OUTCOME OF THE COUNCIL MEETING

3719th Council meeting

Agriculture and Fisheries

Brussels, 14 October 2019

President Jari Leppä
Minister of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland
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1 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.
OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

BUDGETS
- 2020 EU budget - Brexit contingency measures

JUSTICE
- EPPO: Decision appointing the European Chief Prosecutor

INTERNAL MARKET AND INDUSTRY
- Amendment of Regulation (EC) No 1099/2008 on the implementation of updates for the annual, monthly and short-term monthly energy statistics

SPACE
- Approval of the Canberra Declaration set out by the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) on 8 November 2019

HOME AFFAIRS
- Visa facilitation Belarus
- eu-LISA: Ireland opt-in
ITEMS DEBATED

AGRICULTURE

Post-2020 Common agricultural policy (CAP) reform package: state of play

In public session the Council discussed a progress report on the work carried out in the Council's preparatory bodies on the Commission proposals for a reform of the Common agricultural policy (CAP) post-2020.

Ministers welcomed the report and focused in particular on those elements that they considered to be crucial in the reform package. They indicated that the new delivery model (the issue of simplification in particular) and the "green architecture" were the main elements requiring further debate.

Regarding the "green architecture" several member states made a link between the overall environmental ambition and the availability of adequate CAP funds. Eco-schemes were also considered to be an important element, on which delegations maintained divergent views.

Some member states challenged the presidency's view that the Common Market Organisation (CMO) regulation could be considered broadly stable.

The Commission proposals

The reform package consists of three proposals for:

- a regulation on CAP strategic plans (9645/18 + ADD 1)
- a regulation on financing, managing and monitoring of the CAP (9634/18 + ADD 1)
- a regulation on a common market organisation of agricultural products (9556/18)

and an impact assessment (9646/18 + ADD 1+ ADD 2).

The proposed CAP reform introduces a new delivery model that will allow member states more flexibility in the way they use EU funds and will allow them to tailor-make their programmes. Based on 9 EU-wide economic, environmental and social objectives, each member state would have to draw up a Strategic Plan setting out how it intends to meet those objectives while taking account of its needs, using direct payments, rural development and market measures. The Commission would 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 the field of environment and climate action. Direct payments would be conditional on enhanced environmental and climate requirements and member states would 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 would better target small and young farmers, thereby facilitating generational renewal, and would try to foster greater use of knowledge and innovation.

**Communication on stepping up EU action to protect and restore the world’s forests**

In public session the Commission presented its communication on stepping up EU Action to protect and restore the world's forests. After the presentation, ministers were invited to indicate whether or not they considered the priorities presented by the Commission appropriate and adequate in order to achieve the objectives of the communication. They were also invited to share their views on the key actions to be set as priorities.

Delegations broadly welcomed the publication of the communication, in light of the increasing threats represented by deforestation and forest degradation at global level.

Delegations stressed the essential contribution of forests to mitigate the impact of climate change and loss of biodiversity, in particular with a view to the targets of the 2030 sustainable development goals (SDGs) agenda and other international commitments.

While ministers underlined the importance of all five priorities set out in the Commission's communication, they stressed in particular the promotion of deforestation-free supply chains, including through certification schemes for deforestation-free products. Ministers also suggested to work in partnership with the producing countries and involve private stakeholders and the civil society in carrying out the key actions.

The Communication on stepping up EU action to protect and restore the world’s forests was adopted on 23 July 2019 as a response to the continued and widespread destruction of the world’s forests.

By setting out five priorities implemented through 36 actions, the aim of the communication is to protect and improve the health of existing forests and increase sustainable, biodiverse forest coverage worldwide.
EU Forest Strategy post-2020

In public session ministers were invited to exchange views on the future EU Forest Strategy post-2020 focusing in particular on how an EU forest strategy could contribute to addressing the challenges ahead in an enhanced, balanced and holistic way.

Ministers supported the preparation of a new and stronger framework to further coordinate EU and national policies in the field of forestry. To this end, ministers called for a "holistic" approach, which would take into account all existing related initiatives, and called for consistency at EU level against the fragmentation of forestry-related legislation in different EU member states.

