and awareness-raising ([13314/1/17 REV 1](#)).

The Agriculture and Fisheries Council discussed soil issues in 2015, at the request of the French delegation. The topic is relevant in the context of the future review of the Common Agricultural Policy and of the 2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development.

**Any other business**

– *Outcome of the summit on 'Equal quality of products for all', 13 October 2017 - Bratislava*

The Czech and Slovak delegations informed the Council about the outcome of the summit entitled 'Equal quality of products for all', held on 13 October in Bratislava.

The meeting's objective was to seek options for a joint approach involving all relevant actors to the problem of dual quality of food, in order to achieve increased transparency and consumer trust.

Several ministers underlined the importance of the meeting and of its outcome, and shared the Czech and Slovak concerns about consumer trust and equality. The Commission illustrated the initiatives taken so far, in particular on promoting a constant dialogue with the industry and empowering national authorities to combat unfair commercial practices.

The issue of dual quality of foodstuffs had already been on the agenda of the **Agriculture and Fisheries Council** in March and July 2017.

– *Outcome of the meeting of the Visegrad group, 21 September 2017*

**a) renewable energy directive**

On behalf of the Visegrad group plus Bulgaria and Romania, Hungary informed the Council about their joint declaration on the renewable energy directive after 2020 ([6456/17](#)).

In their declaration the above-mentioned member states underline the need to maintain or increase the current level of renewable energy sources of agricultural origin after 2020 and advocate a macro-regional approach. They also encourage the Commission to analyse the issue and consider keeping the current requirements on the use of food and feed crops for production of biofuels in EU countries and in third countries.

At the Council meeting Lithuania also expressed support to this declaration.

b) initiatives in the field of knowledge-based agriculture, aquaculture and forestry in the bio-economy (BIOEAST)

On behalf of the Visegrad group plus Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Slovenia, Hungary informed the Council about the group's joint declaration on the BioEast initiative.

The Central Eastern European initiative for knowledge-based agriculture, aquaculture and forestry in the bio-economy was launched in 2014 by the four Visegrad group countries. It provides a common and shared strategic research and innovation framework for working towards sustainable bio-economies in the Central and Eastern European countries. It aims to achieve that by building a network of research institutions, industries and other key stakeholders, including the partnership of countries from the EU13, and ministries that could contribute to the development of the European bio-economy research area.



## **OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**

### **AGRICULTURE**

#### **Indications of spirit drinks**

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission Regulation amending Annex II to Regulation (EC) 110/2008 on the definition, description, presentation, labelling and the protection of geographical indications of spirit drinks ([12786/17](#)).

#### **Official controls on echinoderms**

The Council adopted a decision on the position to be taken on behalf of the European Union within the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) with regard to quality standards for fruit and vegetables ([13234/17](#)).

The UNECE working party on agricultural quality standards (UNECE-WP.7) examines and adopts proposals establishing new UNECE quality standards for fruit and vegetables or amending the existing standards, thereby contributing to the international harmonisation of such standards and setting a framework which ensures fair competition in the trading of fruit and vegetables. The Union participates in UNECE-WP.7 as an observer.

### **FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

#### **African Union-European Union relations**

The Council authorised the opening of negotiations on an Africa Union - European Union memorandum of understanding for a renewed partnership on peace and security.

#### **EU- Central Asia relations**

The Council approved the draft joint communiqué for the EU-Central Asia ministerial meeting that will take place on 10 November in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, is expected to attend the meeting.

## **EU relations with Georgia**

The Council adopted the EU position for the Association Council with Georgia that will be held on 8 December, in Brussels.

## **Western Balkans - Kosovo**

The Council established the EU's common position in preparation for the second meeting of the EU-Kosovo\* Stabilisation and Association Council to be held in Brussels on 17 November 2017.

## **JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS**

### **European Legislation Identifier**

The Council adopted conclusions on the European Legislation Identifier (ELI). It invited member states who introduce ELI on a voluntary basis, as well as the expert group of the relevant Council working party, to take a series of measures aimed at expanding the use of ELI.

The European Legislation Identifier (ELI) is intended to facilitate access to both EU and member states' legislation, and to promote sharing of legal information published through national, European and global legal information systems. Deploying the ELI identifier and structured metadata to reference and classify legislation guarantees easier access to legal information and facilitates its exchange and reuse. ELI is divided into three pillars, which are to be introduced on a voluntary and gradual basis. [\(9855/17\)](#)

### **Schengen evaluation - Iceland**

The Council adopted an implementing decision setting out a recommendation on addressing the deficiencies identified in the 2017 evaluation of Iceland on the application of the Schengen acquis in the field of the common visa policy [\(13968/17\)](#).

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\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

### **Schengen evaluation - France**

The Council adopted an implementing decision setting out a recommendation on addressing the deficiencies identified in the 2016 evaluation of France on the application of the Schengen acquis in the field of the common visa policy ([13967/17](#)).

