



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



9975/14

(OR. en)

PRESSE 299  
PR CO 26

## **PRESS RELEASE**

3314th Council meeting

### **Agriculture and Fisheries**

Brussels, 19 May 2014

President            **Athanasios TSAFTARIS**  
Minister for Rural Development and Food of Greece

# **P R E S S**

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## **Main results of the Council**

### ***Minor uses of plant protection products***

*The Council supported the setting up of a coordination facility to help develop additional tools to control diseases for minor crops, as suggested in a Commission report.*

*Minor uses of plant protection products (such as herbicides) are not economically sustainable for the plant protection industry. This leads to a lack of available plant protection products for minor crops (including most vegetables, fruits and flowers) and major crops affected by less common pests or diseases. "The issue of minor uses is very important for agriculture as a whole, affecting around a quarter of the plant production in the EU", said Athanasios Tsiftaris, Greek Minister for Rural Development and Food and President of the Council.*

### ***Other business***

*On the initiative of the Netherlands and Swedish delegations the Council discussed **food loss and food waste** in the European Union and ways to reduce it. Ministers felt that action to reduce food loss and food waste was useful, as long as food safety was not undermined. One of the suggestions made by the Netherlands and Swedish delegations was to exempt more products, which have a long shelf life and retain their quality for a very long time, from the requirement to provide a "best before" date on the label.*

*On a request from the Danish and Swedish delegations, supported by several other delegations, the Commission informed the Council of the measures taken so far to improve the implementation of the **animal transport regulation**.*

*The Council also took note of the Commission commitment to take all necessary measures to prevent **citrus black spot disease** from entering the EU and to present a new proposal with strict control measures to the Standing Committee on the food chain on 22 May.*

### ***Other items approved***

*The Council adopted conclusions welcoming the new EU Forest Strategy published by the Commission in September 2013.*

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- <sup>1</sup>
- 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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Minister for Rural Affairs

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Deputy Permanent Representative

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**Commission:**

Mr Dacian CIOLOȘ

Member

Mr Tonio BORG

Member

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## **ITEMS DEBATED**

### **Minor uses of plant protection products**

The Council supported the setting up of a coordination facility to help develop additional tools to control diseases for minor crops, as suggested in a Commission report ([6847/14](#)).

Minor uses of plant protection products (such as herbicides) are not economically sustainable for the plant protection industry. This leads to a lack of available plant protection products for minor crops (including most vegetables, fruits and flowers) and major crops affected by less common pests or diseases.

This not only has major repercussions for the growers of these crops but can also have a considerable impact on human health and the environment, owing to possible illegal uses of plant protection products.

According to the Commission report, the minor crops concerned by the problem of minor uses are valued at about 70 billion € per year, which represents 22% of the entire EU plant production value. The direct impacts (i.e. crop production loss and additional growing costs to farmers) are estimated at more than 1 billion €.

In its report, the Commission identified the following main causes for the minor uses problem:

- lack of economic incentives for the plant protection industry to apply for the authorisation of PPP;
- differing degrees of PPP for minor uses as economic incentives and needs vary between member states;
- difficult access to and complicated use of regulatory pathways to obtain extensions of use for third parties;
- lack of information on existing initiatives in other member states.

## **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### ***– Food loss and food waste***

On the initiative of the Netherlands and Swedish delegations the Council discussed food loss and food waste in the European Union and ways to reduce it. Ministers felt that action to reduce food loss and food waste was useful, as long as food safety was not undermined. One of the suggestions made by the Netherlands and Swedish delegations was to exempt more products, which have a long shelf life and retain their quality for a very long time, from the requirement to provide a "best before" date on the label ([9755/14](#)).

The "best before" date is a date of consumption recommended by the manufacturer and represents the last date by which, according to the manufacturer, a product's flavour and quality is at its best, or the optimal time of its shelf life. Such food is still safe to consume after the indicated "best before" date as long as storage instructions are respected and packaging is not damaged. Some foodstuffs are currently exempted from the obligation to indicate a "best before" date, such as wines, cooking salt, solid sugar and certain confectionary products.

The "best before" date should not be confused with the "use by" date which is used for foods that are highly perishable (e.g. fresh meat, dairy products).

