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## OUTCOME OF THE COUNCIL MEETING

3719th Council meeting

### Agriculture and Fisheries

Brussels, 14 and 15 October 2019

President **Jari Leppä**  
Minister of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland

# P R E S S

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12921/19

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**CONTENTS<sup>1</sup>**

**ITEMS DEBATED**

AGRICULTURE .....	4
Post-2020 Common agricultural policy (CAP) reform package: state of play .....	4
The Commission proposals .....	4
Communication on stepping up EU action to protect and restore the world's forests .....	5
EU Forest Strategy post-2020 .....	6
Market situation .....	7
ANY OTHER BUSINESS .....	8
Sustainable forestry .....	8
CAP budget .....	8
Serious damage caused by the Asian stink bug .....	8
European Bioeconomy Scene 2019, 8-10 July 2019 - Helsinki, Finland .....	9
Outcome of the ministerial conference "Strengthening the generation and transfer of knowledge for the progress of agriculture and the rural areas", 23 August 2019 - Ptuj, Slovenia.....	9
US additional duties on certain EU agro-food products linked to the Airbus-Boeing WTO dispute .....	10
Joint declaration on wolf management .....	10

<sup>1</sup> • 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.

African swine fever (ASF): State of play.....	11
Joint declaration on African swine fever .....	11
Food safety: state of play regarding major issues .....	12
Recent listeria cases in the EU .....	12
<b>FISHERIES</b> .....	13
Fishing opportunities in the Baltic Sea for 2020.....	13
EU/Norway: annual consultations for 2020.....	13
ICCAT 22nd annual meeting, 18-25 November 2019 - Palma de Mallorca, Spain .....	14
European Maritime and Fisheries Fund .....	15

**OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**

*BUDGETS*

– 2020 EU budget - Brexit contingency measures .....	16
--	----

*JUSTICE*

– EPPO: decision appointing the European Chief Prosecutor .....	16
---	----

*INTERNAL MARKET AND INDUSTRY*

– Amendment of Regulation (EC) No 1099/2008 on the implementation of updates for the annual, monthly and short-term monthly energy statistics .....	17
---	----

*SPACE*

– Approval of the Canberra Declaration set out by the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) on 8 November 2019.....	17
---	----

*HOME AFFAIRS*

– Visa facilitation Belarus .....	18
– eu-LISA: Ireland opt-in .....	18

**ITEMS DEBATED**

**AGRICULTURE**

**Post-2020 Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform package: state of play**

In public session, the Council discussed a progress report on the work carried out in the Council's preparatory bodies on the Commission proposals for a reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) post-2020.

Ministers welcomed the report and focused, in particular, on those elements that they considered to be crucial in the reform package. They stated that the new delivery model (the issue of simplification in particular) and the "green architecture" were the main elements requiring further debate. Other elements that, in their view, would require more work included targeting of support (in particular, coupled support), and various types of intervention in certain sectors.

With regard to the "green architecture", several member states identified a link between the overall environmental ambition and the availability of adequate CAP funds. Eco-schemes were also considered to be an important element. Delegations maintained divergent views on this issue.

A number of member states challenged the presidency's view that the Common Market Organisation (CMO) regulation could be considered to be broadly stable, and stressed the importance of the capacity to react quickly to market fluctuations.

**The Commission proposals**

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 the CAP ([9634/18](#) + [ADD 1](#))
- a regulation on a common market organisation of agricultural products ([9556/18](#))

and an impact assessment ([9646/18](#) + [ADD 1](#) + [ADD 2](#)).

The proposed CAP reform introduces a new delivery model that will allow member states more flexibility in the way they use EU funds and in adapting their programmes. Based on 9 EU-wide economic, environmental and social objectives, each member state would have to draw up a Strategic Plan setting out how it intends to meet those objectives while taking into account its needs, using direct payments, rural development and market measures. The Commission would approve each plan to ensure consistency and the protection of the single market, and monitor progress towards objectives and targets using a set of result indicators agreed at EU level.

