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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Labelling of honey blends and the revision of the Council Directive on honey (2001/110/EC) <i>- Information from the Slovenian delegation, supported by the Austrian, Belgian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Cyprus, Estonian, French, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak and Spanish delegations</i>

Delegations will find in the Annex a document on the above subject to be presented by the Slovenian delegation under "Any other business" at the "Agriculture and Fisheries" Council on 30 January 2023.

Labelling of honey blends and the revision of the Council Directive on honey (2001/110/EC)

Non-paper of Slovenia, supported by Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Spain

Beekeeping and the production of honey are an important economic activity for farmers and beekeepers, which contributes to maintaining an ecological balance and biodiversity. Bees and pollination are vital for food production and food security. Furthermore, honey and bee products are high valued foodstuffs, for which consumers expect high quality and information on their origin.

Honey imported from third countries, which is often used in honey blends on the EU market, is often significantly cheaper than honey produced in the EU. When consumers choose this cheaper honey, they do not receive comprehensive, clear and unambiguous information on its origin. That is why the current origin-labelling rules for honey place producers of honey originating from a single country on an unequal footing compared to producers of honey blends.

In the joint declaration on origin labelling of honey blends from January 2020 many Member States outlined the above-mentioned issue and called for clearer origin labelling of honey blends and the revision of the directive.¹

The Farm to Fork Strategy foresees a revision of marketing standards to ensure the uptake and supply of sustainable agricultural products, including the extension of mandatory origin or provenance indications to certain products. On this basis, the Commission will shortly present its proposal for a revision of the Honey Directive as part of a package.

¹ Joint declaration of Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain on origin labelling of honey blends from January 2020 ST5389/2020 INIT

In the related public consultation conducted by the Commission in summer 2021, the interested parties drew attention to the insufficient requirements for the mandatory labelling of the origin of honey to provide consumers with adequate and transparent information. They also proposed an action plan at several levels, which would cover measures at farms, packing stations, borders and supermarkets in order to increase the traceability of honey.

Member States also expressed broad support for amending the origin-labelling rules for honey in honey blends in the political discussion on the revision of marketing standards at the AGRIFISH Council meeting in October 2021.

The revision of the Honey Directive is an opportunity to improve transparency significantly by providing more detailed information on the origin of honey and to enhance the profitability of the sector and restore consumer confidence.

Slovenia, supported by Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Spain call on the Commission to be ambitious in drafting the proposal for a revision of the Honey Directive, to take into account the outcome of the public consultation and the positions already expressed by Member States.

The rules should provide for the obligation to indicate each country of origin and its respective share of honey in honey blends, whilst also considering implementation aspects.