The Commission announced the publication of a paper on food sustainability, setting out a strategic approach to prevent food waste, in the coming weeks.

### ***– Protection of animals during transport***

On a request from the Danish and Swedish delegations, supported by several other delegations, the Commission informed the Council of the measures taken so far to improve the implementation of the animal transport regulation ([9395/14](#)).

The Council adopted conclusions on the protection and welfare of animals in June 2012. However, it did not request the Commission to present a proposal to enhance the protection of animals during transport.

### ***– Climate and energy framework 2030***

On the initiative of the Irish and German delegations many ministers asked the Commission to assess the impact of the climate and energy framework 2030 on the agriculture and called for the Council of Agriculture Ministers to be fully involved in the discussions on this framework ([9669/14](#)).

The 2030 policy framework for climate and energy proposed by the Commission is aimed at making the European Union's economy and energy system more competitive, secure and sustainable. Its centrepieces are:

- the target to reduce EU domestic greenhouse gas emissions by 40% below the 1990 level by 2030;
- the objective to increase the share of renewable energy to at least 27% of the EU's energy consumption.
- ***Citrus black spot***

The Council took note of the Commission commitment to take all necessary measures to prevent citrus black spot disease from entering the EU and to present a new proposal with strict control measures to the Standing Committee on the food chain on 22 May.

This followed the request of the Spanish delegation, supported by several other delegations, to reinforce the measures on imports of citrus fruits from South Africa in order to prevent the black spot disease from entering the EU ([9805/14](#)).

Citrus black spot disease is caused by a plant pathogen (*guignardia citricarpa*), reducing both the quantity and quality of the fruit. Symptoms include lesions on both fruit and leaves.

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) published an opinion<sup>1</sup> in February 2014 recommending that phytosanitary measures should focus on preventing entry since it is difficult to eradicate and contain this disease.

– ***State aids***

On the initiative of the Italian, French and Hungarian delegations many ministers drew the Commission's attention to a number of difficulties identified in the second draft guidelines for state aids in the agriculture and forestry sector and in the rural areas for the period 2014 to 2020. These difficulties include notably the question of land acquisition for young farmers, the requirement for a comprehensive national state aid website, the limited scope for state aid for investments in irrigation and the prohibition of state aid for the purchase of animals ([9833/1/14 REV 1](#)).

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/3557.htm>

Article 107 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU gives the Commission the role of deciding whether state aids are compatible with the internal market. By publishing guidelines, the Commission clarifies which types of aid it considers compatible.

– ***Climate-smart agriculture***

The Netherlands delegation briefed the Council on the progress in establishing an alliance on climate-smart agriculture. A roadmap for the setting up of such an alliance was agreed at the third global conference on agriculture, food and nutrition security and climate change in Johannesburg on 3-5 December 2013. The alliance for climate-smart agriculture will be launched at the Climate Summit in New York on 23 September 2014 ([9786/14](#)).

– ***Conference on the future of rural areas***

The Austrian delegation informed the Council of the outcome of the international conference on the future of rural areas which took place in Wildschönau (Tyrol) on 9 May ([9822/14](#)).

– ***Flooding in Croatia***

The Croatian delegation informed the Council about the severe flooding that is currently affecting the eastern part of the country, damaging more than 40 000 ha of arable land and more than 7 000 head of livestock. The Council and the Commission expressed their sympathy with the people hit by this major catastrophe. The Commission explained the possibilities which exist for Croatia to receive EU support, including the solidarity fund, the instrument for pre-accession (IPA) and rural development programmes

## **OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**

### **AGRICULTURE**

#### **Council conclusions on a new EU forest strategy**

The Council adopted conclusions welcoming the new EU Forest Strategy published by the Commission in September 2013.

This strategy is aimed at putting forests and the forest sector at the heart of the policy for achieving a green economy and to value the benefits that forests can sustainably deliver, while ensuring their protection.

For details, see [9944/14](#).

### **FISHERIES**

#### **Indian Ocean Tuna Commission - EU position**

The Council adopted a decision on the position to be adopted, on behalf of the EU, in the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC).