The Commission proposals also outline new obligations and incentives for farmers in the area of environment and climate action. Direct payments would be conditional on enhanced environmental and climate requirements and member states would have to offer eco-schemes to support farmers in going beyond the mandatory requirements, funded with a share of their national direct payments' allocations.

Moreover, the new CAP would better target small and young farmers, thereby facilitating generational renewal, and would try to promote greater use of knowledge and innovation.

### **Communication on stepping up EU action to protect and restore the world's forests**

In public session, the Commission presented its communication on stepping up EU Action to protect and restore the world's forests. After the presentation, ministers were invited to state whether or not they considered the priorities presented by the Commission to be appropriate and adequate in order to achieve the objectives of the communication. They were also invited to share their views on the key actions to be set as priorities.

Delegations broadly welcomed the publication of the communication, in view of the increasing threats represented by deforestation and forest degradation at global level. They also welcomed the Presidency's initiative to have Council Conclusions adopted on this topic before the end of 2019.

Delegations stressed the essential contribution of forests in mitigating the impact of climate change and the loss of biodiversity, and referred, in particular, to the targets of the 2030 sustainable development goals (SDGs) and other international commitments.

While ministers highlighted the importance of all five priorities set out in the Commission's communication, they stressed in particular the promotion of deforestation-free supply chains, and the use of certification schemes for deforestation-free products. Ministers also suggested working in partnership with the producing countries and involving private stakeholders and the civil society in the key actions.

The Communication on stepping up EU action to protect and restore the world's forests was adopted on 23 July 2019 as a response to the continued and widespread destruction of the world's forests.

By setting out five priorities implemented through 36 actions, the aim of the communication is to protect and improve the health of existing forests and increase sustainable, biodiverse forest cover worldwide.

### **EU Forest Strategy post-2020**

In public session, ministers were invited to exchange views on the future EU Forest Strategy post-2020, focusing in particular on how an EU forest strategy could help address the challenges in an enhanced, balanced and holistic way.

Ministers supported the preparation of a new and stronger framework to further coordinate EU and national policies in the area of forestry. To this end, ministers called for a "holistic" approach, which would take into account all existing related initiatives. In addition, they called for consistency at EU level to avoid the fragmentation of forestry-related legislation in different EU member states.

The promotion of sustainable forest management emerged as the backbone of the future strategy. Ministers highlighted the important contribution of forests towards the implementation of the European Green Deal, the promotion of the bioeconomy and circular economy and towards achieving EU international commitments, particularly those concerning climate change, such as the Paris Agreement and the SDGs.

The current EU Forest Strategy (EUFS) runs until 2020. In its conclusions of April 2019, the **Agriculture and Fisheries Council** welcomed the progress achieved in the current EU Forest Strategy and recognised the need for a new strategy beyond 2020 in order to further strengthen the coherence of EU forest-related policies.

## **Market situation**

As a continuation of the practice at previous meetings of the "Agriculture and Fisheries" Council, the Commission updated the Council on the latest developments in the most important agricultural markets.

According to the Commission's report, the market situation remained mostly stable and generally positive, with the exception of the olive oil and table olive, beef and sugar sectors. The Commission nonetheless considered that the market situation would need to be monitored closely in the coming weeks to assess the impact of the introduction of additional US duties following the decision of the WTO arbitration panel in the Airbus case and, possibly, Brexit.

Ministers generally shared these views and welcomed the positive economic situation and outlook in the main market segments, but also expressed concerns as to the difficult situation of the sugar, olive oil and table olives, beef and rice sectors. Some also expressed their concerns in relation to a possible no-deal Brexit and the existing trade tensions with the US.

