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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	AOB item for the meeting of the "Agriculture and Fisheries" Council of 17 November 2025: The future of EU rice sector: a common strategy – Ministerial meeting (Vercelli, 12-14 September 2025) <i>- Information from Italy</i>

From 12 to 14 September 2025 Italy hosted in Vercelli (Piedmont) “Risò - International Rice Festival”, the first event of this importance dedicated to rice sector. During the festival, the international conference "The future of EU rice sector: a common strategy" took place. The Ministers of Agriculture and senior representatives of Bulgaria, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Romania and Spain, together with heads of national agencies, FAO Deputy Director-General and European Commission representative discussed the main challenges and opportunities related to rice sector.

The conference focused on the relevance of rice for food security and sovereignty, the EU policies to support a quality product like rice and a common strategy on international markets. As a result, the EU rice producing countries adopted a final communiqué (annexed) highlighting the level of European rice production, the role of rice paddies as ecosystems where agricultural activity exists in harmony with the environment and the need to safeguard rice cultivation.

In this context, the increasing EU imports from third countries, especially from EBA countries, which enjoy a preferential zero customs tariff on all types of rice and lower environmental and human rights standards, are threatening European producers. On the other hand, measures to increase EU exports should be implemented, taking into account the interest of third countries for a high-quality product, grown with respect for ethical and environmental sustainability principles.

The final communiqué recall the crucial role of reciprocity principle in trade relations, the attention to be paid to new scientific ways to improve rice production and the need for a CAP post-2027 equipped with adequate financial resources.

Taking into account the key role of rice sector and the range of challenges it is currently facing in trade-related issues, the eight EU rice producing countries agree on the need to establish an alliance among them – “EURice” – that, under a rotating annual presidency among its members, should meet regularly as a permanent coordination group to address the sector’s issues.

Final Communiqué
about the establishment of the “EURice Alliance”
(Permanent Coordination Group among EU rice producing countries)

The rice cultivation area in EU countries is approximately 401,000 hectares, with an estimated production of 1.5 million tonnes. Rice paddies represent true ecosystems where agricultural activity exists in harmony with the environment, aiding in the retention and release of water resources, safeguarding the biodiversity typical of wetlands, and creating landscapes of particular scenic value. Thus, safeguarding rice cultivation is necessary not only from a food production standpoint, but also for the preservation of a unique ecosystem.

EU imports from third countries are expected to reach 1.5 million tonnes, mainly from India and Pakistan and from EBA (“Everything but Arms”) countries - primarily Myanmar and Cambodia - which enjoy a preferential zero customs tariff on all types of rice and for all stages of processing. Nonetheless, in some exporting countries there are cases of violations of human rights (e.g., child labor exploitation) or use of active substances banned in the EU or applied in quantities that exceed EU regulatory limits (e.g., high levels of tricyclazole).

EU exports to third countries, on the other hand, are estimated at just under 240,000 tonnes. Measures should be implemented to increase exports to non-producing countries that appreciate high-quality products. European rice can be considered a niche product aimed at consumers willing to pay a higher price for a quality item grown with respect for ethical and environmental sustainability principles. In this respect, information campaigns should be launched to promote the unique features of European rice and encourage consumers to choose it over Asian alternatives.

Many issues must be addressed on the **import and export** front, such as the application of the reciprocity principle and the export increase to non-producing countries that appreciate high-quality products. At EU level, more attention should be paid to **new scientific ways to improve rice production**. Furthermore, it is necessary that the **CAP post-2027 is equipped with adequate financial resources**, for a strong and independent CAP, which allows to provide our farmers the support they need and to face ever-increasing challenges.

Taking into account the key role of rice sector and the range of challenges it is currently facing in trade-related issues, the eight EU rice producing countries agree on the need to **establish an alliance** among them – “**EURice**” – that, under a rotating annual presidency among its members, should meet regularly as a permanent coordination group to address the sector’s issues.
