

AGRICULTURE and FISHERIES Council

14 July in Brussels

The Council meeting will address agricultural and fisheries matters; it will start at 10.00 on Monday 14 July 2014. The Council will be chaired by Mr Maurizio MARTINA, Minister for Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policy.

*The Presidency will present its **work programme** for the six months ahead and its priorities as regards agriculture and fisheries issues.*

*Concerning agriculture, the Council will hold a policy debate on **organic farming**. Last March, ministers were briefed by the Commission about its proposal for a review of the legal framework for organic production and farming in Europe. The proposal acknowledges that the current EU policy on organic production has drawbacks such as complex legislation and unclear provisions, as well as deficiencies in the control system.*

*The Council could then adopt conclusions on **the future of the dairy sector**. A report on the development of the market situation in the dairy sector was presented by the Commission last June, but conclusions could not be adopted at that time due to diverging positions among Member States with some calling for additional measures to ensure a proper soft landing in the coming months and others asking for measures for the future of the sector after the end of the quota system in April 2015.*

*As regards fisheries issues, ministers will be briefed and will hold an exchange of views on a Commission communication concerning a **consultation on fishing opportunities for 2015**. The communication sets out the general approach to be taken by the Commission in formulating its proposals for fishing opportunities for 2015. The document outlines the state of the stocks, gives a limited overview of the economic performance of the EU fleet, and stresses the commitment to long-term management plans and to management in accordance with scientific advice.*

*Finally, ministers will be briefed on **ICCAN domains, food frauds and the fisheries partnership agreements with Morocco and Mauritania**.*

*A **press conference** will be held at the end of the meeting (around 18.30).*

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*Press conferences and public events by video streaming: video.consilium.europa.eu.
Video coverage in broadcast quality (MPEG4): tvnewsroom.consilium.europa.eu.
Photographic library for photos in high resolution: www.consilium.europa.eu/photo.*

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

Presidency work programme

The Italian Presidency will give a public presentation on its work programme in the agriculture and fisheries sectors.

The agricultural policy priorities of the Presidency will include:

- Preparing the **EXPO Milano 2015**, devoted to the theme “Feeding the planet, energy for life” which will be a landmark event for the EU in the area of food security. The Presidency will strive to promote a more sustainable, innovative and environmentally friendly development of the agriculture, food and fisheries sector in the EU, ensuring coherence with EXPO Milano 2015;
- Continuing the work on the proposal on **organic farming**, and if possible negotiating with the European Parliament, with a view to adoption of the new proposal, focusing on the rules on control, import and combating fraud in this field and keeping in mind simplification of the procedures;
- Contributing to reflection on the mid-term review of the **Europe 2020 Strategy** by insisting on the role of agriculture, in particular as regards perspectives for young people.
- Continuing the discussions on a proposal for a **school scheme on fruit and vegetables and milk** products which aims to merge the two different existing schemes to simplify the procedure;
- Widening the debate on the **future of the milk sector** once the quota system ends;
- Concluding the formalities concerning the approval of the proposal on information and **promotion for agricultural products** within and outside the EU;
- Seeking completion of the work on the last **delegated acts** related to the entry into force of the reformed Common agriculture policy (CAP) in January next year.

The priorities for fisheries policy will focus on:

- Actively monitoring the start-up of the new **Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)** and the entry into force of the **European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)** at the beginning of next year;
- Paying special attention to **aquaculture** in view of the increase in production in the EU;
- Reaching agreement on **fishing opportunities for 2015** which will have to be fully consistent with the objectives of the new CFP;
- Coordinating the EU position and representation at negotiations concerning protocols to **agreements on fisheries partnership with third countries**, as well as annual meetings with regional organisations of fisheries management and coastal states.
- Seeking to promote the regional procedures provided for by the new CFP to introduce appropriate resources management measures regarding stocks in the **Mediterranean Sea**.

As regards food and veterinary issues, the Presidency intends to:

- Take stock of the new proposals on **animal cloning** and **novel food** to find a balanced solution preventing the marketing of food from animal clones, while avoiding any obstacles to research and innovation;
- Continue the work on the **package of food chain legislation**, including regulations on official control, animal health, protective measures against plant pests, and the production and marketing of plant reproductive material;
- Encourage the review of regulations on **veterinary medicines** and the use of **medicated feeds** in farm animal therapy;
- Reinforce cooperation between Member States' competent authorities in the fight against **food fraud**.

On the subject of forests, the Presidency will address the implementation of the new EU Forest Strategy and the launch of EU coordination for the preparation of Council conclusions for the 11th session of the United Nations Forum on Forests to be held in 2015.

AGRICULTURE

New proposal on organic farming

The Council will hold a policy debate on organic farming. Last March, ministers were briefed by the Commission about its proposal for a review of the legal framework for organic production and farming in Europe ([17375/13](#)). The Hellenic Presidency started the examination of the legislative proposal at some working party meetings. The current Presidency indicated that this issue constitutes a priority in its work programme.