The IOTC is a regional fisheries management organisation (RFMO) responsible for the management of tuna and tuna-like species in the Indian Ocean and adjacent seas. It works to achieve this by promoting cooperation among its contracting parties (Members) and cooperating non-contracting parties in order to ensure the conservation and appropriate utilisation of fish stocks and encouraging the sustainable development of fisheries. The EU became a contracting party to the IOTC in 1995. Conservation and management measures decided in the framework of IOTC may become binding upon the EU.

The decision provides that, in the framework of the IOTC, the EU shall act in accordance with the objectives and principles pursued by the EU within the reformed Common Fisheries Policy (CPF) notably through the precautionary approach and the aims related to maximum sustainable yield as laid down in regulation 1380/2013<sup>1</sup>. This decision includes negotiating directives to be used when deciding the position to be taken by the EU in the annual meetings of the IOTC Commission. The next annual meeting of the IOTC will take place in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 1 June 2014.

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<sup>1</sup> [OJ L354, 28.12.2013, p. 22](#)

## **General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean - EU position**

The Council adopted a decision on the position to be adopted, on behalf of the EU, in the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM).

The EU, together with Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Romania, Slovenia and Spain, is a contracting party to the GFCM, a regional fisheries management organisation (RFMO) established under FAO Constitution. The GFCM may, on the basis of scientific advice, adopt recommendations and resolutions designed to promote the development, conservation, rational management and optimum utilisation of stocks of living aquatic resources in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea at levels that are considered sustainable and at low risk. Since recommendations adopted by the GFCM are binding on its contracting parties, they should be transposed into EU law.

The decision provides that, in the framework of the GFCM, the EU shall act in accordance with the objectives and principles pursued by the EU within the reformed Common Fisheries Policy (CPF) notably through the precautionary approach and the aims related to maximum sustainable yield as laid down in regulation 1380/2013. This decision provides a multiannual mandate and includes negotiating directives to be used when deciding the position to be taken by the EU in the annual meetings of the GFCM Commission.

## **Partnership agreement between EU and São Tomé - Protocol renewal**

The Council adopted a decision on the signing, on behalf of the EU, and the provisional application of the protocol setting out the fishing opportunities and the financial contribution provided for in the fisheries partnership agreement (FPA) between the EU and the Democratic Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe ([8583/14](#)).

The partnership agreement in the fisheries sector between the EU and São Tomé was concluded in 2007. The main objective of the protocol to this FPA is to define the fishing opportunities offered to EU vessels as well as the financial contribution due, separately, for access rights and for sectoral support. Following the negotiations, a new protocol was initialled on 19 December 2013, for a period of four years, with the the previous protocol due to expire on 12 May 2014. In order to allow EU vessels to carry on fishing activities, the new protocol should be applied from the date of its signature on a provisional basis, pending the completion of the procedures for its formal conclusion.

In addition to the the signing of the provisional application of this new protocol, the Council also adopted a regulation setting out the fishing opportunities and the financial contribution provided for in the FPA between the EU and São Tomé ([8589/14](#)).

## **INTERNAL MARKET**

### **Construction products - Model of declaration of performance**

The Council decided not to oppose a Commission regulation amending regulation 305/2011 with a view to facilitating the drawing up of declarations of performance by manufacturers concerning construction products ([6971/14](#) and [6971/14 ADD 1](#)). The amendment will also contribute to reduce administrative burden and to increase clarity on the information covered by declarations of performance.

Regulation 305/2011 lays down harmonized conditions for the marketing of construction products and the Commission has been delegated the task of adapting its annex III to this respect. The amendment to regulation 305/2011 can now enter into force unless the European Parliament objects.

## **JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS**

### **European Asylum Support Office**

The Council adopted two decisions on the conclusion of the Arrangements between, respectively, the European Union and the Principality of Liechtenstein ([18116/13](#) and [18115/13](#)) and the European Union and the Kingdom of Norway ([18140/13](#) and [18141/13](#)) on the modalities of those countries' participation in the European Asylum Support Office.

The [European Asylum Support Office](#) plays a key role in the concrete development of the Common European Asylum System. It was established with the aim of enhancing practical cooperation on asylum matters and helping member states fulfil their European and international obligations to give protection to people in need.

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