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OUTCOME OF THE COUNCIL MEETING

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Agriculture and Fisheries

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President

Marija Vučković
Minister for Agriculture of Croatia

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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>).
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ITEMS DEBATED

AGRICULTURE

Agricultural aspects of the European Green Deal

The Commission presented its communication [The European Green Deal](#), published on 11 December 2019. This strategy is a response to climate change and serious environmental challenges. It aims to achieve a resource-efficient and competitive EU economy, with no net emissions of greenhouse gases in 2050.

In the European Green Deal communication, the Farm to Fork strategy and the CAP are identified as the main tools to help farmers and fishermen fight climate change, protect the environment and preserve biodiversity, but also to ensure that they have a decent living and that the transition is fair.

The Commission's proposals for the CAP for 2021 to 2027 stipulate that 40% of the CAP budget and at least 30% of the Maritime Fisheries Fund would contribute to climate action. The Farm to Fork strategy, to be presented in spring 2020, will aim at making the European food system more fair, healthy and environmentally friendly by limiting the use of chemical pesticides, fertilisers and antibiotics and by reducing the environmental impact of food processing and the retail sector.

The debate was structured around three questions, included in a presidency note ([5174/20](#)):

- The European Green Deal suggests a series of key policies and measures aiming at contributing to the objective of achieving a climate-neutral EU by 2050. Does the future CAP provide an adequate framework in order to accomplish this ambition?
- In the field of agriculture, which other tools could be used besides the future CAP in order to contribute to the ambitions set out in the European Green Deal?
- What elements of the package do you consider particularly important for further examination at the Agriculture and Fisheries Council?

Ministers agreed that the EU's ambitious goals should be matched by an increased budget, in particular in the area of agriculture. They also highlighted the need for new technologies, smart farming techniques and broader digitalisation. Ministers agreed that the future CAP could provide an adequate framework to contribute to the achievement of climate neutrality by 2050, but they also stressed that it was crucial to ensure appropriate financing of the CAP. In addition to the CAP, delegations identified forestry (highlighting the need for a new EU forestry strategy), biodiversity, research and innovation, and circular economy, among others, as other important areas that could contribute to achieving the EU's ambitious climate neutrality goals. Ministers stressed that other EU initiatives, such as Horizon Europe or the rural development fund, could also play a crucial role in the context of the European Green Deal. The presidency expressed its readiness to include a discussion on the future Farm to Fork strategy in the agenda of one of the forthcoming Agriculture and Fisheries Council meetings.

Regulation on CAP transitional rules

In public session, ministers exchanged views on the proposal for a regulation on CAP transitional rules ([13643/19](#)).

The proposal was adopted on 31 October 2019 and presented at the Agricultural and Fisheries Council in November last year. It aims to ensure continuity of CAP support to European farmers and other beneficiaries in 2021 since the new strategic plans will not be able to apply from January 2021.

The debate was based on a presidency note ([5071/20](#)) and ministers were invited to answer the following questions:

- Do you agree that we should aim at arriving at a partial general approach as soon as possible, independently from the MFF figures, with a view to the timely adoption of the Transitional Regulation?
- Do you agree that the proposal should not entail any new major elements compared to the current rules?

The majority of delegations expressed their wish to see the Council's position (partial general approach) adopted as soon as possible, without waiting for the outcome of the negotiations on the next EU 7-year budget. Ministers also agreed that the current rules on financial support should be kept, but financed with new money. As to the duration of the transitional period, some delegations indicated their preference for one year, while others expressed doubts whether one year would be enough.

Any other business

– *Animal welfare labelling*

The German delegation informed the Council about parliamentary discussions in Germany on a national label distinguishing food produced in accordance with animal welfare standards exceeding the minimum legal requirements, and of Germany's position in favour of an EU-wide animal welfare label for such food ([5346/20](#)).

The information from Germany triggered statements by the majority of delegations. The voluntary nature of further measures in the area of animal welfare labelling was highlighted by ministers as the most appropriate way forward. Many delegations stressed the need for a further impact assessment and for ensuring that the new rules would not stigmatise farmers or create conditions for unfair competition.

– *African Swine Fever (ASF)*

The European Commission provided information on the outcome of the high-level international conference 'The future of global pork production under the threat of African swine fever' ([5423/20](#)).

Many ministers took the floor and highlighted the need for:

- a differentiated regional approach
- more proactive awareness-raising campaigns by the European Commission
- continuous financial support for ASF-related efforts

– ***Joint Declaration of France, Germany and Spain on the future CAP***

The joint statement was signed on 19 December 2019 by the ministers of agriculture of Germany, Spain and France ([5404/20](#)). In it, the three member states express support for the new environmental architecture proposed by the European Commission and ask for an eco-scheme, mandatory for member states and optional for farmers, to provide for incentive payments for environmental and climate-friendly practices under the first pillar of the CAP. Germany, France and Spain also underline the necessity of respecting regional competencies in the member states and stress the need for an adequate transition period. Most of the delegations supported the joint statement, with some ministers however expressing their preference for a voluntary approach under the second pillar.

– ***Honey labelling***

On behalf of several delegations, Slovenia and Portugal presented a declaration on origin labelling of honey blends ([5389/20](#)). In the declaration it is stated that the current rules on labelling of blends do not provide consumers with comprehensive and reliable information on the origin of honey.

The majority of delegations supported the signatories of the declaration and their call to the European Commission to consider opening the Directive on honey (2001/110/EC) in order to prescribe for clearer origin labelling for blends of honey.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**AGRICULTURE****Financial discipline and flexibility between pillars**

The Council adopted a regulation amending Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 as regards financial discipline as from financial year 2021 and Regulation (EU) No 1307/2013 as regards flexibility between pillars in respect of calendar year 2020.