The proposal acknowledges that the current EU policy on organic production has drawbacks (complex legislation and unclear provisions, deficiencies in the control system and in the trade regime, significant administrative burden, lack of opportunities for EU producers, etc.). Both the current legislation on organic farming and the European organic action plan should be modernised.

The Presidency would like the debate in the Council be structured around some elements of the proposal raised at the working party meetings:

- Rules for organic production

The Commission has proposed strengthening and harmonising production rules by removing the current exceptions. However, the harmonisation provided for in this proposal may constitute a risk for the growth of the organic sector.

- Control systems

The Commission has proposed to remove the current requirement for a mandatory annual verification of compliance for all operators and to reinforce the approach based on risk analysis to official controls. Furthermore, the proposal requires all operators along the organic chain to be subject to the control system. Finally, there is a provision for modification of the control system by integrating all control-related provisions under the Commission proposal for a Regulation on official controls in food and feed.

- Delegated and implementing acts

The Commission has introduced the possibility of using delegated acts to modify specific organic rules, arguing that it would make the legislation more user-friendly.

Future of the dairy sector

The Council could adopt conclusions on the future of the dairy sector.

In June, most Member States welcomed a report from the Commission on the development of the market situation in the milk sector. The report was provided for in the "Milk Package", which entered into force in October 2012 with a view to improving the position of dairy producers and preparing the dairy sector for the end of the quota system in 2015.

In the same time However, the discussion following the presentation did not lead to the adoption of the conclusions on the milk sector prepared by the Hellenic Presidency presented a document on the future of dairy sector, which attempted to reconcile the position of some Member States urging for additional measures to ensure a proper "soft landing" before the end of the quota system next year with that of other Member States asking for measures for the future of the sector to avoid a crisis after the end of the quota system. The discussion did not bring to any conclusions yet.

Thus, a delegation, unsatisfied in the absence of these conclusions requested this point in the agenda.

FISHERIES

Fishing opportunities for 2015

The Council will be briefed and will hold an exchange of views on a Commission communication concerning a consultation on fishing opportunities for 2015 ([11288/14](#)).

The Communication sets out the general approach to be taken by the Commission in formulating its proposals for fishing opportunities for 2015. The document outlines the state of the stocks, gives a limited overview of the economic performance of the EU fleet, and stresses the commitment to long-term management plans and to management in accordance with scientific advice.

It offers some good news - a stable level of stocks exploited at maximum sustainable yield (MSY) levels, a decrease in overfishing and an improvement in the general knowledge about the state of stocks (46 stocks with full MSY assessment in 2014, against 35 in 2009); however, some mixed news was conveyed as well, especially regarding stocks in the Baltic Sea, the west of Scotland, the Celtic Sea, the Black Sea, the Iberian-Atlantic area and the Mediterranean.

The upcoming landing obligation (agreed in the CFP reform context) will have implications for the determination of fishing opportunities for next year and the fixing of quotas and total allowable catches (TACs). The Communication mentions only that adapted TACs need to be consistent with the target of reaching MSY at the latest by 2020, and mentions that any "de minimis" exemptions from the landing obligation and other flexibilities introduced in this context would have to be accounted for in the TAC setting.

The main proposal for fishing opportunities 2015 as regards stocks in the Atlantic, the North Sea, the Antarctic and in other areas will be presented in October.

Furthermore, the Commission proposals for the Baltic and the Black Sea will be submitted to Council in August and November, respectively.

Finally, this year a proposal for deep-sea stocks will be submitted in September. The fishing opportunities for deep-sea species are decided on a bi-annual basis according to the rhythm of scientific stock assessments.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

ICANN domains

The Presidency will draw the attention of the member States and of the Commission on the possible negative consequences coming from the delegation, made by ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers), of the first level domains regarding generic terms like *.food*, *.organic*, *.vine* *.wine*.

On this matter the Presidency intend to address a request to the Commission aimed to ask which initiatives accordingly should be taken, together with member states, to interrupt such delegation procedure.

State of play of Fisheries Protocols: Morocco and Mauritania

The Lithuanian delegation asked the Commission to report on the protocols to the fisheries partnership agreements (FPA) with Morocco and Mauritania.

The new EU-Morocco protocol is still not ratified while the conclusion of negotiations dates back to summer 2013, and EU vessels still have no access to Moroccan waters. In addition, ongoing negotiations with Mauritania on the renewal of the current protocol are likely to take longer than expected.

Food fraud and controls

At the request of the Swedish delegation the Commission will brief the Council about food controls and food fraud, and action taken since the "horsemeat scandal" (11613/14).

This "scandal" showed that fraud along the food chain is both widespread and of a cross-border nature. Given the multifaceted aspect of the fraud, it is important to strengthen cooperation between institutional actors with various competences. Following the "horsemeat scandal", several actions have been initiated by the Commission in this regard.