### **Schengen evaluation - Croatia**

The Council adopted an implementing decision setting out a recommendation on addressing the deficiencies identified in the 2016 evaluation of Croatia with a view to fulfilling the conditions required for application of the Schengen acquis in the field of legislation on firearms ([13969/17](#)).

### **Schengen evaluation - Austria**

The Council adopted an implementing decision setting out a recommendation on addressing the deficiencies identified in the 2016 evaluation of Austria on the application of the Schengen acquis, with regard to the temporary reintroduction of border controls at the internal border with Hungary and the absence of border controls at the internal border with Italy ([13966/17](#)).

### **Short stay visa waiver**

The Council adopted six decisions on the signing of the agreements amending the short stay visa waiver agreements between the EU and Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Mauritius, Seychelles and Saint Kitts and Nevis. It also requested the consent of the European Parliament for the conclusion of these agreements.

The amendments align the agreements with the current EU visa and border acquis by incorporating the new definition of a short stay (90 days in any 180 day period).

([12382/17](#), [12388/17](#), [12385/17](#), [12395/17](#), [12398/17](#), [12391/17](#))

## **TRADE**

### **Association agreement with Chile**

The Council adopted a decision to adopt a protocol to the association agreement between the EU and Chile, in order to take into account the accession of Croatia to the EU.

The EU-Chile association agreement was signed in 2003 and entered into force on 1 May 2004. It includes a comprehensive trade pillar that has led to a significant increase of trade in goods and services between the EU and Chile. In 2015, bilateral trade in goods had more than doubled, from the initial €7.7 billion in 2003 to €15.9 billion in 2016.

The EU and Chile are currently examining the possibility of updating the existing agreement, so as to ensure that it addresses all relevant aspects of the trade and investment relationship between the EU and Chile.

## **INTERNAL MARKET**

### **Formal qualifications and titles of training**

The Council decided not to object to the adoption by the Commission of a decision updating the list of professional titles that qualify for automatic recognition contained in directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications.

The decision amends annex V to directive 2005/36/EC as regards evidence of formal qualifications and the titles of training ([12206/17](#) and [12206/17 ADD1](#)).

The directive on recognition of professional qualifications, which entered into force in 2005, provides that seven professions (architect, doctor of medicine, dental practitioner, midwife, nurse, pharmacist and veterinary surgeon) may qualify for automatic recognition of their qualifications by meeting a minimum training standard.

Holders of qualifications that meet the requirements enjoy automatic recognition of their qualification in all member states.

The directive was amended by directive [2013/55/EU](#).

This Commission decision 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.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

### **CO2 emissions and fuel consumption of heavy-duty vehicles**

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission regulation implementing [Regulation \(EU\) No 595/2009](#) concerning the determination of the CO2 emissions and fuel consumption of heavy-duty vehicles ([11880 + ADD1-3](#)). It also amends [Directive 2007/46/EC](#) and [Commission regulation \(EU\) No 582/2011](#).

This Commission regulation supplements the legal framework for the type-approval of motor vehicles and engines with regard to emissions and vehicle repair and maintenance information established by Commission regulation (EU) No [582/2011](#).

It lays down the rules for issuing licences to operate a simulation tool with a view to determining CO2 emissions and fuel consumption of new vehicles to be sold, registered or brought into service in the EU. The delegated regulation also establishes the rules for operating the simulation tool and declaring the CO2 emissions and fuel consumption values.

This Commission regulation is subject to the regulatory procedure with scrutiny. This means that now that the Council has given its consent, the Commission may adopt the regulation, unless the European Parliament objects. It will thereafter enter into force on the 20th day following its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union.

## **UN Environment Assembly: EU voluntary commitments**

The Council endorsed the list of EU commitments in preparation for the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-3), which will be held from 4-6 December 2017 in Nairobi (13491/17).

The list contains 20 voluntary commitments covering policy initiatives, funding programmes and research-related actions under the overarching theme of UNEA-3, "Towards a Pollution-Free Planet".

The commitments will be now submitted to the UN Environment Programme and published on the UNEA-3 online platform: <http://www.unep.org/environmentassembly/act-now>

On 13 October 2017, the Council adopted conclusions on the EU priorities for UNEA-3 (13070/17), which required the EU and its member states to present specific actions for combating pollution, in the form of voluntary commitments, ahead of the Assembly.

## **HEALTH**

### **Health statistics**

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of Commission regulation (EU) .../... implementing regulation 1338/2008 regarding statistics based on the European Health Interview Survey (EHIS).

European statistics based on the EHIS concern health status, health care and health determinants as well as socio-demographic characteristics of the population aged 15 and over.

## **TRANSPARENCY**

### **Public access to documents**

On 6 November 2017, the Council approved the reply to confirmatory application No 20/c/01/17 (12278/17).