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COVER NOTE

From:	Secretary-General of the European Commission, signed by Ms Martine DEPREZ, Director
date of receipt:	12 September 2025
To:	Ms Thérèse BLANCHET, Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union

No. Cion doc.:	COM(2025) 481 final
Subject:	Recommendation for a COUNCIL DECISION authorising the opening of negotiations to amend the International Agreement on Olive Oil and Table Olives, 2015

Delegations will find attached document COM(2025) 481 final.

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EUROPEAN
COMMISSION

Brussels, 12.9.2025

COM(2025) 481 final

Recommendation for a

COUNCIL DECISION

**authorising the opening of negotiations to amend the International Agreement on Olive
Oil and Table Olives, 2015**

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

1. SUBJECT MATTER OF THE RECOMMENDATION

This recommendation concerns a decision to authorise the opening of negotiations in the Council of Members of the International Olive Council ("IOC"), as well as in any possible ad hoc bodies that the IOC may set up for this purpose and to establish negotiating directives for the Union in connection to the envisaged revision of the International Agreement on Olive Oil and Table Olives, 2015 ("the Agreement"), which was renewed in 2017.

2. CONTEXT OF THE RECOMMENDATION

2.1 The current Agreement

The current Agreement aims (i) to achieve uniformity in national and international legislation relating to the physico-chemical and organoleptic characteristics of olive oils, olive pomace oils and table olives in order to prevent any obstacle to trade (ii) to conduct activities in the area of physico-chemical and organoleptic testing in order to add to the knowledge of the composition and quality characteristics of olive products, with a view to consolidating international standards, and (iii) to strengthen the role of the IOC as a forum of excellence for the international scientific community in the area of olives and olive oil.

The European Union is a party to the Agreement¹.

2.2 The Council of Members

The Council of Members of the International Olive Council ("the Council of Members") is the highest authority and decision-making organ of the IOC and shall exercise all such powers and functions as are necessary to achieve the objectives of the Agreement. As a party to the Agreement, the European Union is a member of the IOC and is represented in the Council of Members. Pursuant to Article 19(2) of the Agreement, the Council of Members can take decisions amending the Agreement. In conformity with article 10(3) of the Agreement, the decisions of the Council of Members concerning any amendments of the Agreement shall be taken by consensus.

2.3 The envisaged amendments

During its 120th meeting, on 20 November 2024, the Council of Members decided to create a working group to discuss possible amendments to the Agreement. This proposal was originally presented by Iran and Tunisia and concerned potential changes on Article 11 and 32 of the Agreement. After consultation with the Working Party on Commodities (PROBA), the European Union delegation proposed to include in this discussion other elements for review, related to Articles 1, 2, 7, 16 and 17 of the Agreement.

Article 1 of the Agreement refers to its general objectives, with respect to standardisation and research, with respect to olive growing and technical cooperation and with respect to the promotion of olive products, dissemination of information and the olive economy.

¹ Council Decision (EU) 2016/1892 of 10 October 2016 on the signing, on behalf of the European Union, and provisional application of the International Agreement on Olive Oil and Table Olives, 2015 (OJ L 293, 28.10.2016, p. 2) and Council Decision (EU) 2019/848 of 17 May 2019 on the conclusion on behalf of the European Union of the International Agreement on Olive Oil and Table Olives, 2015 (OJ L 139, 27.05.2019, p. 1).

Article 2 of the Agreement includes the definitions for the purposes of the Agreement.

Article 7 of the Agreement defines the powers and functions of the different organs in the IOC, in particular for the Council of Members and the Executive Secretariat of the IOC.

Article 11 of the Agreement refers to the participation shares in the IOC, and its method of calculation, which also determines a Member's contribution.

Article 16 refers to the payment of contributions, the suspension of voting rights, the exclusion from the Agreement and the rescheduling of financial obligations.

Article 17 refers to financial controls of the IOC.

Article 32 of the Agreement establish the amendment process acting through the Council of Members, including the notification of acceptance to the depository of the Agreement by all members before entering into force.

Bringing reform to the IOC to further align it with the practices the Union fosters in other international commodity bodies, as well as with developments in the global olive oil market, is in the interest of the Union. At the very least, this reform should lead to an improved scheduling system concerning the Members' financial contributions, as well as a simpler ratification procedure for amendments to the Agreement. The reform should also update the objectives of the IOC in line with the realities of the olive sector. Further minor improvements to the Agreement are also envisaged.

The proposed decision allows the Commission to open negotiations on the amendment of the Agreement and to engage with other members in case they should take the lead on reform proposals.

3. LEGAL BASIS

3.1 Procedural legal basis

3.1.1. Principles

Article 218(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) provides for authorising the opening of negotiations and, depending on the subject of the agreement envisaged, nominating the Union negotiator or the head of the Union's negotiating team.

Article 218(4) TFEU provides for the Council to address directives to the negotiator and designate a special committee in consultation with which the negotiations must be conducted.

3.1.2. Application to the present case

As the aim of this recommendation is for a Council Decision to authorise the opening of negotiations in the Council of Members of the International Olive Council, the procedural legal basis for the proposed decision is Article 218(3) and 218(4) TFEU. The substantive legal basis is Article 207(4) TFEU, in view of the horizontal scope of the proposed amendments to the agreement that concerns standardisation with respect to olive growing and technical cooperation and with respect to the promotion of olive products, dissemination of information and the olive economy and that was signed and concluded on that basis.

3.2 Choice of the instrument

Article 218(3) TFEU provides that the Commission or the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy shall submit recommendations to the Council, which shall adopt a decision authorising the opening of negotiations. Given the subject matter of the envisaged agreement, it is for the Commission to submit a recommendation to that effect.

3.3 The choice of the negotiator

Given that the envisaged agreement exclusively covers matters other than the Common Foreign and Security Policy, the Commission must be designated as the negotiator pursuant to Article 218(3) TFEU.

Recommendation for a

COUNCIL DECISION

authorising the opening of negotiations to amend the International Agreement on Olive Oil and Table Olives, 2015

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Article 207(4), in conjunction with Article 218(3) and (4) thereof,

Having regard to the recommendation from the European Commission,

Whereas:

- (1) The Union is a Party to the International Agreement on Olive Oil and Table Olives, 2015 ('the Agreement')¹.
- (2) It is in the Union's interest to participate in the forthcoming negotiations that will be held in the Council of Members of the International Olive Council of the International Agreement on Olive Oil and Table Olives, 2015, considering the importance of that sector for the economy of the Union. The institutional framework of the Agreement should be updated, in particular as regards some of its objectives, the procedure to settle Members' contributions and the procedure for the adoption of amendments to the Agreement.
- (3) Pursuant to Article 32 of the Agreement, the Council of Members of the International Olive Council ('the Council of Members') is to adopt decisions that modify the Agreement,

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

Article 1

The Commission is hereby authorised to participate, on behalf of the Union, in the negotiations on amendments to the Agreement on Olive Oil and Table Olives, 2015.

Article 2

The negotiating directives are set out in the Annex.

Article 3

The negotiations shall be conducted in consultation with the Working Party on Commodities (PROBA), which is hereby nominated as the special committee within the meaning of Article 218(4) TFEU.

¹ Council Decision (EU) 2019/848 of 17 May 2019 on the conclusion on behalf of the European Union of the International Agreement on Olive Oil and Table Olives, 2015 (OJ L 139, 27.05.2019, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2019/848/oj>).

Article 4

This Decision is addressed to the Commission.

Done at Brussels,

*For the Council
The President*