



AGRICULTURE and FISHERIES COUNCIL
26 January 2015, in Brussels

The Council meeting will address agricultural and fisheries matters; it will start at 10.00 on Monday 26 January 2015. The Council will be chaired by Mr Jānis DŪKLAVS Latvia's Minister for Agriculture

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

*Concerning fisheries, the ministers will be briefed by the Commission and will hold an exchange of views on a proposal for a regulation of the establishing a **multiannual plan for the stocks of cod, herring and sprat in the Baltic Sea**. It will also be briefed on **the implementation of the landing obligation**.*

*As regards agriculture, the Council will discuss **market developments** including the consequences of the Russian ban on EU agricultural products, and it will take stock on the **future of the sugar sector**.*

A press conference on fisheries issues will be held at lunchtime (+/- 13.30). A second press conference on agriculture will take place the second day at the end of the meeting (+/- 17.00).

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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.

Presidency work programme

The Latvian 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:

- Focusing on the **simplification of the reformed Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)** with an emphasis on how to implement the basic acts in a simpler way with particular attention to rural development
- Continuing the work on the proposal on **organic farming** to reach a general approach in the Council with a view to beginning the negotiations with the Parliament on this issue;
- Working on **market developments**, including the Russian agricultural import ban by encouraging political debate in Council.

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

- Work towards reaching an agreement with the Parliament on the legislative proposal on **animal health** ;
- Continue the work on a more integrated and horizontal approach to **official controls** to reach compromise between member states with a view to launch negotiations with the Parliament;
- Continue discussion on the compromise text on a harmonised approach to **protective measures against pests of plants** and represent the interests of the EU and its member states under the **International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC)**;
- Start the examination of the new proposal on **fertilisers**;
- Finalise work on **novel food**.

The priorities for fisheries policy will focus on:

- Taking forward on the **multiannual management plans** to ensure the sustainable management of fisheries;
- Continuing the **alignment of several existing regulations** with the Lisbon Treaty;
- 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** responsible for fisheries management.

On the subject of forests, the Presidency will continue to promote the European model of forest management. Efforts will also be focused on the preparation of the EU position and presentation of the EU model at the session of the United Nations Forum on Forests, to be held in May 2015.

FISHERIES

Multiannual management plan for fish stocks in the Baltic

The Council will be briefed by the Commission and will hold a public exchange of views on a proposal for a regulation of the establishing a multiannual plan for the stocks of cod, herring and sprat in the Baltic Sea ([14028/14](#)).

This management plan aims to ensure that the Baltic stocks of cod, herring and sprat are exploited in a sustainable way according to the principles of maximum sustainable yield (MSY). It aims to replace the existing management plan for the Baltic Sea cod stocks (in place since 2007) with a multispecies approach because the stocks of herring and sprat are not yet subject to a management plan. In view of the strong influence that biological interactions and environmental effects have on those Baltic Sea fish stocks, exploitation rates and patterns of these stocks should be adapted in the light of improvements in scientific understanding of the interactions and of changes in environmental conditions. In addition, scientific advice has indicated that the current exploitation rates for some of the Baltic fish stocks are currently not consistent with achieving MSY.

The proposal will be a test case for a new generation of multiannual management plans designed on the basis of principles jointly agreed between the Council and the European Parliament, as a result of the report on the subject from the inter-institutional Task Force. The Task Force was created to resolve an inter-institutional disagreement on the allocation of responsibilities between the Council and the European Parliament under article 43 of the Lisbon Treaty.

AGRICULTURE

Market developments, including the impact of the Russian ban

The Council will discuss market developments and in particular the impact on the EU market of import ban on EU agricultural product imposed by Russia in August 2014 ([5397/15](#)). In response to the ban, the Commission triggered emergency market support measures for fruit, vegetables and dairy products, while also providing funds for Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) promotion programmes.

This debate follows the discussions that took place during the extraordinary Agriculture Council organised in September and the Council meeting in October 2014. On those occasions member states raised concerns about consequences for sectors the most affected by the ban: fruit and vegetables, dairy products and pigmeat.

With a view to structuring the exchange of views at Council, the Presidency would like the debate to focus on the following questions, taking into account the duration of the ban, the possible impact of other factors as well as budgetary constraints:

- Do you consider that the measures taken so far by the EU have contributed to mitigating the situation in the sector?
- What do you consider to be relevant quantitative criteria for qualifying the situation on the market as a crisis situation ?
- While taking into account that a better assessment of the respective effects of the Russian ban itself and of other possible factors would help in better tailoring measures, what would be your main priority for further measures?

Background

On 7 August, the Russian Federation introduced a one-year import ban on a number of agricultural products, raw materials and foodstuffs originating from the EU as a countermeasure to sanctions imposed on Russia because of the situation in Ukraine. It includes meat, fish and crustaceans, milk and dairy products, fruit and vegetables, sausages and food or finished products.

In response to the Russian ban, the Commission decided to trigger the following emergency market support measures:

- on 11 August 2014 for peaches and nectarines;
- on 18 August 2014 for a number of perishable fruit and vegetables. After a suspension due to a disproportionate surge in claims, a newly delegated regulation was adopted on 29 September 2014 laying down further temporary exceptional support measures. In addition to the products covered by the initial scheme, the new plan includes other citrus fruits. On 19 December 2014 the scheme was extended until June 2015 with specific volumes for the period from January to June 2015, for the 12 member states which exported most fruit and vegetables to Russia. The total expenditure in the context of the support under the previous and the new scheme would remain below the total of € 165 million initially estimated under the previous programme.
- on 28 August for butter, skimmed milk powder and certain cheeses. On 22 September the measure for private storage aid was stopped (PSA) for cheese following a disproportionate surge in interest in this measure in certain regions not traditionally exporting significant quantities to Russia. PSA is still open and will remain open until the end of the year for skimmed milk powder and butter, but the take-up has been low particularly in the main dairy exporters such as the Baltic countries & Finland;
- on 3 September, an additional €30 million of EU funding for CAP promotion programmes starting in 2015 was announced, on top of the €60 million that is provided for annually in the CAP budget.
- A set of compensatory measures was granted by the Commission to milk producers in the Baltic States (€28 million) and in Finland (€10.7 million).

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Implementation of the landing obligation

The Presidency and the Commission will brief the ministers on the state of play of the implementation of the landing obligation through the "omnibus" regulation.

A central objective of the reformed Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) is the progressive elimination of discards in all EU fisheries through the introduction of an obligation to land all catches. In order to make the landing obligation operational certain provisions within the current technical measures and control regulations should be removed or amended. All the identified changes were combined in a single text, the so called "omnibus" regulation proposed by the Commission.

While the landing obligation will be gradually introduced from January this year, the "omnibus" regulation is still discussed between the Council and the Parliament. Many member states expressed concerns that as the "omnibus" regulation will not become applicable immediately, this situation could generate inconsistencies.

The future of the sugar sector

At the request of the Italian delegation, the ministers will discuss the future of the sugar sector which is now in a difficult economic situation. Italy would notably ensure a smooth transition when the current sugar quota system ends in 2017 ([5460/14](#)).

The EU confirmed its decision to abolish the sugar quota system from October 2017 by adopting the reformed CAP in 2013. Since then market data show a constant price reduction in sugar prices in the EU and the forecasts confirm a further, global decline in the coming years. This situation could also affect the beet producers supplying the raw material to refineries. In addition, the persisting situation of surplus out of the existing quotas in the EU impacts the economic viability of sugar companies, with consequences for the whole sugar production chain.
