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OUTCOME OF THE COUNCIL MEETING

3766th Council meeting

Agriculture and Fisheries

Brussels, 20 July 2020

President **Julia Klöckner**
Federal Minister for Food and Agriculture of Germany

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>).
 - Acts adopted with statements for the Council minutes which may be released to the public are indicated by an asterisk; these statements are available on the Council's internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

ITEMS DEBATED

Presidency's work programme

The German presidency outlined its [work programme](#) and the main priorities for the next six months in the agriculture and fisheries sectors.

Adopting a general approach on the common agricultural policy (CAP) reform package in October 2020 is a key priority for the presidency and it was widely endorsed by the Council. During the next six months, the presidency will also try to reach conclusions on the farm to fork strategy as well as on animal welfare and food labelling. In the field of fisheries, the presidency will prioritise the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and will lead negotiations on the 2021 fishing opportunities for the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, and the Atlantic and North Sea.

Farm to fork

Ministers discussed the farm to fork strategy, focusing on how to increase sustainability in the European food systems. During the discussion, the European Commission, which presented the farm to fork strategy in May 2020, reiterated the importance of including the strategy's objectives and targets in the future CAP national strategic plans through country-specific recommendations. Ministers urged the Commission to publish these recommendations as quickly as possible but questioned their binding nature. The Commission confirmed that the recommendations are not legally binding and that it would take their implementation into account when approving each national strategic plan. Ministers also called for transparency, subsidiarity and a structured dialogue with the Commission in the approval process for the strategic plans.

Ministers also emphasised the need to ensure food security in the EU and a level playing field with third-country food producers entering the EU market. They also called for comprehensive impact assessments before turning the strategy's targets into legislative proposals. Ministers broadly supported the targets and objectives of the farm to fork strategy and pointed out that adequate funding is a pre-requisite for such a high level of ambition.

More information

[Farm to fork strategy - for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system - European Commission](#)

[Staff working document \(SWD\) by the European Commission 'Analysis of links between the CAP Reform and the Green Deal'](#)

CAP reform

The Council held an exchange of views on the green architecture of the future CAP. More specifically, ministers discussed the eco-schemes and the minimum share of arable land devoted to non-productive features, catch crops or nitrogen-fixing crops (GAEC 9) in the conditionality system.

Several ministers questioned the proposal of a minimum budget for eco-schemes (ring-fencing), highlighting the risk of losing funds for farmers. With a view to ensure greater flexibility in the event that ring-fencing is introduced, ministers asked for the possibility to move ring-fenced amounts between the two pillars of the CAP and to set a ring-fenced amount for the whole period of the CAP strategic plan. Ministers also reiterated their views on mandatory or voluntary eco-schemes.

Following the suggestion of the Croatian presidency that GAEC 9 should only concern arable land dedicated to non-productive features, catch crops or nitrogen fixing crops, ministers discussed whether a uniform minimum percentage of non-productive areas should be set at EU level. Supporters of the EU-wide minimum percentage argued that this approach would create a level playing field and were in favour of fixing it at the current status quo of 5%.

More information

Eco-schemes are a proposed new element, aimed at supporting and incentivising farmers to adopt practices which are beneficial for the climate and the environment. They will be funded from direct payments on an annual basis (thus falling under Pillar I). According to the Commission's proposal, they should be mandatory for member states but voluntary for farmers. The Commission also suggested a ring-fencing for eco-schemes under Pillar 1 (in its staff working document accompanying the farm to fork and biodiversity strategies published in May 2020; SWD 8228/20).

The reform package consists of three proposals for:

- a regulation on CAP strategic plans ([9645/18](#) + [ADD 1](#))
- a regulation on the financing, management and monitoring of the CAP ([9634/18](#) + [ADD 1](#))
- a regulation on a common market organisation of agricultural products ([9556/18](#))

The Commission also published an impact assessment ([9646/18](#) + [ADD 1](#) + [ADD 2](#)) and a staff working document ([SWD](#)) analysing the links between the CAP reform and the Green Deal.

[Future of the CAP post 2020](#)

Market situation

The ministers held an exchange of views on the agricultural market situation and the challenges in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The discussion was based on a Commission presentation and member states' written comments (9599/20). In the Commission's view, the situation in the market has stabilised despite the COVID-19 disruptions, partially thanks to the support measures adopted by the Commission and the member states but also thanks to the effectiveness of the CAP. This was particularly the case for cereals and the fruit and vegetable sector.

