The April Agriculture and Fisheries Council meeting will start at 10.00 and will be chaired by Petre Daea, minister of agriculture and rural development of Romania. The session will be exclusively dedicated to agriculture.

After the approval of A items, the Council will exchange views on green architecture in the framework of the post 2020 Common Agricultural Policy reform package and in particular the Regulation on CAP strategic plans. The discussion will be held in public session and will be based on a presidency's state of play report and questionnaire.

Over lunch ministers will have a discussion on the impact of large carnivores and other species on agriculture.

The afternoon session will start with an exchange of views on the Task Force Rural Africa based on a presidency background document and a questionnaire.

The Council will also be briefed by the Commission on the markets situation in the EU and will hold an exchange of views on the topic.

Under Any Other Business items the Netherlands delegation will provide ministers with information on the EU action on deforestation, the Slovak delegation will inform the Council on a joint declaration of the ministers of agriculture of Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia on the Renewable Energy Directive post 2020 and the presidency will brief ministers on the outcome of a high-level conference on research and agriculture.

A press conference will be held at around 19.35 with Commissioner Hogan

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

Post 2020 Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform package

In public session the Council will exchange views on green architecture in relation to the Regulation on CAP strategic plans (9645/18 + ADD.1) in the framework of the post 2020 CAP reform package.

The debate will be based on a presidency background document, which invites ministers to answer the following questions:

- **Taking into account the intended higher environmental and climate ambition of the CAP post-2020 as well as the objective of simplification and the flexibility conferred to Member States to allow them to adapt the green architecture, which of the basic standards and requirements proposed by the Commission do you support and which not? Furthermore, do you agree that conditionality should apply to all beneficiaries of aid, or the small farmers should be exempted from the controls and penalty rules of conditionality as defined in the Horizontal Regulation?**

- **Taking the above into account, do you agree that pillar I eco-schemes should be mandatory for Member States, but voluntary for farmers, as proposed by the Commission, or do you consider that additional flexibility is necessary for Member States?**

- **Do you agree with the proposed allocation of at least 30% of EAFRD contribution to be reserved for climate and environment? Do you agree with the call for an increased environmental/climate ambition as set out in Article 92? Are the general provisions sufficient to ensure a level playing field in view of environmental and climate objectives?**

Green architecture

Among others, the post 2020 CAP reform package aims to address 3 specific environmental objectives of societal importance such as climate change mitigation and adaptation, the efficient management of natural resources (e.g. water and soil), and the protection of biodiversity and landscapes, as well as other environmental issues.

To address these (and other) CAP objectives, each member state will draw up a “CAP strategic plan” encompassing both pillars of the CAP. Member states will set objectives, quantified targets on which they will be called to deliver and report annually.

There are three components in the proposed green architecture:

- **a new ‘enhanced conditionality’** - a system of linkage between area- and animal-based CAP payments (both in Pillar I and Pillar II) and a range of obligations (covering environment, public, plant and animal health and animal welfare) to be respected to access direct payments. The new conditionality replaces the current cross-compliance and greening payment requirements

- **new eco-schemes** - payment schemes for care for the environment and climate which will be funded from direct payment budgets (in CAP Pillar I). Member states will have to make one or more eco-schemes available, but farmers will have the freedom to participate or not

- **voluntary agri-environment-climate measures (AECMs)** - The CAP’s “second pillar” – support for rural development – will continue to offer a wide range of tools which can benefit the environment and climate, such as per-hectare (occasionally per-animal) payments on farms, payments for environmental, climate and other management commitments, support to knowledge-building, investments, innovation, etc.

Ministers already had the opportunity to be informed about the green architecture at their January meeting.
The Commission proposals

The Commission proposals for a CAP reform worth €365 billion introduce a new delivery model which will give member states more flexibility in how to use their funds and the ability to tailor-make their programmes. A single set of 9 EU-wide economic, environmental and social objectives will be identified at EU level, and each member state will have to draw up a Strategic Plan covering the whole programming period, setting out how it intends to meet those objectives, using both direct payments and rural development. The Commission will approve each plan to ensure consistency and the protection of the single market, and monitor progress towards objectives and targets using a set of result indicators agreed at EU level.

