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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.

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ITEMS DEBATED

FISHERIES

Baltic Sea fishing opportunities for 2022

EU agriculture and fisheries ministers reached a political agreement on the total allowable catches (TACs) and quotas per member state for the ten most commercially important fish stocks in the Baltic Sea for 2022. The agreement determines the quantities of each species that member states will be allowed to catch in 2022 and also sets out certain conditions for fishing vessels operating in the region.

Background to the agreement

In October of each year, agriculture and fisheries ministers meet to agree upon the TACs and quotas for Baltic Sea fishing for the following year. The agreement is based on a proposal from the Commission that takes into account the following elements:

- the latest scientific advice provided, inter alia, by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES);
- the objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), including the need to ensure that fish stocks are restored and maintained above levels that can produce the maximum sustainable yield (MSY);
- the provisions of the multiannual management plan for the Baltic Sea.

Initial negotiations take place at regional level via BALTFISH, the regional fisheries body for the Baltic Sea, which is currently chaired by Latvia.

Changes to the previous year's TACs

- Due to low biomass levels, the TAC for Western Baltic herring was limited to bycatches and was reduced by 50% in the western part of the Baltic Sea.
- The TAC for Central Baltic herring was also limited to bycatches and was reduced by 45%, again due to low biomass levels.
- The TACs for herring in the Gulf of Bothnia and the Gulf of Riga were increased, by 71% and 21% respectively.

- Given the lack of improvement in cod stocks, the Council continued the practice of limiting the TACs for cod to bycatches only. The bycatch TAC for Eastern cod was unchanged; for Western cod it was decreased by 88%.
- The TAC for salmon in the Main Basin was also restricted to bycatches.
- TACs for salmon stocks in the Gulf of Finland were increased by 6%.
- TACs for plaice went up by 25%; for sprat they were increased by 13%.

Other measures

In addition to the abovementioned TACs and national quotas, the Council agreed on specific measures aimed at restoring cod stocks to a healthy level, including restrictions applied to recreational fishing in subdivisions 22-26 and temporary fishing bans (with certain exemptions) during specific periods to protect cod spawning.

Norway pout

As part of the political agreement, the Council also decided on fishing opportunities for Norway pout, the fishing season for which begins each year on 1 November. As this stock is partly present in UK waters, the TAC will be revised at the end of the year to take into account the outcome of consultations with the United Kingdom.

EU-UK consultations on fishing opportunities for 2022

Ministers held an exchange of views on fishing opportunities for stocks shared with the United Kingdom for 2022. Following the UK's withdrawal from the EU, consultations with the UK on shared fish stocks are set to take place annually in line with the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement. Talks are due to commence in early November with the aim of reaching an agreement by 10 December, as the outcome will determine the remaining TACs and quotas for the Atlantic, North Sea, Mediterranean and Black Sea for 2022 (to be agreed upon at the [Agriculture and Fisheries Council](#) on 13-14 December). The delegations prepared the ground for these consultations by providing guidance to the Commission on the EU's priorities and on the content of the agreement. In particular, they emphasised the need to base TACs on scientific advice and to comply with the objectives of the CFP, taking the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainability into account. Many member states also reiterated the importance of presenting a united front in these negotiations.

EU-Norway and Coastal States fishing consultations for 2022

Ministers held an exchange of views on the upcoming consultations with Norway and the Coastal States for fishing opportunities in 2022. Negotiations with Norway will be led by the Commission and are due to take place between mid-October and late November, with Coastal States consultations commencing in late October. The aim of the discussion was for ministers to provide guidance to the Commission on the position to be taken by the EU in these negotiations.

Consultations with Norway have changed as a result of the UK's withdrawal from the EU. Since January 2021, six stocks previously managed jointly by the EU and Norway – saithe, plaice, cod, haddock, whiting and autumn-spawning North Sea herring – are managed trilaterally by the EU, Norway and the UK. The bilateral EU-Norway consultations are now limited to access to waters, the exchange of fishing opportunities, and certain TACs in the Skagerrak and Kattegat (including shrimp, whiting and herring). Coastal States consultations are held annually, usually in October and early November, to discuss TACs, sharing arrangements and management measures for each jointly managed stock.

International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)

Ministers were asked to provide guidance to the Commission on the position to be taken by the EU at the annual meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), which this year will take place from 15-22 November. The discussion included, inter alia, proposed measures to manage tropical tuna (in particular bigeye tuna) and protect the shortfin mako shark, the recovery of bluefin tuna stocks, and the importance of avoiding a negative impact on small-scale and artisanal fisheries. The European Community acceded to the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas – which established ICCAT – on 9 June 1986. ICCAT is responsible for adopting measures to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of fishery resources in the convention area and safeguard the marine ecosystems in which these resources are found. ICCAT's measures may be binding on the EU, and its recommendations and resolutions have direct implications for EU legal acts setting fishing opportunities each year.

