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OUTCOME OF THE COUNCIL MEETING

3781st Council meeting

Agriculture and Fisheries

Brussels, 15 and 16 December 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.

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ITEMS DEBATED

FISHERIES

Fishing opportunities for 2021

Following two days of intense negotiations, ministers reached an agreement on the catch limits for over 200 commercial fish stocks in the Atlantic, the North Sea, the Mediterranean and the Black Sea for 2021, and for 2021 and 2022 in the case of deep-sea species. More than 100 of these stocks in the Atlantic and the North Sea have been co-managed with the UK in recent decades. Given the ongoing negotiations on the future EU-UK relationship, ministers agreed to set provisional quotas for the fish stocks shared with the UK. The provisional quotas are designed to ensure the continuation of sustainable fishing in the areas concerned until consultations with the UK are concluded. A similar approach was agreed for the stocks co-managed with Norway.

The provisional quotas include a proportionate roll-over of the existing 2020 fishing opportunities for the first three months of 2021 (applying a 25% ratio of the total existing Union quota). Ministers agreed on certain exceptions to this approach based on seasonality (certain stocks are mainly fished at the beginning of the year, e.g. mackerel and blue whiting) and scientific advice (drastic cuts for some stocks, e.g. northern prawn).

To safeguard stocks, ministers agreed to reduce catch limits for, inter alia, plaice in Kattegat, Norway lobster in Skagerrak, hake and pollack in the southern part of the Atlantic, and several deep-sea species, including roundnose grenadier and black scabbardfish.

Regarding the fishing opportunities in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, ministers agreed to further reduce demersal fishing efforts in the western Mediterranean by 7.5% with a view to sustaining fish stocks in the area. This reduction is part of the commitment for an overall and gradual reduction of up to 40% by the beginning of 2025 in order to progressively reach maximum sustainable yield for all stocks concerned in these highly mixed fisheries.

- [Total allowable catches in the Atlantic and North Sea for 2021](#)
- [Total allowable catches for deep-sea species in 2021 and 2022](#)

AGRICULTURE

Animal welfare

The Council approved conclusions on an EU-wide animal welfare label, inviting the European Commission to submit a proposal for a harmonised label for food produced under animal welfare standards higher than those in EU legislation. In the conclusions, ministers also called for the gradual inclusion of all livestock species in the label, covering their entire lifetime (including transport and slaughter), and for a smooth interplay between the new label and existing labels.

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

Front-of-pack nutrition labelling, nutrient profiles and origin labelling

In public session, ministers discussed the draft conclusions on front-of-pack nutrition labelling, nutrient profiles and origin labelling, as prepared by the presidency of the Council of the EU. Ministers agreed on the importance of harmonised EU front-of-pack nutrition labelling in promoting healthy and sustainable diets. They also encouraged the European Commission to prepare a legislative proposal based on science and an impact assessment. While there was broad support from member states for the text prepared by the presidency, there was no consensus. With the support of 23 member states, the presidency will issue the text as presidency conclusions.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

– COVID-19 crisis in fisheries and aquaculture

The Croatian delegation, with the support of several other delegations, presented its call to extend the eligibility period of the COVID-19 specific measures under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) for a further 6 months in 2021 (measures include compensation for aquaculture farmers and processing enterprises, temporary cessation and more). The Commission responded that it will closely monitor the situation of the markets and intervene as necessary.

– EU conference on digitalisation and agriculture

The presidency informed ministers about the conference on digitalisation and agriculture which took place on 2-3 December 2020, highlighting the importance of agriculture data and the need for guidelines on how to handle them.

– Conference of Directors of EU Paying Agencies

The presidency informed the Council about the 48th conference of Directors of EU Paying Agencies, which took place, in an online format, on 8 and 9 October 2020. The presidency referred to the prevention and detection of irregularities and fraud but also to the design of CAP strategic plans.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**AGRICULTURE****Council conclusions on plant protection products**

The Council approved conclusions on the Commission's report about the placing of plant protection products on the market and the maximum residue levels of pesticides. In its conclusions, the Council expresses its support for the Commission in its intention to minimise the impact of plant protection products on human health and the environment through focusing on alternative methods as well as on low-risk and non-chemical plant protection products. It also calls upon the Commission and the member states to give priority to those areas ([13439/20](#)).

Council conclusions on the sustainable use of pesticides

The Council approved conclusions on the Commission's report about the experience gained by member states in the implementation of national targets established in their National Action Plans and on progress in the implementation of directive [2009/128/EC](#) on the sustainable use of pesticides. In its conclusions, the Council underlines the need for an impact assessment before any revision of the relevant directive in light of the measures and targets envisaged in the European Green Deal and the future Common Agricultural Policy ([13441/20](#)).

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

EU-ACP Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation

The Council approved:

- a decision giving a discharge to the Director of the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) in respect of the implementation of its budget for the financial year 2019 ([13658/20](#)) and
- a decision extending the mandate of the members of the Executive Board of the CTA ([13656/20](#)).

The Council decided to forward the decisions to the ACP side for adoption by the [ACP-EU Committee of Ambassadors](#) by exchange of letters, and ordered that the decisions of the [ACP-EU Committee of Ambassadors](#), once adopted, be published in the Official Journal.

GENERAL AFFAIRS

Chairing of certain working parties

The Council was informed ([13217/20](#)) about the fact that Portugal, as holder of the presidency for the period from 1 January to 30 June 2021, had requested that Germany chair the working party on international environment issues on behalf of the Portuguese presidency.

TRANSPORT

EU position within the Joint Committee set up by the Common Aviation Area Agreement

The Council adopted a decision establishing the position to be taken on behalf of the EU in the Joint Committee set up by the Common Aviation Area Agreement between the European Union and its member states and:

- Georgia ([13380/20](#), [13385/20](#));
- Israel ([13482/20](#), [13483/20](#)).
- the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan ([13480/20](#), [13481/20](#)), and
- the Republic of Moldova ([13513/20](#), [13515/20](#))

with regard to the adoption of the rules of procedure of the Joint Committee.

CARIFORUM-EU Trade and Development Committee

The Council adopted a decision ([13628/20](#)) on the position to be taken on behalf of the European Union within the CARIFORUM-EU Trade and Development Committee of the Economic Partnership Agreement between the CARIFORUM states, of the one part, and the European Community and its member states, of the other part, with regard to the establishment of a Special Committee on Services.