At the same time, the closure of the hotel, restaurant and catering (HORECA) sector impacted the poultry, beef, veal, dairy, and sheep and goat meat sectors. Moreover, the wine and olive oil sectors remain under pressure and pig meat prices are very volatile. The Commission also acknowledged that there were significant differences in the impact of the crisis on the different sectors, depending on specific factors and other particularities.

Further to their written comments, member states pointed to specific problems and highlighted the need to closely monitor and, if necessary, adopt additional measures for the markets of olive oil, wine, poultry, pig meat, beef and veal, sheep and goat meat, dairy and dairy products, potatoes, sugar, rice, honey and fruit. Ministers also referred to the problems created by adverse weather conditions.

The Bulgarian delegation informed ministers about a joint declaration issued together with Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia on the beekeeping sector, asking the Commission to address systematic honey imports into the EU at extremely low prices.

Any other business

The Czech delegation informed ministers about a joint declaration by the ministers of agriculture of the Visegrad Group (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia) plus Bulgaria and Romania on the reform of the common agricultural policy in light of the European Green Deal, the farm to fork and biodiversity strategies and the COVID-19 pandemic.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

AGRICULTURE

Measures to address market disturbances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic

The Council confirmed that it had no intention of objecting to a Commission delegated regulation amending Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/592 on temporary exceptional measures derogating from certain provisions of Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013. These measures address the market disturbances in the fruit and vegetable and wine sectors caused by the COVID-19 pandemic ([9475/20](#)).

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

Crowdfunding

The Council adopted new rules to improve the way crowdfunding platforms operate across the EU.

The new framework is part of the capital markets union project which aims to provide easier access to new financing sources. It will remove barriers to cross-border crowdfunding services by harmonising the minimum requirements for platforms operating in their home market and other EU countries. It will also increase legal certainty through common investor protection rules.

For more details see the [press release](#)

European Semester 2020 - country-specific recommendations

The Council adopted its 2020 recommendations and opinions on the member states' economic, employment and fiscal policies, as well as the recommendation for the euro area.

This year's country-specific recommendations take into account the specific context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the activation on 20 March 2020 of the general escape clause under the Stability and Growth Pact.

For more details see the [press release](#)

EU fiscal governance

The Council adopted conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' special report 'EU requirements for national budgetary frameworks: need to further strengthen them and to better monitor their application'. ([6297/20](#))

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hague Code of Conduct and ballistic missile non-proliferation

The Council adopted a decision amending Decision (CFSP) [2017/2370](#) in support of the Hague Code of Conduct (HCoC) and ballistic missile non-proliferation in the framework of the implementation of the EU Strategy against Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction. This amendment extends the implementation period for Decision (CFSP) [2017/2370](#) until 20 December 2021, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Angola-EU ministerial meeting, 23 July 2020 - joint press statement

The Council approved the Angola-EU joint press statement and agreed that if on-the-spot adjustments to the text are required in order for both parties to agree, the text could be adapted accordingly, provided that the changes do not affect the substance and intent of the text.

EU positions for international negotiations

Council Decision on the EU position in the Ghana-EU EPA Committee regarding the adoption of the Rules of Procedure of the EPA Committee.

The Council adopted a decision on the position to be taken on behalf of the EU within the EPA Committee established under the stepping stone Economic Partnership Agreement between Ghana, of the one part, and the European Community and its member states, of the other part, as regards the adoption of the Rules of Procedure of the EPA Committee ([9207/20](#), [9240/20](#)).

TRADE

Selection of the EU candidate for the post of acting WTO Director-General

The Council endorsed the designation of a single EU candidate for the post of acting WTO Director-General. This decision comes as a consequence of the announcement by WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo that he would step down on 31 August 2020.

In the event that it is not possible to appoint a new WTO Director-General by 1 September 2020, it will be necessary to designate one of the four WTO Deputy Directors-General as acting WTO Director-General for the interim period. This question is expected to be discussed at the WTO General Council meeting on 22/23 July 2020.

EU-China agreement on geographical indications

The Council today adopted decisions on the signature of the agreement between the European Union and the government of the People's Republic of China on geographical indications (GIs).

This is the first significant bilateral trade agreement signed between the EU and China.

It will ensure that 100 EU agri-food GIs (geographical indications) such as Mozzarella di Bufala Campana, Languedoc wine, Polska Wódka or Elia Kalamatas are protected in the Chinese market. Likewise, 100 Chinese products will be protected in the EU, thereby ensuring mutual respect of the best of both agricultural traditions.

Four years after its entry into force, the scope of the agreement will expand to cover an additional 175 GI names from both sides. The agreement also includes a mechanism to add more geographical indications thereafter.

For more details see the [press release](#)