AGRICULTURE

CAP strategic plans

Under the reformed Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which will cover the period 2023-2027, member states are asked to prepare strategic plans detailing how they will implement the provisions of the policy. Ministers discussed progress made in preparing their plans, identified any challenges they were facing and reflected on the public consultation processes carried out with relevant stakeholders. They also called on the Commission to adopt a transparent approach to evaluating the plans, for example by providing clear assessment criteria and ensuring that as many guidance documents as possible are made public.

EU marketing standards

Ministers held an exchange of views on the revision of EU marketing standards for agricultural products. They underlined the importance of marketing standards and acknowledged the need to examine ways to improve them further, in particular with a view to contributing to greater sustainability, while also providing clear information to consumers and maintaining the competitiveness of EU products on the international market. Moreover, many of them expressed support for the Slovenian presidency's proposal to revise the rules on labelling honey blends so as to indicate the countries of origin of the honey used in the blends.

EU marketing standards set out minimum requirements for products that are traded between businesses or marketed to consumers. The EU's farm to fork strategy envisages a revision of marketing standards aimed at increasing the sustainability of the food supply chain. Other considerations include the need to modernise certain standards and bring them in line with consumer expectations.

New EU forest strategy for 2030

Ministers discussed the Commission's Communication on the new EU forest strategy for 2030, which was published on 16 July 2021. This strategy, which is anchored in the European Green Deal, aims to adapt Europe's forests to respond to threats such as climate change, maintain forests' role as carbon sinks and preserve and restore ecosystems, while also ensuring sustainable management of forest resources.

Ministers welcomed the strategy but stressed the importance of balancing environmental goals with the crucial economic and social roles that Europe's forests play. They underlined that the strategy needs to take into account national specificities and existing national strategies and measures, while fully respecting the principle of subsidiarity, and that adequate funding should be provided. The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on the strategy at the Agriculture and Fisheries Council in November.

Fit for 55

An exchange of views took place on the potential contribution of the agriculture and forestry sectors to the new fit for 55 package. Ministers discussed the challenges and opportunities posed by the initiative. Points raised included the possible overlap with the new CAP and the need for the different starting points of member states to be taken into account when setting climate objectives. A key message from ministers was that the primary CAP objective of food security should always be guaranteed. A number of delegations also called for an impact assessment of the package to be carried out. Regarding forests, ministers acknowledged their essential role as carbon sinks and in preserving biodiversity, but highlighted that the main challenge would be to balance the more ambitious environmental targets for forestry with the social and economic aspects of forest sustainability.

Fit for 55 is a set of interconnected proposals adopted by the Commission on 14 July with the aim of reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030 (compared to 1990 levels). Three of the proposals have a clear connection to agriculture and forestry as they involve the revision of three key regulations:

- the land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) regulation
- the effort sharing regulation
- the renewable energy directive

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

– 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit

The presidency updated ministers on the outcome of the United Nations Food Systems Summit, which took place in New York on 23 and 24 September in the margins of the 76th UN General Assembly. This summit, the first event of its kind, was organised as part of the UN's Decade of Action, the aim of which is to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Stakeholders from national governments, international organisations and civil society discussed ways to transition to more sustainable food systems and proposed a number of actions. The EU and its member states made a substantial contribution to these discussions, based on the political priorities set out in the Council conclusions adopted in May 2021. The event was preceded by a three-day pre-summit in Rome, which took place on 26-28 July 2021.

– Meeting of G20 agriculture ministers

The Italian delegation informed ministers about the key outcomes of the G20 agriculture ministers' meeting, which had taken place in Florence on 17-18 September under Italy's presidency of the G20. During the meeting the G20 ministers had discussed a number of topics, including:

- how to combine the environmental, economic and social dimensions of sustainability in food systems
- policies for sustainable agriculture in the context of a global health crisis
- research as a driving force for achieving sustainability

The G20 ministers had also shared their approaches to achieving the zero hunger SDG, and discussed their contributions to the upcoming UN Food Systems Summit and COP 26 meeting. Moreover, they had reiterated their commitment to achieving food security and nutrition for all and ensuring sustainable and resilient food systems.

– ***Situation in the pig meat sector***

The Council took note of information provided by Belgium, with the support of Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, concerning the situation in the pig meat sector. This sector is facing challenges as a result of high feed prices, reduced demand, and the impact of African swine fever on European pig meat prices outside the EU. The delegations called on the Commission to activate the provisions of the common market organisation concerning exceptional market measures in the pig meat sector.