Sustainable forest management emerged as one of the main priority for the future strategy, with particular regard to the increase of afforested areas. Ministers recommended good coordination with the European Green Deal, other relevant EU policies (incl. rural development) and international commitments, particularly those concerning climate change, such as the Paris Agreement and the SDGs.

The current EU Forest Strategy1 (EUFS) runs until 2020. The Agriculture and Fisheries Council in its conclusions of April 2019 welcomed the progress achieved in the current EU Forest Strategy and recognised the need for a new one beyond 2020 in order to further strengthen the coherence of EU forest-related policies.

Market situation

As a continuation of the practice at previous meetings of the "Agriculture and Fisheries" Council, the Commission updated the Council on the latest developments in the most important agricultural markets.

According to the Commission's report the market situation remained mostly stable and generally positive, with the exception of the olive oil and table olive, beef and sugar sectors. The Commission nonetheless considered that the market situation would need to be monitored closely in the coming weeks to assess the impact of the introduction of US additional duties following the decision of the WTO arbitration panel in the Airbus case and, possibly, Brexit.

Ministers generally shared these views and welcomed the positive economic situation and outlook in the main market segments, but also expressed concerns as to the difficult situation of the sugar, olive oil and table olives, beef and rice sectors. Some also mentioned their concerns in relation to a possible no-deal Brexit and the existing trade tensions with the US.
In recent years agricultural markets faced a number of challenges following in particular the Russian ban coupled with excess supply worldwide, increased price volatility in the wake of the end of dairy and sugar quotas and various outbreaks of diseases such as African swine fever. In response, several support packages were adopted and implemented focusing in particular on cash-flow measures, market stabilisation and production reduction, the better functioning of the food supply chain, and other measures such as the promotion of European agro-food products.

Reports from the Commission's market observatories show that, as from mid-2016, many sectors recovered gradually, notably in the dairy and pig meat sectors. The picture of general stability continued in 2019, but the recovery is still fragile in some sectors and requires further monitoring.

The most recent Council discussion on developments in the most important agricultural markets took place in April 2019.

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**European Bioeconomy Scene 2019, 8-10 July 2019 - Helsinki, Finland**

The Presidency informed the Council about the outcome of the conference "European Bioeconomy Scene 2019", held in Helsinki last July, and provided a comprehensive summary of its conclusions.

The Presidency stressed that the bioeconomy shall be understood as a political path towards an environmentally and socially sustainable and just society, where also economy can flourish within the limits of nature and local and global social equality.

The conference was organised jointly by the EU Commission and the Finnish Presidency, with the aim of raising public awareness and promoting dialogue on the progress towards an inclusive and sustainable bioeconomy in Europe. The objective of the conference was also to update the 2018 EU bioeconomy strategy “A sustainable Bioeconomy for Europe: strengthening the connection between economy, society and the environment”, and the Circular Economy Package.
Outcome of the ministerial conference "Strengthening the generation and transfer of knowledge for the progress of agriculture and the rural areas", 23 August 2019 - Ptuj, Slovenia

The Slovenian delegation debriefed the Council about the outcome of the ministerial conference "Strengthening the Generation and Transfer of Knowledge for the Progress of Agriculture and the Rural Areas".

The main goal of the conference was to boost Agricultural and Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) and reduce differences in the functioning of AKIS in European countries. The outcome was a joint declaration aiming at providing guidance and concrete proposals for strengthening the transfer of knowledge and innovation in the agricultural sector.

Serious damages caused by the Asian stink bug

The Italian delegation informed the Council about the damages caused by the Asian stink bug (Halyomorpha halys) to its fruit and vegetables sector, for a total estimated loss of more than €500 million. Italy took the opportunity to urge the Commission to consider the activation of measures under the CMO regulation.

This item was debated in the context of the public discussion on the market situation.

African swine fever (ASF): State of play

The Commission updated the Council about the state of play of the disease in Europe, reiterating its call to all member states to remain vigilant and well-prepared.

Since the last discussion on African swine fever in the Agriculture and Fisheries Council of July 2019, the disease has continued to spread and the first outbreaks in domestic pigs were recorded in Slovakia and Serbia. Globally, the disease has also continued to spread reaching the Philippines and South Korea.

