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'I' ITEM NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 1)
Subject: European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 23/2024: Food labelling in the EU – Consumers can get lost in the maze of labels
– Approval

1. On 25 November 2024, the European Court of Auditors (ECA) published its Special Report No 23/2024 entitled "Food labelling in the EU – Consumers can get lost in the maze of labels"¹.
2. Pursuant to the Council conclusions on improving the examination of special reports drawn up by the Court of Auditors² and following the designation by the Permanent Representatives Committee³, the Working Party on Food and Food Systems (Food information and nutrition) examined the Special Report at its meeting of 6 December 2024, following a presentation by representatives of ECA.

¹ This special report is available on the Court's website: <http://eca.europa.eu>.

² Doc. 7515/00 + COR 1

³ Doc. 16163/24

3. The Special Report assesses the EU legal framework in the area of food labelling, and whether food labelling in the EU helps consumers make informed decisions when purchasing food. It also assesses how consumer understanding of labels is monitored, how member states' control systems are set up, how member states check that food companies comply with labelling rules, and how the Commission and member states report on these checks.
4. The Special Report concludes that food labelling in the EU can help consumers make better-informed decisions when purchasing food, but there are notable gaps in the EU legal framework as well as weaknesses in the monitoring, reporting, control systems and sanctions. This leads to consumers being confronted with labels that can be confusing or misleading, or that they do not always understand.
5. The Special Report therefore addresses five recommendations to the Commission: to address the gaps in the EU legal framework for food labelling; to step up efforts to analyse labelling practices; to monitor consumer expectations and take action to improve their understanding of food labelling; to strengthen member states' checks on voluntary labels and online retail; and to improve reporting on food labelling.
6. Given that the Special Report is not linked to the discharge procedure, the Presidency informed delegations at the meeting of Counsellors/Attachés (Agri – Food and Food Systems) on 8 January 2025 of its proposal not to draw Council conclusions in response to it.
7. During the meeting, delegations welcomed the Special Report and expressed their appreciation for its high quality and clarity. While no delegation opposed the Presidency's proposal not to draw up Council conclusions⁴, several stressed the importance to ensure proper follow-up to the recommendations, in particular to address the gaps in the EU legal framework for food labelling, and highlighted elements of importance for their countries.
8. In view of the above, the Permanent Representatives Committee is invited to confirm that no Council conclusions should be drawn up regarding Special Report No. 23/2024.

⁴ One delegation indicated that it did not have a position.