In recent years agricultural markets have faced a number of challenges following, in particular, the Russian ban, excess supply worldwide, increased price volatility after the lifting of dairy and sugar quotas and various outbreaks of disease, including African swine fever. In response, several support packages were adopted and implemented. These focused, in particular, on cash-flow measures, market stabilisation and production reduction, the better functioning of the food supply chain, and other measures such as the promotion of European agro-food products.

Reports from the Commission's market observatories show that, as from mid-2016, many sectors recovered gradually, notably the dairy and pig meat sectors. The picture of general stability continued in 2019. However, recovery is still fragile in some sectors and requires further monitoring.

The most recent Council discussion on developments in the most important agricultural markets was held in April 2019.

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**Sustainable forestry**

On behalf of the Visegrad group, Bulgaria, Croatia and Slovenia, the Czech Republic presented a joint declaration on "Forests, sustainable forest management and adaptation to climate change". It emphasised the need to adapt the forest strategy to individual measures to address challenges linked to climate change and to support forest holders.

This item was debated in the context of the public discussion on the EU Forest Strategy post-2020.

**CAP budget**

On behalf of Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, France, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain, the French delegation presented a common paper on the need to maintain the CAP budget at the current EU-27 level in current prices under the next Multiannual Financial Framework.

This request was supported by many delegations, some of which expressed particular concerns as to the cuts in the rural development budget.

Several delegations restated that no agreement on the CAP reform could be reached before an agreement on the next MFF. Other delegations took the opportunity to reiterate their well known positions on the issues of external convergence, reduction of payments and the co-financing rates for rural development.

This item was debated in the context of the public discussion on the CAP reform.

**Serious damage caused by the Asian stink bug**

The Italian delegation informed the Council about the damage caused by the Asian stink bug (*Halyomorpha halys*) to its fruit and vegetables sector, which amounted to an total estimated loss of more than €500 million. Italy took the opportunity to urge the Commission to consider the activation of measures under the CMO regulation.

This item was debated in the context of the public discussion on the market situation.



**European Bioeconomy Scene 2019, 8-10 July 2019 - Helsinki, Finland**

The Presidency informed the Council about the outcome of the conference "European Bioeconomy Scene 2019", held in Helsinki last July, and provided a comprehensive summary of its conclusions.

The Presidency highlighted the point that the bioeconomy should be understood as a political strategy towards achieving an environmentally and socially sustainable and just society, in which the economy could flourish within the limits of nature whilst ensuring local and global social equality.

The conference was organised jointly by the EU Commission and the Finnish Presidency. The aim of the conference was to raise public awareness, promote dialogue on the progress towards an inclusive and sustainable bioeconomy in Europe as well as develop a better understanding of how to implement the updated EU bioeconomy strategy (Commission Communication on "A sustainable Bioeconomy for Europe: strengthening the connection between economy, society and the environment", published in October 2018).

**Outcome of the ministerial conference "Strengthening the generation and transfer of knowledge for the progress of agriculture and the rural areas", 23 August 2019 - Ptuj, Slovenia**

The Slovenian delegation briefed the Council on the outcome of the ministerial conference "Strengthening the Generation and Transfer of Knowledge for the Progress of Agriculture and the Rural Areas".

The main goal of the conference was to boost Agricultural and Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) and reduce differences in the functioning of AKIS in European countries. The outcome was a joint declaration aimed at providing guidance and setting out clear proposals on promoting the transfer of knowledge and innovation in the agricultural sector.

The Commission highlighted the key role of knowledge transfer, particularly in view of the "European Green Deal" and the post-2020 CAP. It also highlighted the value of farm advisory services.

## **US additional duties on certain EU agro-food products linked to the Airbus-Boeing WTO dispute**

The Italian, Spanish and French delegations drew the Council's attention to the recent announcement of the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) that it would impose additional duties on a list of EU agro-food products as of 18 October 2019.

