

10944/20

(OR. en)

PRESSE 22
PR CO 22

OUTCOME OF THE COUNCIL MEETING

3768th Council meeting

Agriculture and Fisheries

Brussels, 21 September 2020

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

P R E S S

Rue de la Loi/Wetstraat 175 B – 1048 BRUSSELS Tel.: +32 (0)2 281 6319 Fax: +32 (0)2 281 8026
press.office@consilium.europa.eu <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/press>

10944/20

1
EN

CONTENTS¹

ITEMS DEBATED

AGRICULTURE		3
– <u>Trade-related agricultural issues</u>		5
– <u>Any other business</u>		5

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

FISHERIES

– Council to approve the UK's application to join the NEAFC Convention		7
--	--	---

TRADE POLICY

– Council to approve the UK's accession to the Grains Trade Convention		7
--	--	---

INTERNAL MARKET AND INDUSTRY

– Directive on Representative Actions		7
– Council conclusions on a deepened single market		8

ENVIRONMENT

– Global Alliance on Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency		8
– A Call for Action: Raising Ambition for Climate Adaptation and Resilience		8
– UN Summit on Biodiversity: Leaders' pledge for nature		8

¹

- 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**AGRICULTURE**

The Council exchanged views on the **common agricultural policy reform package** with a view to adopting its **general approach in October 2020**. Three elements were the focus of the ministerial discussion: the **green architecture, the incorporation of the European Council's MFF conclusions in the future direct payments system, and the new delivery model**. Ministers discussed these elements by providing answers to the following set of questions, prepared by the presidency:

- Do you agree to the presidency's approach for the green architecture of the future CAP? In your opinion, which CAP elements would be the most relevant ones to make the environmental and climate ambition of the future CAP effective and credible?
- Do you agree with the presidency's suggestions to allow member states to make a flexible use of targeting possibilities for direct payments? Do you see a need for additional guiding provisions to achieve a higher degree of uniform application of the direct payments system across the EU?
- In your opinion, which provisions are most important to strike a balance between the focus on better delivery and the need to provide administrative simplification? Which elements would you propose to be strengthened in order to improve that balance?

Ministers agreed on the need to adopt the Council's general approach at their next meeting in October 2020. Many ministers acknowledged that the **suggestions put forward by the presidency were a step in the right direction**. These included the introduction of an EU-wide uniform minimum share of non-productive areas and a more flexible and voluntary approach on capping of direct payments. The presidency also suggested to step up the ambition on eco-schemes through a mandatory approach and a reserved budget, which raised different views among ministers.

Suggestions on **conditionality** also triggered positive reactions to some degree, namely: the introduction of an EU-wide uniform minimum share of non-productive areas (with many ministers suggesting keeping this share to 5%) and the possibility to count certain productive uses against the minimum percentage. While discussing the 'green' aspects of the policy, ministers also took the chance to reiterate their positions on whether small holdings should be subject to conditionality controls, and many confirmed the need for a simplified system to be applicable to them. Several ministers suggested to focus more on the importance of environmental interventions under pillar II and supported a suggestion from the Austrian delegation ([10934/20](#)).

Discussing **budget provisions related to the next MFF**, ministers supported the presidency's suggestions to provide more options and flexibility on direct payments to farmers; namely to make the gradual reduction of direct payments optional. Ministers also focused on other schemes with less convergent views among member states: the binding nature of redistributive payments to small farms, the prolongation of transitional national aid to support specific agricultural sectors, and the level of coupled support.

With regard to the **new delivery model**, ministers acknowledged the progress achieved so far, but also considered that further discussions were still needed on specific issues: among them, the approval process of the national strategic plans and, more generally, the need for a simplified policy.

More information

The reform package consists of three proposals for:

- a regulation on CAP strategic plans ([9645/18](#) + [ADD 1](#))
- a regulation on financing, managing 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 CAP Reform and the Green Deal.

Eco-schemes are a new suggested 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 CAP proposal, they should be mandatory for member states but voluntary for farmers. The Commission also suggested ring-fencing for eco-schemes under Pillar 1 (in its staff working document published in May 2020). During the work of preparatory bodies of the Council and at previous Council meetings, several member states highlighted the need for financial flexibility to avoid the risk of losing available funds for farmers.

– **Trade-related agricultural issues**

Based on a presentation by the European Commission, ministers discussed the latest developments in the ongoing negotiations on **free trade agreements and partnerships**, including initial positive results - in terms of increased EU exports - from the application of those recently concluded. They also discussed the EU's bilateral and multilateral relations, including its relations with the UK, US, Africa and China. On Mercosur, a number of delegations reiterated the need to respect sustainable development obligations. The Commission also repeated its commitment to adopt compensatory measures in support of affected EU farmers, in case the agreement is concluded.

