



Council of the
European Union

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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Permanent Representatives Committee

Subject: Draft Council conclusions on Special Report No 04/2020 from the European Court of Auditors entitled: "Using new imaging technologies to monitor the Common Agricultural Policy: steady progress overall, but slower for climate and environment monitoring"
- Approval draft Council conclusions

1. The Permanent Representatives Committee instructed the Working Party on Financial Agricultural Questions (WP AGRIFIN) to examine the above mentioned Special Report in accordance with the rules laid down in the Council conclusions of 8 May 2000 on improving the examination of special reports drawn up by the Court of Auditors (doc. 7515/00 + COR 1).
2. At its informal videoconference meeting on 16 June 2020, WP AGRIFIN discussed the above mentioned Special Report as well as the Commission's replies to that report. From 20-29 July, AGRIFIN delegations were consulted during an informal written consultation on draft Council conclusions, which were based on the discussion on the above mentioned special report (WK 7998/2020). There were no requests from delegations to change the draft conclusions drawn up by the Presidency.

3. At its informal videoconference meeting on 9 September 2020, WP AGRIFIN reached informal agreement on the draft conclusions (WK 8666/2020) related to the Special Report as set out in the Annex to this note.

 4. In accordance with the Council conclusions of 8 May 2000, the Permanent Representatives Committee is hereby invited to suggest to the Council that it approve the draft Council conclusions as set out in the Annex to this note as an 'A' item at a forthcoming session.
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Draft Council conclusions

on Special Report No 04/2020 from the European Court of Auditors entitled:

"Using new imaging technologies to monitor the Common Agricultural Policy: steady progress overall, but slower for climate and environment monitoring"

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

1. WELCOMES the Court's Special Report No 04/2020 entitled "Using new imaging technologies to monitor the Common Agricultural Policy: steady progress overall, but slower for climate and environment monitoring", which examines the extent to which the European Commission and the Member States use these new technologies for the management and control of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP);
2. TAKES NOTE of the Court's recommendations to the Commission to promote 'checks by monitoring' as a key control system for paying agencies, to make better use of new technologies for monitoring environmental and climate requirements and to develop action plans to remove obstacles to their wider uptake;
3. ACKNOWLEDGES the potential of using new imaging technologies, such as Copernicus Sentinel satellite data, images taken by drones and geotagged images, for managing and monitoring the CAP, e.g. for assessing farmers' compliance with CAP rules, such as area-based direct aid to farmers, and for monitoring compliance and performance monitoring of climate and environmental requirements;

4. UNDERLINES that a transition to a 'checks by monitoring' approach requires significant changes to paying agencies' procedures and IT systems, resources and expertise and STRESSES that further consideration be given in this regard to the possible outcomes of future Commission audits under the new approach, the parallel use of traditional and new monitoring systems during a transition period, the overall objective to simplify the CAP, including the Integrated Administration and Control System (IACS), and to limit the administrative burden and costs for administrations and beneficiaries;
5. CONSIDERS that the 'checks by monitoring' approach has the potential to prevent non-compliance from occurring rather than penalizing farmers afterwards but CALLS on the Commission to issue guidelines on 'checks by monitoring' in order for paying agencies to take the right decisions and to reduce the risk of future financial corrections as a result of the Commission's conformity clearance procedure;
6. REMINDS that the Council's position on the use of new technology and knowledge, in particular of digital technologies, for the purposes of monitoring agri-environment-climate policy and for boosting the use of full, free and open data and information, is in the process of being formulated as the CAP post-2020 legislative proposals are currently under negotiation by the Council and the European Parliament; AFFIRMS in this context that the Court's observations and recommendations as well as the Commission's replies to the Court's Special Report will be duly taken into account in the Council's deliberations.