The many delegations that took the floor praised the positive results in containing the epidemics and supported the Commission's call to keep alert high on ASF. Ensuring a common EU approach, including through boar population control, was considered to be key. Delegations' suggestions also included awareness raising initiatives, building fences/buffer zones, cooperation with federations of hunters and other stakeholders, and dialogue with third countries.
Joint declaration on African swine fever

During the debate on the Commission's state of play of the fight against ASF, the Czech Republic presented on behalf of the Visegrad group (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia), Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Slovenia, a joint declaration on "Combating African swine fever in the European Union".

The declaration calls for targeted measures to reduce the wild boar population, more flexibility in the restrictions imposed on areas affected by ASF, intensified research cooperation and a wider ranging financial support for the eradication and control measures. These calls were supported by several delegations.

Food safety: State of play on the major issues

The Commission informed the Council about the state of play of the major issues in the field of food safety, focusing in particular on: official controls and crisis management, animal health, animal welfare, plant health, food waste, and risk assessment in the food chain.

The Commission invited member states to continue to work on the good implementation of existing hygiene standards to fight food infections. In terms of future priorities, some delegations requested mandatory origin labelling rules. The quick adoption of secondary legislation on veterinary medicinal products imports and antimicrobial resistance were also mentioned.

Recent Listeria cases in the EU

The Belgian delegation informed the Council about its recent decision to withdraw products from the market s a precautionary measures to protect the health of citizens against recent outbreaks of Listeria infections in EU member states.

Belgium also called the EU to seek possibilities to minimise to the maximum extent delays to information sharing between member states, notably through better use of technology.

This item was debated in the context of the discussion on food safety.
Sustainable forestry

On behalf of the Visegrad group, Bulgaria, Croatia and Slovenia, the Czech Republic presented a joint declaration on "Forests, sustainable forest management and adaptation to climate change", emphasising the need to adapt the forest strategy to individual measures to face challenges linked to climate change and support forest holders.

This item was debated in the context of the public discussion on the EU Forest Strategy post-2020.

US additional duties on certain EU agro-food products linked to the Airbus-Boeing WTO dispute

The Italian, Spanish and French delegations drew the attention of the Council to the recent announcement of the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) that it would impose additional duties on a list of EU agro-food products as of 18 October 2019.

The three delegations shared their concern about the likely impact of the US countermeasures, particularly regarding olive oil and table olives, cheeses and wine. The Italian delegation also asked the Commission to assess the opportunity to activate market measures (e.g. private storage for cheeses) within the scope of the CMO regulation, while the French delegation invited the Commission to use all the tools available within the CAP, including promotion activities. Spain encouraged the EU to intensify its actions in order to promote the development of stable and rules-based international trade on a global level, and to take action to reassure European farmers.

Several ministers took the floor to express their regret for the US decision to impose additional tariffs, and supported a coordinated EU position and negotiations with the US to avoid harmful barriers.

The Commission restated its willingness to negotiate a solution and reassured ministers that it would work to avoid any further escalation. With regard to possible market measures, the Commission reaffirmed the need to better assess the situation and announced the activation of some promotion activities in the near future.
CAP budget

On behalf of Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, France, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain, the French delegation presented a common paper on the need to maintain the budget for the CAP at the current EU-27 level in current prices also under the next Multiannual Financial Framework.

This request was supported by many delegations, some of which expressed particular concerns as to the cuts in the rural development budget.

Several delegations restated that no agreement on the CAP reform could be reached before an agreement on the next MFF, and some others took the opportunity to reiterate their well known positions on the issues of external convergence, reduction of payments and the co-financing rates for rural development.

This item was debated in the context of the public discussion on the CAP reform.

Joint declaration on wolf management

On behalf of Denmark, Estonia, Italy, France and Latvia, the French delegation presented a joint declaration about the measures to be put into place to ensure the best possible management of wolves’ populations.

The signatory delegations requested the Commission to take into consideration their concerns when revising the Guidance on the protection of species under the Habitats Directive, with a view ensuring flexibility to sustainably manage wolf populations.

The Commission called for achieving a sustainable coexistence with wolves, recalled the measures available for member states, e.g. under rural development, and highlighted that population control is a possibility under the Habitats Directive. The Commission also announced that it was analysing a recent judgment of the European Court of Justice on the possibility to hunt wolves.
FISHERIES

Fishing opportunities in the Baltic Sea for 2020

The Council agreed on 2020 total allowable catches (TACs) and member states' quotas for the ten most commercially important fish stocks in the Baltic Sea.