Ministers highlighted the importance of the EU promoting, through these trade agreements, the **European model of sustainable agrifood production**. They also welcomed the European Commission's efforts to keep agricultural trade flowing, without restrictions, despite challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

– **Any other business**

France presented a declaration ([10813/1/20 REV1](#)) on the need to develop **plant proteins** in Europe to reduce dependence on imports and support more sustainable agrifood business models. The declaration got the support of 15 delegations. Ministers urged the need for more research and innovation on this field and discussed how the next CAP could help the EU reach a higher independence on protein crops, including through coupled support.

Spain and France reiterated calls to maintain the current budget for the programme dedicated to the **outermost regions** in the next MFF ([10916/1/20](#)).

The Czech Republic and Italy presented, through a non-paper ([10846/20](#)), a set of desired principles related to **front-of-pack nutritional labelling**. Several ministers supported the idea of a harmonised EU scheme on front-of-pack nutritional labelling and discussed its binding nature (voluntary or mandatory), exclusivity (co-existence with current labelling schemes) and flexibility (possibility to exempt particular product categories such as the protected designation of origin and geographical indication). The European Commission reiterated that a legislative proposal on front-of-pack nutritional labelling is due by the end 2022 and will take into account all discussed elements.

The Czech Republic called on the European Commission to submit a proposal to **ban the production of eggs from laying hens in cages** in the EU by 2030 ([10844/20](#)). The call was supported by several member states; some called for the introduction of similar requirements on eggs imported from third countries. Some ministers also expressed concerns on possible complete cage bans due to recent investments into enriched cages. Sufficient transition periods and thorough impact assessments were floated as possible solutions.

Germany outlined the current state of play of **African swine fever** in Germany ([10825/20](#)) and highlighted the need for more open information sharing among EU member states and the removal of disproportionate import bans. In this backdrop, the Czech Republic called on the European Commission to provide a detailed analysis of the **pig market** and potential measures to support it ([10904/20](#))

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

FISHERIES

Council to approve the UK's application to join the NEAFC Convention

The Council adopted a decision to approve the application for accession of the United Kingdom to the Convention on Future Multilateral Cooperation in the North-East Atlantic Fisheries (10570/20).

TRADE POLICY

Council to approve the UK's accession to the Grains Trade Convention

The Council adopted a decision to approve the accession of the United Kingdom to the 1995 Grains Trade Convention, provided that the accession does not take effect and the Convention is not provisionally applied in respect of the United Kingdom before the end of the transition period referred to in Article 126 of the Withdrawal Agreement.

INTERNAL MARKET AND INDUSTRY

Directive on Representative Actions

Following an agreement with the European Parliament with a view to the swift adoption of the proposed directive at second reading, the Council reached a political agreement on the text of the directive.

The draft directive requires member states to put in place a system of representative actions for the protection of consumers' collective interests against infringements of Union law. It covers actions for both injunctions and redress measures.

The political agreement paves the way for the adoption of the Council's position at first reading (9592/20 + COR1 + ADD 1).

Council conclusions on a deepened single market

The Council adopted a set of conclusions setting out the priority actions for restoring and deepening the single market with a view to accelerating and boosting the recovery and competitiveness of the EU economy. The conclusions will be the Competitiveness Council's input for the relevant discussions to take place at the [European Council](#) on [24/25 September 2020](#).

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

ENVIRONMENT

Global Alliance on Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency

The Council approved the Commission's request to enter into negotiations on a "Global Alliance on Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency. Towards Just Transition". The Commission is therefore authorised to aim for the launch of the alliance at the fifth meeting of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-5) in Nairobi in February 2021, as a non-binding instrument containing political commitments. The alliance will be established in order to identify knowledge and governance gaps in advancing a global circular economy and to take forward partnership initiatives, including with major economies. It is in line with the Commission's circular economy action plan ([10543/20](#)).

A Call for Action: Raising Ambition for Climate Adaptation and Resilience

The Council approved the Commission's request to enter into negotiations on a "Call for action: Raising Ambition for Climate Adaptation and Resilience", which was initiated by the UK and Egypt on the occasion of the Global Climate Action Summit convened by United Nations Secretary-General on 23 September 2019. The Commission is thereby authorised to reach out to the other parties supporting this call with a view to finalising the text, as a non-binding instrument containing political commitments ([10566/20](#)).

UN Summit on Biodiversity: Leaders' pledge for nature

The Council authorised the Commission to endorse, on behalf of the EU, the "Leaders' Pledge for Nature", in order to send a united signal to step up global ambition for biodiversity. Commission President Ursula von der Leyen is thereby authorised to endorse the pledge at an UN event to be held virtually on 28 September 2020 in the context of the UN Summit on Biodiversity. The pledge is a voluntary declaration which stresses that biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation require urgent and immediate global action ([10616/20](#)).

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