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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	AOB item for the meeting of the “Agriculture and Fisheries” Council on 26 May 2025: For a strong Common Agricultural Policy and a strong Common Fisheries Policy that are fit to face future challenges <i>- Information from Italy and Greece, supported by Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, France, Hungary, Ireland and Portugal</i>

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is the European Union's essential tool for ensuring the competitiveness of the agricultural sector. Its common nature has made it possible to preserve the European single market over time while guaranteeing food security, environmental sustainability, protecting and maintaining vital rural areas and providing income support for farmers.

Reaffirming the principles expressed in the Treaty of Rome of 25 March 1957, it is important to recall that the CAP was initially designed to boost European agricultural production throughout the Union, ensuring a fair income for farmers even in the most disadvantaged areas.

The core objectives of the CAP, clearly expressed in Article 39 of the Treaty of Rome, remain valid and necessary to guide the future action of the European Union. They include, in fact, increasing agricultural productivity through technological progress and the optimal use of inputs, ensuring a fair standard of living for the agricultural population, stabilizing agricultural markets, ensuring food security and reasonable prices for consumers.

In line with these principles, the “Vision for Agriculture and Food - Shaping together an attractive farming and agri-food sector for future generations” (the Vision) outlined a clear roadmap to support the agricultural sector and address the upcoming challenges, focusing on attractiveness, competitiveness, equity and foresight.

Fisheries policy entered EU law with the Treaty of Rome, as part of the common agricultural policy and the first elements of a distinct fishery policy were introduced in 1970 to increase productivity, stabilize markets, provide a source of healthy food and ensure reasonable prices for consumers.

Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) has played a critical role in ensuring that fishing activities are environmentally sustainable in the long term, are managed in a way consistent with achieving economic, social and employment benefits, and contribute to the availability of food supplies.

Despite the positive contribution of the CAP and the CFP to improve food security, environmental sustainability, protection of rural and coastal areas and income support for farmers and fishers, there is an ongoing debate regarding the continuity of specific policy funds and the idea to integrate the agriculture and fishery funds into a broader Single fund under a unique National program per Member State.

We have strong concerns about the floated idea of establishing a single fund and a National Plan that would replace the current approach based on separate funds and programs for agriculture and fishery. This would entail a concrete risk of weakening the effectiveness and coherence of policies and losing the flexibility of the sector’s needs.

The Common Agricultural Policy, with its two-pillar structure, plays an indispensable role in ensuring that the European population is supplied with high-quality, safe, and affordable food and in preserving the natural production base.

The implementation of the CAP Strategic Plans 2023–2027 the CAP, based on a massive and fundamental systemic reform to adapt to current challenges and crises, has been very challenging and just started across Europe. Continuity in the measures and implementation structures is thus key for success.

Another substantial reform will put the much-needed stability and predictability of the agricultural sector and food security at risk. Instead of another radical systemic change, we should build upon the current achievements and further develop the performance-based approach already introduced within the CAP Strategic Plans.

We express our appreciation for the current Vision, which clearly represents a solid way forward for a strong CAP and CFP. In particular, we fully agree on the urgency of strengthening farmers' and fishers' income and increasing the competitiveness of the agricultural and fishery sector, especially to attract younger generations. In this regard, we also support the objective of ensuring the integrity of the internal markets towards international markets and protecting European agricultural and fishery products from unfair competition in terms of quality, health, environmental and social standards. Finally, we underline the vital role of farmers and fishers in environmental protection and in sustainable use of natural resources.

To comply with the high EU standards and objectives of the CAP and the CFP, separate and distinct funding instruments for agriculture, fishery and aquaculture are essential.

Furthermore, it is acknowledged that a significant income disparity exists between the agriculture, aquaculture and fisheries sector compared to other economic sectors.

We recall that the need to keep the funding of CAP separately, dedicated and independent, based on the current two pillar structure, in line with the Agrifish Council Conclusions of December 2024.

In order to enable the implementation of the Vision, and to pursue the general objectives of the CAP and the CFP, we consider it necessary to ensure an adequate level of financing of the CAP and the CFP for the post-2027 programming period. An appropriate level of funding is essential to preserve the integrity of the policy and its instruments with reference to the core objectives of guaranteeing food security, supporting agricultural and fishery income and competitiveness of the sectors.

Moreover, we must further strengthen the policies to guarantee strategic autonomy of the Union and to respond effectively to a complex scenario, characterized by political instability, wars, health crises, economic emergencies and climate change.

In particular, to ensure strong agricultural and fishery sectors it is essential to:

- guarantee predictability and stability for farmers, fishermen and administration as well as maintain the common character of European policies;
- provide the sectors with adequate resources to meet the new challenges; a competitive agri-food and fishery system requires appropriate investments and consequently courageous actions to finance the transition to sustainability and reduce the associated risks;
- maintain specific support instruments for European agriculture and for European fishery and aquaculture. The idea of creating a single fund and a Single Plan for all EU intervention instruments is by no means adequate for the ambitious objectives attributed to the CFP and the CAP and will be a threat to the very effective rural development measures essential for a sustainable and comprehensive agriculture across the EU territory;
- commit to a strong CFP and the two-pillar structure of the CAP; in order to keep a level playing field and a balanced financing of these policies across the Member States, the quantification of the resources devoted to the strategic role of the two sectors has to be decided at EU level.

With this in mind, we call on the Commission to respect a coherent and policy dedicated agriculture and fishery budget in all EU consultations during discussions on the future Multiannual Financial Framework, in order to safeguard the well-functioning of common EU policies.