



Brussels, 13 February 2014

BACKGROUND¹
AGRICULTURE and FISHERIES COUNCIL
Monday 17 February 2014, in Brussels

The Council meeting will address agricultural matters; it will start at 10.00 on Monday 17 February 2014. The Council will be chaired by Mr Athanasios Tsiftaris, Minister of Rural Development and Food.

The Hellenic Presidency will first present, in public debate, its work programme for agriculture and fisheries matters.

*As regards agriculture, the Commission will brief the Council about its proposal for a regulation as regards the **aid scheme for the supply of fruit and vegetables and milk in schools**.*

*The Council will then hold a policy debate on the proposal for **promotion measures for agricultural products** on the internal market and in third countries which was presented at the last Agriculture Council meeting.*

*Ministers will also discuss on the **situation of the EU milk sector** as a follow-up of the discussion in the December Council on the Conference on the EU dairy sector which took place in Brussels last year.*

*The Council will finally be briefed on **the Innovation Partnership for agricultural productivity and sustainability, the conclusions of the 34th Conference of Directors of EU Paying Agencies and the outbreak of African Swine Fever in Lithuania**.*

A press conference on agriculture will be held at the end of the meeting (+/- 19h30).

*The public events and the press conferences can be followed via video streaming:
<http://video.consiliums.europa.eu>*

Video coverage of the event will be available for preview and download in broadcast quality (MPEG4) on www.eucouncil.tv

Photos of the event can be found in our photographic library on www.consilium.europa.eu/photo where they can be downloaded in high resolution.

¹ This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the Press Office.

P R E S S

Presidency work programme

The Hellenic 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:

- Seeking the completion of the work on delegated acts related to entry into force of the **reformed Common agriculture policy (CAP)** in January next year;
- Continuing the work, and if possible negotiating with the European Parliament with a view to the adoption of a proposal on **information and promotion for agricultural products** within and outside the EU, focusing on a more flexible response to the specific needs of different markets and the simplification of programme administration;
- Examining the report and possibly a proposal for a **Common organisation of the market organisation in the fruit and vegetable sector** including better administration and implementation of measures in the fruit and vegetable sector, as related to the organisation of producers, their operating funds and programmes;
- Initiating the work on a proposal for **school schemes on fruit and vegetables and milk products** which aims to put together two different schemes to simplify the procedure.
- Working **alignment with the Lisbon Treaty** on legislative proposals and initiating the work on reports on **organic farming** and the **future of milk sector**.

The priorities for fisheries policy will focus on:

- Finalise as soon as possible the work on the agreement with the European Parliament on **the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)** that will be used from 2014 to 2020 to fund the implementation of the new Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) adopted last year;
- Supporting the work of the inter-institutional task force regarding the setting of **multiannual plans** of fish stocks management that represent the basis for 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 the regional organisations of fisheries management and coastal states.

As regards food and veterinary issues the Presidency intends to:

- Finalising the work on the proposal on a regulation laying down provisions for the **management of expenditure relating to the food chain**, animal health and animal welfare, and relating to plant health and plant reproductive material with a view to an agreement with the European Parliament this semester on this issue;
- Continue the work on the **package of food chain legislation**, including regulations on official control, on animal health, on protective measures against plant pests, and on the production and marketing of plant reproductive material.;

AGRICULTURE

School schemes on fruit and vegetables and milk

The Council will be briefed by the Commission on its proposal for a regulation as regards the aid scheme for the supply of fruit and vegetables, bananas and milk in the educational establishments ([5958/14](#)).

School schemes on milk and fruit were respectively established in the EU in 1977 and 2007 to promote the consumption of fruit and vegetable and milk products in schools. The rationale which led to the establishment of the two schemes is still relevant in the current context of declining consumption of fruit and vegetables and milk products. This situation is exacerbated amongst others by modern consumption trends towards highly processed foods which are often high in added sugars, salt and fat. The school schemes are beneficial in terms of public health and focus on younger age groups in an effort to change trends.

The new proposed scheme also covers products from important sectors of EU agriculture each representing approximately 15% of the value of EU agricultural output.

The new proposal aims to put the two different schemes into a single proposal in order to simplify the procedures and aims to address certain weaknesses in their design and inefficiencies in their functioning highlighted in different reports and external evaluations. The reformed Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) already contains important elements that are expected to solve some of the identified problems, in particular through significant changes to the financing of the School Fruit Scheme and strengthening of its educational dimension.

Information and promotion measures for agricultural products

The Council will have a policy debate of the proposal for a regulation on information provision and promotion measures for agricultural products on the internal market and in third countries ([16591/13](#)).

The proposal was presented at the last Agriculture Council meeting in December. Member States generally welcomed the proposal and took note of its ambition to better capitalise the EU agri-food industry and strengthen its competitiveness both on the internal market and in third countries. However, many of them expressed concerns about the removal of the possibility to provide a national cofinancing support for the promotion measures; they also pointed out the need to better involve member states in the whole process of promotion from the selection of the measures. Some countries would like to extend the list of products covered by the measures and others insisted on the need to closely check use of the budget for information and promotion considering the increase scheduled in the proposal.

