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'I/A' ITEM NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council

To: Permanent Representatives Committee/Council

Subject: Council Decision on the position to be taken on behalf of the European Union in the Council of Members of the International Olive Council (IOC) as regards the trade standard for olive oils and olive pomace oils

- *Statement from Portugal and Spain*

Delegations will find in Annex a statement from Portugal and Spain on the above-mentioned subject.

Proposal for a COUNCIL DECISION on the position to be taken on behalf of the European Union in the Council of Members of the International Olive Council (IOC) as regards the trade standard for olive oil and olive pomace oil

Statement by Spain and Portugal

Regarding the position to be taken on behalf of the European Union in the Council of Members of the International Olive Council (IOC) as regards the trade standard for olive oil and olive pomace oil, Spain and Portugal are against the inclusion of a footnote changing the limit for total sterols for monovarietal olive oils obtained from either Koroneiki or Nocellara del Belice olive varieties, pending further scientific studies.

The ‘total sterols’ parameter is included in the IOC olive oil standard as an indicator of the purity of olive oil or, in other words, an indirect indicator of fraudulent manipulations and the value currently set is considered the lower limit to guarantee its purity. Spain and Portugal are against changing the minimum ‘total sterols’ limit as defined in the footnote. Nevertheless, we would accept reducing the minimum limit of ‘total sterols’, as long as there is an alternative chemical method or decision tree that guarantees the authenticity of the product, as is currently the case for other olive oils that do not comply with certain established chemical parameters. We believe that any modification of the IOC trade standard must be based on sound technical, chemical and scientific grounds.

Without this alternative chemical parameter, the official control services will not be able to guarantee that the olive oils declared as having been obtained from these two varieties are genuine and have not been manipulated. This is unfair competition with other olive oils and goes against the consumer protection policy.

The modification of the IOC standard for olive oils and table olives will have legal effects in EU legislation. To ensure compliance with our trade rules, it is essential to support the control authorities by ensuring that every olive oil respect the same rules. It is necessary to safeguard quality and guarantee consumers that all olive oils meet the quality standards.

For all these reasons, Spain and Portugal cannot support the proposed amendment of the IOC standard for olive oils and table olives to modify the lower limit of total sterols at the moment.