



AGRICULTURE and FISHERIES Council

10 and 11 November 2014 in Brussels

The Council meeting will address agricultural and fisheries matters. It starts at 10.00 on Monday 10 November 2014 and may continue on Tuesday 11 November 2014. The Council will be chaired by Mr Maurizio MARTINA, Italy's Minister for Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policy.

*Regarding fisheries, the ministers will try to reach a political agreement on **fishing opportunities for 2015 and 2016 for certain deep-sea stocks**.*

*As regards agriculture the Council will have an exchange of views on the **Commission amending letter to the draft general budget 2015 of the EU**. Ministers will then take stock of a **Cyprus tax exemption on motor fuel for agriculture**.*

*Ministers will then be briefed on **young farmers**, on a **declaration on organic production**, on the **Russian ban on peaches and nectarines from the EU**, on the **protection of honey bees**, on **measures against the corn rootworm** and on **ICANN domains**.*

A press conference on agriculture and fisheries will be held at the end of the session on the first day of meeting (around 18.30). If needed, a second press conference on fisheries issues will be held at the end of the second day of meeting.

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Press conferences and public events by video streaming: <http://video.consilium.europa.eu>

Video coverage in broadcast quality (MPEG4) and photo gallery on: www.eucouncil.tv

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¹ This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office.

FISHERIES

Fishing opportunities for deep-sea stocks

Ministers will try to reach a political agreement on fishing opportunities for certain deep-sea stocks for 2015 and 2016 ([13852/14](#)).

Deep-sea stocks are fish stocks caught in waters beyond the main fishing grounds of continental shelves. They are distributed on the continental slopes or associated with seamounts. These species are slow-growing and long-lived, which can make them particularly vulnerable to fishing activity.

In order to ensure the sustainability of the resource, fishing for deep-sea species has been regulated by the EU since 2003 through total allowable catches (TACs) per species and area, and maximum fishing effort deployable in the North-East Atlantic. The fishing opportunities for deep-sea species are decided on a bi-annual basis on the strength of scientific stock assessments.

The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) provides a review of the biological status of deep-sea stocks every two years. The latest advice was published in May 2014. The proposal for fixing fishing opportunities is based on the further review undertaken by the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) in June 2014, following the work of ICES. The advice from both sources indicates that most deep-sea stocks are still harvested unsustainably and that in order to assure their sustainability the fishing opportunities for those stocks should be further reduced until the evolution of the stocks shows a positive trend.

Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013² establishing the main principles of the reformed Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) establishes that decision-making such as fixing fishing opportunities must be guided, among others things, by scientific advice. Furthermore, the regulation provides that the CFP will aim to restore and maintain a maximum sustainable yield (MSY) of the fish stocks.

In accordance with to Article 43(3) of the Treaty, the Council is expected to adopt measures on a proposal from the Commission on the fixing and allocation of fishing opportunities for deep-sea stocks.

AGRICULTURE

Financing of the European agricultural guarantee fund

Ministers will have an exchange of views on the financing of the European agricultural guarantee fund (EAGF) in the context of the Commission amending letter No 1 to the draft general budget of the EU for 2015.

The EAGF primarily finances direct payments to farmers and measures regulating or supporting agricultural markets that are the main tools of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). In the reformed CAP a new crisis reserve has been established within the EAGF to secure the financial resources needed in the event of an agricultural crisis. The use of the crisis reserve would mean deductions from direct payments, with unused amounts reimbursed to farmers in the consecutive budget years.

The amending letter No 1 for 2015 ([14401/14](#)) updates the draft budget proposed by the Commission for 2015 notably with regard to agricultural expenditure, reducing the overall commitments by €448.5 million and redeploying payments of €397 million from heading 2 (Sustainable growth: natural resources) to meet needs under other headings. The reduction of appropriations in heading 2 is compensated for by additional revenue, notably from the milk superlevy (levy paid when milk quotas have been exceeded by producers in a member state). Furthermore, €344.3 million of the €433 million in the agricultural crisis reserve are used to finance emergency market measures in response to the Russian food import ban.

² OJ L 356, 22.12.2012, p. 22.

Cyprus tax exemption on motor fuel in agriculture

The Council will take stock of the Cyprus request for a state aid to farmers in the form of a tax exemption on motor fuel used for agricultural purposes ([13778/14](#), [15201/14](#)).