As regards the production of and trading in agricultural and agri-food products, the EU is today faced with a very competitive environment, largely resulting from the globalisation of markets, and this trend should continue in the coming years. In addition on the internal market and in third countries the logos on products that benefit from EU quality scheme logo are generally not recognised. This context calls for a renewed policy of promotion in the framework of the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) reformed last year.

The proposal provides that measures will follow a strategy of identifying priorities on markets and products or messages to be highlighted. As the CAP reform encourages farmers to organise themselves, the scheme should be opened up to new beneficiaries, such as **producer organisations**. Strict guidelines should be established as regards the possibilities of mentioning the origin of products or brand names as a means of illustrating the main generic message highlighting the **intrinsic characteristics of European agricultural products**. **Programmes submitted by operators from different Member States** to promote the diversity of European agricultural products will be encouraged as part of the reform of the promotion policy. The proposal includes the development of **new technical support services for stakeholders**, favouring the exchange of information on information provision and promotion measures or good practices and allowing their expertise to be developed. It also aims to **simplify the management of the information and promotion policy**. Managing **multi-country programmes** would make them easier to set up and implement.

Compared to the present situation, the proposal suggests a gradual but significant increase in the budget allocated to information provision and promotion measures for agricultural products (from EUR 61.5 million in the 2013 budget to EUR 200 million in 2020).

Conference on the dairy sector

The ministers will hold a policy debate on the situation in the EU dairy sector as a follow-up of the discussion on this issue which took place in the Council in December last year (5965/14).

On that occasion, the Commission briefed the Council on the main outcomes of the conference (Brussels - 24 September 2013) which explored future trends in the EU milk sector beyond 2015, in the context of the abolition of the milk quota system in 2015. In order to prepare the sector for this new operating environment, a series of new instruments were developed in the context of the "Milk Package" that entered into force last year.

In the discussion some member states considered that the "safety net" provisions provided for in the CAP reform should be complemented by more targeted measures to address market volatility and help in particular vulnerable milk production areas. On the contrary a few other Member States judged the existing measures as sufficient and/or rejected specifically any possible control measures over the production. Many member states, in particular those exceeding their milk quotas, took this opportunity to recall the current favourable situation on the market and to insist on the need to have measures to ensure an actual "soft landing" in all Member States.

The Commission confirmed the establishment of a market observatory for milk, which will allow to ensure a close monitoring of this sector. In addition, the Commission will prepare a report by 30 June 2014 regarding the development of the market situation in the milk sector as provided for by the Milk Package regulation. This will help to evaluate whether additional measures for this sector will be necessary.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Innovation Partnership for agricultural productivity and sustainability

Ministers will be briefed by the Commission on the implementation of the European innovation partnership (EIP) "Agricultural productivity and sustainability".

The EIP on "Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability" for the period 2014-2020 aims to address two fundamental challenges faced by European agriculture in the early 21st century – how to increase production and productivity in order to respond to the significant growth in global food demand and how to improve sustainability and resource efficiency and address environmental issues.

This EIP will provide a working interface between agriculture, bio-economy, science, advisors, and other stakeholders at EU, national and regional level. An EIP network facility should be set up to work as a mediator enhancing communication between science and practice, and fostering cooperation.

34th conference of directors of EU paying agencies

The Lithuanian delegation will present the conclusions of the 34th conference of EU paying agency directors which took place in Vilnius from 23 to 25 October 2013 ([6007/14](#)).

The conferences of the paying agency directors takes place every six months, in whichever member state is holding the EU Presidency. The conference programme includes bilateral exchange of experiences, plenary sessions, presentations and also break-up workshops. The key work results from the previous conference were presented.

The main theme of this conference was once again the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the adjustments to be made at the legal, technical, IT and procedural levels in the paying agencies for a correct implementation.

Conference on agriculture, food security and climate change

The Netherlands will brief the Council on the outcome of the 3rd global conference on agriculture, food and nutrition security and climate change which was hosted in Johannesburg (South Africa) from 3 to 5 December 2013.

This conference set up an alliance on Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) promoting environmentally friendly farming practices. The alliance is expected to be launched during the UN General's Leaders' Summit on the 23 September 2014 in New York.

The alliance is based on the following three pillars - Working at the sustainability of agricultural productivity; Adapting and building resilience to climate change; and Mitigating greenhouse gas emissions.

Climatic disaster in Slovenia

The Council will take stock of the climatic disaster which recently affected Slovenia and will be briefed about the impact on agricultural production.

Consequences of an outbreak of African Swine Fever in Lithuania

The Lithuanian and Polish delegations will brief the ministers about the consequences of an outbreak of African Swine Fever which appeared in Lithuania (6290/14). The epizootic disease, probably coming from Belarus, has already had catastrophic effects on pig farming in these countries: in addition to the restrictions imposed by sanitary measures in place affecting the production, Russia has also banned the export of pig meat from the whole EU.