In line with the latest scientific advice highlighting poor conditions in the Baltic Sea, the Council decided to decrease fishing opportunities for the majority of fish stocks. TACs were moderately increased only for herring in the Gulf of Riga and were maintained for salmon in the Gulf of Finland.

Cuts were particularly significant for cod, with a 60% decrease in the Western part of the Baltic Sea, and the permission to have by-catches only in the Eastern part.

For more information read the press release: Baltic Sea: Council agreement on 2020 catch limits.
OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

BUDGETS

2020 EU budget - Brexit contingency measures

The Council decided to request the European Parliament's consent on the draft Council Regulation on measures concerning the implementation and financing of the EU budget in 2020 in relation to the UK’s withdrawal from the EU (12412/19).

This draft regulation is an extension to 2020 of the contingency framework laid down in Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2019/1197 for the 2019 EU budget.

The aim of the measures is to mitigate the impact of a no-deal scenario for funding in a wide range of areas such as research and agriculture. They will enable the EU to continue making payments to UK beneficiaries for contracts signed and decisions made before the withdrawal date or between the withdrawal date and the end of 2019, in application of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2019/1197. This is subject to the condition that the UK continues paying its contribution in the EU budget for 2020 and accepts the controls and audits which cover the entire implementation period of the programmes or actions.

In accordance with Article 352(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, the Council may adopt the Regulation acting unanimously after obtaining the consent of the European Parliament.

JUSTICE

EPPO: Decision appointing the European Chief Prosecutor

The Council adopted a decision appointing Laura Codruța Kövesi as first European chief prosecutor as the new European chief prosecutor of the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO). The appointment is subject to confirmation by the European Parliament.

For more information see press release
INTERNAL MARKET AND INDUSTRY

Amendment of Regulation (EC) No 1099/2008 on the implementation of updates for the annual, monthly and short-term monthly energy statistics

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission regulation amending the annexes to regulation (EC) No 1099/2008.

The regulation aims at updating the EU energy statistics reporting framework. It provides for the disaggregation of the statistics on final energy consumption in industry, conceptual adjustments for natural gas trade definitions, the mandatory reporting for specific items and improvement of the timeliness for the monthly data collection for coal and electricity.

The Commission regulation is subject to the regulatory procedure with scrutiny. This means that now that the Council has given its consent, the Commission may adopt the regulation, unless the European Parliament objects.

11677/19 + ADD1

SPACE

Approval of the Canberra Declaration set out by the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) on 8 November 2019

The Council approved the draft declaration of the Group on Earth Observation (GEO) to be adopted at the ministerial summit on 8 November 2019 in Canberra, Australia and authorized the Commission to subscribe to it on behalf of the EU.

12051/19 + COR 1
HOME AFFAIRS

Visa facilitation Belarus

The Council adopted a decision to sign (12361/19) a visa facilitation agreement with Belarus (12363/19). In its decision the Council noted that it will decide on the conclusion of the agreement in the light of a Commission assessment of the security and integrity of Belarus' system of issuance of biometric diplomatic passports and their technical specifications.

Visa facilitation is reciprocal and applies to stays of no more than 90 days in any 180 day period. It covers the documentary evidence to be presented regarding the purpose of the journey, the length of the procedures, the issuance of multiple-entry visas for certain categories of persons and a reduced fee for processing visa applications. Citizens of Belarus holding a valid biometric diplomatic passport will be able to travel to EU member states without a visa, and vice versa.

eu-LISA: Ireland opt-in

The Council adopted a decision establishing that Ireland shall take part in the new eu-LISA regulation (2018/1726) to the extent that it relates to the operational management of the VIS, the parts of SIS in which Ireland does not take part and the EEAS and ETIAS (12543/19).

Ireland has taken part in the adoption and participates in Eurodac, DubliNet and partially in SIS, all operationally managed or prepared by eu-LISA, and as such has the right to participate in the activities of the agency. However, eu-LISA has a single legal personality, with one organisational and financial structure. Therefore the partial participation of Ireland would not be possible. The Council decision has been adopted, following a request by Ireland, to ensure the eu-LISA regulation in its entirety is applicable to Ireland, including regarding the systems managed or prepared by eu-LISA in which Ireland does not take part.