– ***Turkish fishing in EU waters***

The Greek delegation informed ministers about illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing by Turkish vessels in Greek territorial waters. A number of member states took the floor to express their support for Greece, highlighting the impact of IUU both on EU fishing vessels and on the marine environment.

– ***Committee on World Food Security***

The Spanish delegation received broad support from ministers for its proposed candidate to chair the Committee on World Food Security (CFS). Based in Rome, the CFS is an international and intergovernmental platform that brings together stakeholders working on food security and nutrition. As a UN intergovernmental body, it reports to the UN General Assembly and to the Conference of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). The Spanish candidate, Gabriel Ferraro, has been Ambassador on Special Mission for World Food Security since April 2021 and was previously Director-General for Sustainable Development Policies at the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The election of the next chair of the CFS is due to take place on 14 October 2021.

– ***Revision of the European quality policy***

On behalf of Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Spain, the Spanish delegation presented a common declaration on the upcoming revision of the EU's quality policy. The aim of this policy is to provide protection for the names of certain products with unique characteristics that are linked to their geographical origin or traditional know-how. In particular, geographical indications (GIs) establish intellectual property rights for specific products, whose quality level is linked to their area of production. The commissioner for agriculture, Janusz Wojciechowski, welcomed the declaration and noted that the Commission's upcoming proposal to revise quality standards would seek to strengthen such standards in line with the new CAP and the European Green Deal.

– ***Framework for state aid***

The Hungarian and Croatian delegations put forward a joint proposal to further extend the temporary framework for state aid measures to support agriculture until 31 December 2022, with a proportionate increase in the aid ceiling. This framework was adopted on 19 March 2020 with the aim of enabling member states to use the full flexibility provided for under state aid rules to support the economy during the COVID-19 outbreak. It is currently valid until 31 December 2021. The Commission has proposed to extend the framework until at least 30 June 2022 and to introduce new post-pandemic economic investment and solvency support measures.

– *Animal welfare*

The Danish delegation, on behalf of the Belgian, Danish, German, Netherlands and Swedish delegations, provided information to ministers regarding the future revision of EU legislation on animal welfare. In particular, they highlighted the need to take scientific information into account when updating the existing EU legislation. They also discussed the challenges of enforcing the existing provisions and the lack of specific, EU-level animal welfare requirements for all species that are kept or traded for economic purposes, including house pets. On the whole, member states acknowledged the need to update animal welfare legislation. A number of delegations stressed the need for a gradual transition to new rules and the importance of maintaining competitiveness, particularly vis-à-vis imports from non-EU countries with different welfare standards. The Commission welcomed the member states' contributions, and responded that the farm to fork strategy provides for the evaluation and revision of the existing animal welfare legislation by the end of 2023, and that many of the issues raised would be addressed as part of this revision process.

– *The price of fertiliser*

The Polish delegation informed ministers about the rising price of fertiliser as a result of high gas prices, and the potential impact on food prices.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

ENVIRONMENT

Kunming Declaration on biodiversity

The Council authorised the Commission to endorse the Kunming Declaration on behalf of the European Union at the high-level segment of the first part of the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP 15 to be held on 12-13 October 2021).

Through the Kunming Declaration, the parties to the UN Biodiversity Convention will commit among other things to ensuring the development, adoption and implementation of a post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

The Kunming Declaration, under the theme “Ecological Civilization: Building a Shared Future for All Life on Earth”, is expected to be adopted at the High-Level Segment of the first part of COP15. The Kunming Declaration constitutes a non-binding instrument that contains political commitments ([12531/21](#)).

Aarhus Convention on access to justice in environmental affairs

The Council adopted a decision on the EU position to be taken at the seventh session of the meeting of the parties to the Aarhus Convention (MOP 7) on compliance cases [ACCC/C/2008/32](#), [ACCC/C/2015/128](#), [ACCC/C/2013/96](#), [ACCC/C/2014/121](#) and [ACCC/C/2010/54](#).

The Aarhus Convention aims to guarantee access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters. At its seventh session on 18-20 October 2021, the meeting of the parties to the Aarhus Convention aims to adopt decision VII/8f, which concerns compliance by the Union with its obligations under the Aarhus Convention, including, in particular, the findings and recommendations of the Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee in the above-mentioned cases.

This decision sets the EU’s position on decision VII/8f with regard to all the above-mentioned cases ([12238/21](#)).

AGRICULTURE

Statistics on pesticides

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission regulation amending regulation (EC) No 1185/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning statistics on pesticides, as regards the list of active substances ([12247/21](#), [11021/21](#) + ADD 1).

Opium alkaloids in certain foodstuffs

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission regulation amending regulation (EC) No 1881/2006 as regards maximum levels of opium alkaloids in certain foodstuffs ([12249/21](#), [11118/21](#) + ADD 1).