The three delegations shared their concern about the likely impact of the US countermeasures, particularly regarding olive oil and table olives, cheeses and wine. The Italian delegation also asked the Commission to assess the option to activate market measures (e.g. private storage of cheeses) within the scope of the CMO regulation. The French delegation invited the Commission to use all the tools available within the CAP, including promotion activities. The Spanish delegation the EU to step up its actions in order to promote the development of stable and rules-based international trade on a global level, and to take action to reassure European farmers.

Several ministers took the floor to express their regret over the US decision to impose additional tariffs, and supported a coordinated EU position and negotiations with the US to avoid harmful barriers.

The Commission restated its willingness to negotiate a solution and reassured ministers that it would work to avoid any further escalation. With regard to possible market measures, the Commission restated the need to monitor the situation very closely and announced the activation of some promotion activities in the near future.

### **Joint declaration on wolf management**

On behalf of Denmark, Estonia, Italy, France and Latvia, the French delegation presented a joint declaration about the measures to be put into place to ensure the best possible management of wolf populations.

The signatory delegations asked the Commission to take into consideration their concerns when revising the guidance on the protection of species under the Habitats Directive, with a view ensuring flexibility in the sustainable management of wolf populations.

The Commission highlighted the need for sustainable coexistence with wolves, and outlined the measures available to member states, for instance under rural developmen. The Commission stated that the Habitats Directive provided scope for population control and announced that it was analysing a recent judgment of the European Court of Justice on the hunting of wolves.

**African swine fever (ASF): state of play**

The Commission updated the Council on the current situation as regards the disease in Europe, and reiterated its advice that all member states should remain vigilant and well-prepared.

Since the last discussion on African swine fever in the Agriculture and Fisheries Council of July 2019 the disease has continued to spread. The first outbreaks among domestic pigs were recorded in Slovakia and Serbia. Globally, the disease has also continued to spread, reaching the Philippines and South Korea.

The many delegations that took the floor praised the positive results achieved in containing the epidemic and supported the Commission's call to keep a high state of alert on ASF. Importance was placed on ensuring a common EU approach, which included boar population control. Delegations' suggestions also included awareness-raising initiatives, building fences/buffer zones, cooperation with federations of hunters and other stakeholders, and dialogue with third countries.

**Joint declaration on African swine fever**

During the debate on the fight against ASF, the Czech Republic presented on behalf of the Visegrad group (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia), Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Slovenia, a joint declaration on "Combating African swine fever in the European Union".

The declaration calls for targeted measures to reduce the wild boar population, more flexibility in the restrictions imposed on areas affected by ASF, increased research cooperation and wider ranging financial support for eradication and control measures. Several delegations supported these calls.

### **Food safety: state of play on major issues**

The Commission informed the Council about the state of play on major issues in the area of food safety. It focused, in particular, on: official controls and crisis management, animal health, animal welfare, plant health, food waste and risk assessment in the food chain.

The Commission invited member states to continue to work on the good implementation of existing hygiene standards to fight food infections. In terms of future priorities, some delegations requested mandatory origin labelling rules. Fight against antimicrobial resistance, animal welfare and the quick adoption of secondary legislation on veterinary medicinal products imports were also mentioned.

### **Recent Listeria cases in the EU**

The Belgian delegation informed the Council about its recent decision to withdraw products from the market as a precautionary measures to protect the health of citizens from recent listeria outbreaks in EU member states.

The Belgian delegation also called on the EU to assess how to minimise delays to the sharing of information between member states, notably through better use of technology.

This item was debated in the context of the discussion on food safety.

## **FISHERIES**

### **Fishing opportunities in the Baltic Sea for 2020**

The Council agreed on total allowable catches (TACs) for 2020 and member states' quotas for the ten most commercially important fish stocks in the Baltic Sea.

In line with the latest scientific advice highlighting poor conditions in the Baltic Sea, the Council decided to decrease fishing opportunities for the majority of fish stocks. TACs were moderately increased only for herring in the Gulf of Riga and were maintained for salmon in the Gulf of Finland.

