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From: General Secretariat of the Council
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Subject: Outcomes of the workshops organised by the Commission's Task Force on Water and Agriculture (Sorø, 27 November 2018 and Bucharest, 5-6 February 2019)
- Information from the Commission

Delegations will find in Annex an information note received from the Commission services on the above mentioned subject to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the meeting of the "Agriculture and Fisheries" Council on 18 March 2019.

Outcomes of the workshops organised by the Commission's Task Force on Water and Agriculture (Sorø, 27 November 2018 and Bucharest, 5-6 February 2019)

The purpose of this note is to inform the Ministers on recent activities of the Commission's Task Force on water & agriculture.

The Commission's Task Force on water and agriculture has been created to strengthen cooperation between different relevant Commission services, especially DG AGRI, DG ENV and DG JRC. The joint work has started with the purpose to identify ways and carry out activities for helping in the implementation of existing legislation for the achievement of the water good status. This work is built into the discussions and proposals of the Common Agricultural Policy and the implementation of the Water Framework Directive.

The Commission's Staff Working Document on Agriculture and Sustainable Water Management¹ identified several areas within the current legislative framework where increased cooperation could improve the sustainability of water management and agricultural production.

These include better policy implementation; ensuring governance structures for water and agriculture that allow effective coordination; addressing investment needs for securing compliance with EU objectives and matching these with available funding sources; and making effective use of the existing knowledge base to innovate further towards water sustainability in the agricultural sector.

Among various activities, this note intends to inform about the outcome of two workshops occurred at EU level in 2018-2019. The Commission has invited representatives of Member States from agriculture and water authorities and various stakeholders and experts in order to raise awareness of the importance of cross-sectoral approach to managing sustainably water in agriculture.

¹ SWD (2017) 153, Agriculture and Sustainable Water Management in the EU

The topics for the workshops follow the main themes of the Commission's Staff Working Document on agriculture and sustainable water management.

The first workshop – "Addressing Diffuse Water Pollution through the post-2020 CAP" was held on 27 November 2018 in Soro near Copenhagen.

This workshop assessed suitable types of actions to tackle agriculture-related pressures on water quality. It presented and discussed concrete best practices taken or planned under the Water Framework Directive (WFD), Nitrates Directive (ND) and Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to address diffuse pollution from agriculture in various EU regions. Several examples of measures funded by the Rural Development Plans and identified in the Programme of Measures of the River Basin Management Plans have been presented.

It has shown that successful win-win solutions for farmers and the environment exist and in order to accelerate the improvement of the current state of EU waters², a joint work between agricultural and environmental water authorities is key, as highlighted by the Commission's proposal for the new CAP.

Moreover, the involvement and dialogue with farmers at all stages was identified as being crucial for the success of such implementing actions. Fruitful and constructive exchanges can take place within the River Basin Management Plan process.

The second workshop – "Governance and investment needs" was co-hosted by the Romanian Presidency and held in Bucharest on 5/6 February 2019.

The workshop considered the investment gaps and needs in water and agriculture. It explored different types of possible funding sources such as the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), other EU instruments including the LIFE programme, lending opportunities from the World Bank, the European Investment Bank as well as national public and private sources. At EU level, the EAFRD remains one of the main sources of funding for implementing of Programmes of Measures (PoMs) under the WFD. Apart from dedicated funding, water pricing can also play an important role for sustainable water management in agriculture.

² EEA report No 7/2018 – European waters – Assessment of status and pressures 2018

Best practices of investments for creating positive synergies for water and agriculture in the implementation of the WFD, ND and CAP were presented and discussed, while simultaneously respecting the baselines for providing public funding in line with the polluter pays principle.

A special focus was put on synergies between current planning tools available under the River Basin Management Plans (RBMBs), PoMs established under the WFD and measures under CAP, notably the EAFRD. Furthermore, funding opportunities under the Commission proposal on the future of the CAP post-2020 and an increased flexibility were highlighted.

The various presentations and contributions to the discussion provided a good insight into the relative costs of specific individual measures in different River Basins and at Member States level and shown that the investments needs in water used for agriculture is considerable and only partly met by the current EU and national funds made available.

The third workshop – “Abstractions/water scarcity – challenges and opportunities” will be held in Spain in May and will deal with issues related to water scarcity.