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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
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Subject:	Promoting RENURE fertilizers as part of a circular economy - Information from the Belgian delegation, supported by Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain

Delegations will find in the Annex a document on the above subject to be presented by the Belgian delegation and supported by Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain under "Any other business" at the "Agriculture and Fisheries" Council on 17-18 October 2022.

Promoting RENURE fertilizers as part of a circular economy

Skyrocketing commodity and input prices currently make it very difficult for farmers to keep their heads above water. One of the indispensable inputs that are not only expensive, but also limited in supply are fertilizers. Fertilizers are important for maintaining food production in the EU and for limiting dependence of our food supply on third countries. The production of fertilizers requires a lot of energy, so in the current context it is opportune to look for alternatives for those products.

On 6 October, the Commissioner announced the presentation of a Communication on fertilisers. In this context, Belgium, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain consider that the circular economy must be relevant, as a way to increase the Union's self-sufficiency in the availability of fertilisers.

One of the alternatives to chemical fertilizers are the RENURE (REcovered Nitrogen from manURE) products. RENURE products are produced by extensive treatment and processing of animal manure. The Joint Research Center has drawn up criteria that alternatives to fertilizers must meet and research shows that their effect is similar to that of chemical fertilizers. They can be used in an environmentally safe way in the field as an alternative to chemical fertilizers. Moreover, these fertilizer substitutes fit perfectly within the circular framework within which the agricultural sector increasingly needs to work.

Currently, however, European legislation restricts the use of this alternative. The Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC) stipulates in Annex III that only a certain amount of animal manure may be applied per hectare per year in vulnerable zones. In addition to this amount of animal manure, fertilizer can be used according to the needs of the crop and within the legal framework of the member state. As long as the RENURE products have a status of animal origin within the Nitrates Directive and it is not assessed whether they fall under the scope of Regulation (EU) 2019/1009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 June 2019 laying down rules on the making available on the market of EU fertilising products, they can only be used within the standard for animal manure, but they cannot be used as a fertilising product substitute.

The use of RENURE fertilizers fits within the shift to a more circular economy, reduces dependence on third countries and relieves pressure on energy consumption, especially on natural gas used both as input material and energy source.

We therefore urge the European Commission to consider making the necessary legislative proposals so that RENURE fertilizers can be used outside of the limited amounts for animal manure in vulnerable zones, taking into account the lower potential impact on the environment.

With a view to a successful implementation of this regulatory modification, it is important to take into account all the related legislation, modifying it accordingly when necessary, and ensure a complete and correct registration system of the use of all types of fertilizers, both at level of the individual farm and the Member State.