The new rules will ensure that the ceiling for the financing of market-related expenditure and direct payments will be respected beyond 2020. The new regulation also ensures that member states can effectively continue to transfer funds between pillars in 2020. The possibility is already provided for by Regulation (EU) 2019/288, which sets up the amounts to transfer from rural development to direct payments as a percentage of the support financed under the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development for 2021. The regulation adopted today sets the maximum amount that can be transferred as a fixed amount.

([PE-CONS 95/19](#))

Maximum residue levels for prochloraz in or on certain products

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission regulation amending Annexes II and III to Regulation (EC) No 396/2005 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards maximum residue levels for prochloraz in or on certain products. The regulation will enter into force on the twentieth day following that of its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union.

([14827/19](#) + [ADD 1-2](#))

Sorbic acid (E 200) in liquid colour preparations for the decorative colouring of egg shells

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission regulation amending Annex III to Regulation (EC) No 1333/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the use of sorbic acid (E 200) in liquid colour preparations for the decorative colouring of egg shells. The regulation will enter into force on the twentieth day following that of its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union.

([15114/19](#) + [ADD 1](#))

Polyglycerol polyricinoleate (E 476) in liquid vegetable oil emulsions

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission regulation amending Annex II to Regulation (EC) No 1333/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the use of polyglycerol polyricinoleate (E 476) in liquid vegetable oil emulsions. The regulation will enter into force on the twentieth day following that of its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union.

([15116/19](#) + [ADD 1](#))

Use of soybean hemicellulose (E 426)

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission regulation amending Annex II to Regulation (EC) No 1333/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the use of soybean hemicellulose (E 426). The regulation will enter into force on the twentieth day following that of its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union.

([15111/19](#) + [ADD 1](#))

Use of citric acid (E 330) in cocoa and chocolate products

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission regulation amending Annex II to Regulation (EC) No 1333/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the use of citric acid (E 330) in cocoa and chocolate products. The regulation will enter into force on the twentieth day following that of its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union.

([15110/19](#) + [ADD 1](#))

Use of polysorbates (E 432-436) in carbonated beverages

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission regulation amending Annex II to Regulation (EC) No 1333/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the use of polysorbates (E 432-436) in carbonated beverages. The regulation will enter into force on the twentieth day following that of its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union.

([15107/19](#) + [ADD 1](#))

FISHERIES

Fishing opportunities in Union waters and in certain non-Union waters

The Council decided to adopt a Council Regulation fixing for 2020 the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks and groups of fish stocks, applicable in Union waters and, for Union fishing vessels, in certain non-Union waters.

The regulation will apply from 1 January 2020. Article 9 will apply from 1 February 2020. The provisions on fishing opportunities set out in Articles 23, 24 and 25 and Annexes IE and VII for certain stocks in the CCAMLR Convention Area will apply from 1 December 2019

([15319/19](#) + [ADD 1-2](#))

TRANSPARENCY

Ombudsman complaint 640/2019/TE

The Council approved a draft opinion in complaint 640/2019/TE submitted in May 2019 by an environmental law organisation.

On 29 October 2019, the Council received a letter from the European Ombudsman (EO) containing a draft Recommendation to the Council stating that it should proactively make public documents related to the annual adoption of Council regulations fixing the total allowable catches of fish stocks and groups of fish stocks. In the same letter, the EO invited the Council to submit a detailed opinion on that draft Recommendation, at the latest by 27 January 2020, in accordance with Article 3(6) of the Statute of the Ombudsman.

([5266/20](#))

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

6th EU-Ukraine Association Council: establishment of the EU position

The Council approved the position that the European Union will take in the 6th meeting of the Association Council with Ukraine, taking place in Brussels on 28 January 2020.

Restrictive measures in view of the situation in Mali: UN transposition

The Council adopted:

- a Council implementing decision, implementing Decision (CFSP) 2017/1775
- a Council implementing regulation, implementing Regulation (EU) 2017/1770

concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Mali.

The adopted decision and regulation transpose into EU law the decision of the United Nations Security Council Sanctions Committee dated 14 January 2020, amending the listings of 7 persons subject to restrictive measures.

Restrictive measures directed against certain persons, entities and bodies in view of the situation in Tunisia: review

The Council adopted:

- a Council decision amending Decision 2011/72/CFSP
- a Council implementing regulation, implementing Regulation 101/2011

concerning restrictive measures directed against certain persons, entities and bodies in view of the situation in Tunisia.

This way the Council extended by one year (until 31 January 2021) the current freeze on the assets of persons deemed to be responsible for the misappropriation of state funds in Tunisia and those persons and entities associated with them, on the basis of Decision 2011/72/CFSP.

The adopted acts will be published in the Official Journal of the EU ('C' Series).

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS**Visa facilitation Belarus**

The Council decided to forward the draft decision on conclusion ([12362/1/19](#)) of a visa facilitation agreement with Belarus ([12363/19](#)) to the European Parliament for its consent ([5223/20](#)).

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.

Migration statistics

The Council adopted a political agreement on the revised migration statistics regulation ([15244/1/19](#) + [COR1](#)). This follows negotiations between the Council and the European Parliament on the text. It will now need to be formally adopted by Parliament and the Council.

The current migration statistics regulation was adopted in 2007, and the situation on the ground has significantly changed since then. This revision will ensure the collection and supply to Eurostat of more extensive and timely data on migration to support evidence-based policy making.