Cyprus farmers have been severely affected by the economic and financial crisis in the country, a recent drought and the Russian ban on agricultural products. In this context, Cyprus would like to alleviate the burden on its farmers by extending the existing tax exemption on motor fuel used for agricultural purposes.

Under the community guidelines for state aid in the agriculture and forestry sector for 2007-2013 , it was possible to grant reduced tax rates and exemptions to agricultural taxation, by applying a taxation level down to zero. Taking advantage of that possibility, since 2004, the Cypriot legislation has provided for state aid in the form of this tax exemption. However, the EU guidelines for state aid in the agriculture and forestry sectors for 2014-2020 no longer provide for such a possibility. The tax exemption in question was not repealed following the new EU guidelines on state aid and Cyprus would like it to be extended.

Such an extension would only be possible under the terms of the third subparagraph of article 108(2) of the TFEU, pursuant to which unanimity is required to decide that a specific state aid will be deemed compatible with the internal market.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Young farmers

The Presidency will brief the Council about difficulties still met by young farmers in the framework of the new CAP ([15127/14](#)).

Whereas the reformed CAP provides for specific measures to support young farmers, there are still some obstacles relating to the setting-up of young entrepreneurs in agriculture. In particular, there are still some barriers to entry in the sector:

- economic barriers, such as lower income relative to other economic sectors;
- market barriers, difficulties to access the main factors of production, especially access to credit and access to agricultural land;
- weakness in the transfer of innovation, limited exchange of information and professional experience among all the different realities across the EU.

To overcome these barriers, the Presidency is committed to bringing to the attention of the ministers feasible solutions for eliminating the aforementioned obstacles. The Presidency document will focus on three main elements: access to credit; access to production factors, access to knowledge and innovation.

Declaration on organic production

The Slovak delegation will brief the Council about a common declaration of the ministers of agriculture of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia on the proposal for a regulation on organic production and labelling of organic products ([7956/14](#) + [7956/14 ADD1](#)).

The declaration emphasises concerns of those member states regarding changes that could be introduced by the proposed regulation and could ultimately affect the organic production in the. They highlight in particular the need to:

- keep a process-based approach for the controls on organic production;
- maintain some derogations such as the possibility to use non-organic seeds in organic production;
- keep the possibility to have farms combining organic and non-organic production in the same holding;
- reduce the number of delegated acts provided for in the regulation and include more provisions in the basic legal act.

Russian ban on peaches and nectarines

At the request of the Greek delegation, the Council will take stock of the possibility of additional targeted measures for supporting the peach and nectarine sector affected by the Russian ban on EU agricultural products ([12792/14](#)).

In this regard, Greece considers that the initial emergency market measures on peaches and nectarines followed by further measures on other fruit and vegetables adopted in August this year did not mitigate the severe effect of the Russian ban affecting the producers.

Protection of honey bee in Europe

Ministers will be briefed by the Slovenian delegation on the outcome of a ministerial conference "Protection of honey bee in Europe" which took place on 22 August 2014 in Maribor, Slovenia ([14966/14](#))

The participants discussed the importance of honey bees and beekeeping, the risk factors causing honey bee losses and proposals for their protection. At the end of the conference a joint declaration laying down guidance and specific action proposals to reduce the threats to the existence of honey bees in Europe was adopted by the following participating countries: Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Moldova and Slovenia.

Measures against the corn root worm

The Austrian and the Hungarian delegations will brief the Council about control measures to eradicate the corn rootworm ([15114/14](#)).

In the context of the spread of the corn rootworm, Austria and Hungary request on one hand an intensification of the research on the parasite and on the other hand better harmonised procedures for the authorisation of suitable plant protection products in the member states affected.

ICANN domains

The Presidency will request the Commission to brief the Council on the ongoing new ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers) program entitled Generic Top Level Domain (gTLDs). This program presents some critical aspects concerning intellectual property rights, in particular geographical indications ([15191/14](#)).

In July this year the Presidency drew already the attention of the Council and the Commission to the possible negative consequences on the European agri-food production, in particular on the wine market, arising from the delegation via ICANN of the first level domains using generic top-levels domain names (e.g. .vin, .wine.).
