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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	2022 spring drought - <i>Information from the Belgian delegation</i>

Delegations will find in the Annex a note received from the Belgian delegation on the abovementioned subject, to be dealt with under “Any other business” at the session of the "Agriculture and Fisheries" Council on 24 May 2022.

2022 spring drought

In Belgium, spring has been characterised by very unfavourable weather conditions.

According to the Royal Meteorological Institute (RMI), a large part of Belgium will suffer severe drought in the coming days. The situation is close to the one experienced by farmers in 1976 in terms of cumulative rainfall deficit over the last 90 days.

This is leading to a deterioration of both the state of food crops and of the availability of feed for livestock, with widespread breakdowns in productivity. Many farmers are already concerned about the scarcity of their own forage resources. Some are even currently drawing on winter stocks to supplement livestock feed.

This very low rainfall has also hardened the agricultural soils. Our authorities have been approached by farmers unable to remove or replace in 2022 the ecological focus area (EFA) catch crops sown in autumn 2021 (greening obligation - subparagraph 3 of Article 45(9) of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 639/2014).

Assuming a meteorological status quo, many farmers will face serious financial and technical difficulties short-term.

In view of the exceptional circumstances described above, Belgium requests that measures be taken to mitigate this situation, including for 2022. Belgium invites the European Commission to specify the measures it envisages to deal with this problem and to explore possible derogations to certain greening requirements.