The Commission proposals also outline new obligations and incentives for farmers in relation to environment and climate action. Direct payments will be conditional on enhanced environmental and climate requirements and member states will have to offer eco-schemes to support farmers in going beyond the mandatory requirements, funded with a share of their national direct payments’ allocations.

Moreover the new CAP will better target small and young farmers, thereby facilitating generational renewal, and will encourage greater use of knowledge and innovation.

Impact of large carnivores and other species on agriculture

Over lunch ministers will hold an exchange of views on the impact of large carnivores and other species on agriculture. Ministers will be invited to give their opinion on possible measures to protect the interests of farmers and the agricultural sector while preserving biodiversity.

Task Force Rural Africa (TFRA)

The Council will exchange views on the following topic: Task Force Rural Africa: 'an Africa-Europe agenda for rural transformation’, in the presence of Tom Arnold, TFRA Chair. The debate will be based on a presidency background document and will be preceded by a presentation by the Commission of the task force's final report "An Africa-Europe agenda for rural transformation". Ministers will be invited to express their views in particular on the task force's main recommendations and the follow-up process. The outcome of the exchange of views will feed into the Council's preparations for the third EU-AU Agriculture Ministerial Meeting, scheduled for 21 June 2019 in Rome.

According to the final recommendations of the TFRA, Africa and the EU should develop a partnership operating at three levels: people to people, business to business, and government to government. It would institute a multi-stakeholder dialogue at all levels, starting locally, and enable a closer connection between African and European societies, business communities and governments.

In November 2018, the Council already had a first exchange of views on the work of the Task Force. On that occasion ministers exchanged views on the possible priorities of an enhanced policy dialogue with Africa in the area of agriculture and food production, and how to maximise the impact of the EU support and investments on African rural and agricultural development.

The task force was set up by the Commission in May 2018 (12167/18) with the aim of providing recommendations on how to strengthen the African rural sector and maximise the role of the EU in creating jobs and fostering economic development in the African agriculture, agribusiness and agro-industries. The work of the Task Force is part of the wider set of actions launched by the Commission in the framework of the 'Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs'.
Markets situation

As a continuation of the practice at previous meetings of the "Agriculture and Fisheries” Council, the Commission will be invited to provide an update on the market situation in the main agricultural sectors, with particular emphasis on the sugar, pig meat and beef sectors, as well as on Brexit-related measures.

In recent years agricultural markets have faced certain challenges, following in particular the Russian ban coupled with excess supply worldwide, increased price volatility in the wake of the end of dairy quotas and various outbreaks of diseases such as African swine fever. In response, several support packages were adopted and implemented between 2015 and 2016 focusing in particular on cash-flow measures, market stabilisation and production reduction, the functioning of the food supply chain and other measures such as promotion of European agriculture internally and at export.

The most recent Council discussion on developments in the most important agricultural markets took place in November 2018. On that occasion ministers welcomed the generally positive economic situation and outlook in the main market segments, but also raised concerns about the pig meat sector due to the African swine fever, the sugar sector following the end of the quotas in September 2017 and highlighted the difficult situation in the apples and pears sector.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Deforestation and forest degradation

Under this item the Netherlands, as Chair of the Amsterdam Declarations Partnership, will inform ministers about their invitation to the European Commission to present an ambitious EU Action Plan on Deforestation and Forest Degradation (8233/1/19). The Commission will be publishing later this year a Communication on stepping up EU Action against Deforestation and Forest Degradation.

Renewable Energy Directive post 2020

The Council will take note of an information from the Slovak delegation on a joint declaration of the ministers of agriculture of Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia on the Renewable Energy Directive post 2020 (8381/19). The declaration suggests that one of the most effective ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in transport is to use biofuels, especially when they are produced from domestic sources. This production is linked to primary agricultural production.

Research and agriculture

The Presidency will inform the Council about the high level Conference on Agricultural Research and Innovation – a basis for the development of European agriculture, rural areas and bioeconomy, which took place in Bucharest on 5 April. The main objectives of the conference included the identification and adaptation of agricultural research priorities in relation to the increased need for food and the development of the bioeconomy. Among the main items of the agenda was also the debate on the challenges and the means for the implementation of the updated Bioeconomy Strategy at European and national level.