Cuts were particularly significant for cod, with a 60% decrease in the Western part of the Baltic Sea, and permission to have by-catches only in the Eastern part.

For more information, please read the press release: [Baltic Sea: Council agreement on 2020 catch limits](#).

### **EU/Norway: annual consultations for 2020**

The Council held an exchange of views to prepare the annual consultations between the EU and Norway, in the context of their bilateral fisheries agreement. These negotiations are due to be held in London on 18-22 November, and may continue with a second round in Bergen on 2-6 December.

The 1980 EU-Norway bilateral Fisheries Agreement covers joint stocks in the North Sea, some of which are jointly managed. For these jointly-managed stocks, the EU and Norway have to agree annual TACs. There are joint long-term management plans for cod, haddock, herring, saithe and whiting and basic principles for a long-term management plan for plaice. A ten-year agreement with Norway on mackerel signed in January 2010 includes mutual access in the North Sea.

As for the upcoming 2020 consultation, the main issues will be:

- the detailed management arrangements (TACs and quotas) for the jointly-managed fish stocks in the North Sea and Skagerrak,
- the recent ICES advice on North Sea cod, which gives a very pessimistic picture of the situation of the stock for 2020,
- the exchange of reciprocal fishing opportunities, including fishing opportunities for Arcto-Norwegian cod in Norwegian waters.

This year's consultations will have to take account of a range of elements such as: the recent entry into force of the multiannual plan for the management of demersal stocks in the North Sea and Skagerrak ("North Sea MAP"), the potential changes to the EU's fishing opportunities in the framework of the EU-Greenland Agreement, and the future bilateral relations in terms of fisheries between Norway and the UK, in a future Brexit scenario.

### **ICCAT 22nd annual meeting, 18-25 November 2019 - Palma de Mallorca, Spain**

Ministers exchanged views on the position to be taken by the EU at the next annual meeting of ICCAT, scheduled for 18-25 November 2019 in Palma de Mallorca, Spain.

The European Community is part of the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas - which established the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) - since 9 June 1986. ICCAT is responsible for the adoption of measures designed to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of the fishery resources and safeguard of the marine eco-systems. More specifically, ICCAT is responsible for fixing, each year, fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks and groups of fish stocks in EU waters and, for Union fishing vessels, in certain non-Union waters.

The agenda of this year's ICCAT meeting comprises a review of various activities of the organisation, including the work conducted by the ICCAT Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS), which in this context makes a series of stock assessments and recommendations to the ICCAT Commission. These SCRS assessments and recommendations traditionally create the focus for proposals for recommendations by the EU and other contracting parties.

Other important topics to be discussed this year will be the introduction of observers and possible recommendations by the Conservation and Management Measures Compliance Committee.

## **European Maritime and Fisheries Fund**

The Council agreed to supplement the existing partial general approach on the proposal for the next European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) post-2020.

The agreement completed the Council position by adding those elements that were not covered in the partial general approach agreed by the Council in June 2019 (see press release), in particular elements related to the monitoring and evaluation of the fund and alignment with the Common Provisions Regulation.

The proposed European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, which comprises €6.14 billion for investment in the maritime economy and fishing communities, is part of the multiannual financial framework 2021-2027, the new EU long-term budget that enters into force on 1 January 2021.

The proposal is designed to help deliver the objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), including aquaculture, and the implementation of the Union's maritime policy, as well as strengthen the Union's international commitments on ocean governance, in particular, in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The proposal identifies four priorities:

- promoting sustainable fisheries and the conservation of marine biological resources
- contributing to food security in the Union through competitive and sustainable aquaculture and markets
- enabling the growth of a sustainable blue economy and promoting prosperous coastal communities
- strengthening international ocean governance and enabling safe, secure, clean and sustainably managed seas and oceans

The EMFF will also support voluntary contributions to international organisations and technical assistance.

**OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**

**BUDGETS**

**2020 EU budget - Brexit contingency measures**

The Council decided to request the European Parliament's consent on the draft Council Regulation on measures concerning the implementation and financing of the EU budget in 2020 in relation to the UK's withdrawal from the EU ([12412/19](#)).

This draft regulation is an extension to the contingency framework laid down in Regulation (EU, Euratom) [2019/1197](#) for the 2019 EU budget.

The aim of the measures is to mitigate the impact of a no-deal scenario by allocating funding to a wide range of areas such as research and agriculture. They will enable the EU to continue making payments to UK beneficiaries for contracts signed and decisions made before the withdrawal date or between the withdrawal date and the end of 2019, in accordance with Regulation (EU, Euratom) [2019/1197](#). This is subject to the condition that the UK continues paying its contribution to the EU budget for 2020 and accepts the controls and audits which cover the entire implementation period of the programmes or actions.

In accordance with Article 352(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, the Council may adopt the Regulation, acting unanimously after obtaining the consent of the European Parliament.

**JUSTICE**

**EPPO: Decision appointing the European Chief Prosecutor**

The Council adopted a decision appointing Laura Codruța Kövesi as the new European chief prosecutor at the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO). The appointment is subject to confirmation by the European Parliament.

For more information see [press release](#)



**INTERNAL MARKET AND INDUSTRY**

**Amendment of Regulation (EC) No 1099/2008 on the implementation of updates for the annual, monthly and short-term monthly energy statistics**

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission regulation amending the annexes to Regulation (EC) No 1099/2008.

The regulation is designed to ensure the updating of the EU energy statistics reporting framework. It provides for the disaggregation of statistics on final energy consumption in industry, conceptual adjustments for natural gas trade definitions, the mandatory reporting for specific items and the improvement of timely, monthly data collection for coal and electricity.

The Commission regulation is subject to the regulatory procedure with scrutiny. This means that now that the Council has given its consent, the Commission may adopt the regulation, unless the European Parliament objects.

[11677/19](#) + [ADD1](#)

**SPACE**

**Approval of the Canberra Declaration set out by the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) on 8 November 2019**

The Council approved the draft declaration of the Group on Earth Observation (GEO) to be adopted at the ministerial summit on 8 November 2019 in Canberra, Australia and authorised the Commission to subscribe to it on behalf of the EU.

[12051/19](#) + [COR 1](#)

**HOME AFFAIRS**

**Visa facilitation Belarus**

The Council adopted a decision to sign [\(12361/19\)](#) a visa facilitation agreement with Belarus [\(12363/19\)](#). In its decision, the Council noted that it will decide on the conclusion of the agreement in the light of a Commission assessment of the security and integrity of Belarus' system of issuance of biometric diplomatic passports and their technical specifications.

Visa facilitation is reciprocal and applies to stays of no more than 90 days in any 180 day period. It covers the documentary evidence to be presented regarding the purpose of the journey, the length of the procedures, the issuance of multiple-entry visas for certain categories of persons and a reduced fee for processing visa applications. Citizens of Belarus holding a valid biometric diplomatic passport will be able to travel to EU member states without a visa, and vice versa.

**eu-LISA: Ireland opt-in**

The Council adopted a decision establishing that Ireland shall take part in the new eu-LISA regulation (2018/1726) to the extent that it relates to the operational management of the VIS, the parts of SIS in which Ireland does not take part and the EEAS and ETIAS [\(12543/19\)](#).

Ireland has taken part in the adoption and participates in Eurodac, DubliNet and partially in SIS, all operationally managed or prepared by eu-LISA. As such, Ireland has the right to participate in the activities of the agency. However, eu-LISA has a single legal personality, with one organisational and financial structure. Therefore the partial participation of Ireland would not be possible. The Council decision has been adopted, following a request by Ireland, to ensure the eu-LISA regulation in its entirety is applicable to Ireland, including in respect of systems managed or prepared by eu-LISA in which Ireland does not take part.