

Brussels, 10 February 2026
(OR. en)

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DRAFT MINUTES
COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
(Agriculture and Fisheries)
26 January 2026

. **Adoption of the agenda**

The Council adopted the agenda set out in document 5366/26.

2. **Approval of "A" items**

Non-legislative list

5428/26

The Council adopted all "A" items listed in the document above, including all linguistic COR and REV documents presented for adoption.

Statements to these items are set out in the Annex.

AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES

Non-legislative activities

3. **Work programme of the Presidency**



Presentation by the Presidency

The Chair presented the Work Programme of the Cyprus Presidency concerning the Agriculture and Fisheries sectors.

4. **EU Bioeconomy Strategy: Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries issues**



5181/26

*Presentation by the Commission
Exchange of views*

The Council took note of the presentation by the Commission of the EU's Bioeconomy Strategy and held an exchange of views.

AGRICULTURE

Legislative deliberations

(Public deliberation in accordance with Article 16(8) of the Treaty on European Union)

5. **Regulation amending the organic farming regulation as regards rules on production, labelling, certification and trade** 16969/25
5294/26
Presentation by the Commission
Policy debate

The Council took note of the presentation by the Commission of its proposal for amending the organic farming Regulation as regards certain production, labelling and certification rules and certain rules on trade with third countries and held a policy debate.

Any other business

6. Fisheries
- a) **Urgent EU Action needed on Northeast Atlantic Mackerel** 5640/26
Information from Ireland

The Council took note of the information provided by Ireland, supported by Latvia and Poland, on the situation as regards the management of the mackerel stock in the northeast Atlantic. The Council also took note of delegations' comments.

- b) **Difficulties in the implementation of the Control Regulation [Article 14] and the use of CATCH** 5587/26
Information from Spain, Belgium, Czechia, France, Greece, Latvia, Poland and Portugal

The Council took note of the information provided by Spain, on behalf of Belgium, Czechia, France, Greece¹, Latvia, Poland, Portugal and Spain, as regards difficulties in the implementation of the Control Regulation [Article 14] and the use of the IT-system CATCH. The Council also took note of delegations' comments .

¹ Greece asked for their support to be mentioned in the minutes.

- c) **Actions for the improvement of the WestMed MAP** [2] 5596/26
Information from Spain and France

The Council took note of the information provided by Spain, on behalf of France and Spain, as regards several actions needed for the improvement of the multiannual plan for fisheries in the western Mediterranean Sea. The Council also took note of delegations' comments.

Agriculture

- d) **Animal welfare as a forward-looking priority in the Commission's work programme (2026 and beyond)** [2] 5461/26
Information from Slovenia

The Council took note of the information provided by Slovenia, supported by Austria, Belgium, Germany and Malta, and of delegations' comments.

- e) **Current legislative proposal (Public deliberation in accordance with Article 16(8) of the Treaty on European Union)**

Food and feed safety simplification package
Presentation by the Commission

[1] [C] 17054/25
17055/25
17056/1/25 REV 1

The Council took note of the presentation by the Commission, and of delegations' comments.

- f) **Origin labelling for agricultural and food products** [2] 5458/26
Information from France, Austria, Bulgaria, Finland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain

The Council took note of the information provided by France, on behalf of Austria, Bulgaria, Finland, France, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain, and of comments from other delegations.

- g) **Securing EU food security and sovereignty in an uncertain world** [2] 5422/26
Information from the Commission and the Presidency

The Council took note of the information from the Presidency and the Commission and of delegations' comments.

- h) Continuing critical situation on the European milk market** ☐ 5552/26
Information from Hungary
- i) Extraordinary EU Plan for the Crisis in the European Dairy Sector** ☐ 5550/26
Information from Italy

Items 6) h) and i) were taken together.

The Council took note of the information provided by Hungary, supported by Poland, Romania and Slovakia, and by Italy, supported by Romania and Slovakia. It also took note of delegations' reactions.

- j) Marketing Standards for poultry meat** ☐ 5547/26
Information from Germany

The Council took note of the information provided by Germany, supported by Denmark, Latvia, Poland and Slovakia, on the marketing standards for poultry meat, of the points made by delegations.

- k) Arable Farmers under pressure: Urgent action to protect EU agriculture** ☐ 5554/26
Information from Austria

The Council took note of the information provided by Austria and of the comments of delegations.

- l) Actions necessary for protection of sensitive agricultural sectors in the context of trade agreements with third countries** ☐ 5625/26
Information from Poland, Austria, Hungary and Slovakia

The Council took note of the information provided by Poland, on behalf of Austria, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, on the protection of sensitive agricultural sectors in trade agreements. The Council also took note of delegations' comments.

m) Severe damage to Malta's agriculture and fisheries sectors – call for EU solidarity and flexibility
Information from Malta

5676/26

The Council took note of the information provided by Malta. It also took note of delegations' comments.

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- 1** First reading
 - C** Item based on a Commission proposal
 - 2** Public debate proposed by the Presidency (Article 8(2) of the Council's Rules of Procedure)
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Statements to the non-legislative "A" items set out in doc. 5428/26

Ad "A" item 1: **Council Regulation on fixing the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks and groups of fish stocks applicable in the Mediterranean and Black Seas for 2026**
Adoption

JOINT STATEMENT BY FRANCE, ITALY AND SPAIN on the Multiannual Plan for demersal stocks in the western Mediterranean Sea (Regulation (EU) 2019/1022, “WestMed MAP”)

“France, Italy and Spain call on the Commission to set a date for the submission of a legislative proposal to revise the WestMed MAP. This date should be set as soon as possible, so that the plan can be revised ahead of the Council meeting of December 2026, at which fishing opportunities for 2027 in the Mediterranean Sea will be decided.

The revised MAP should better take into account the realities of mixed Mediterranean fisheries and ensure a more balanced approach with regard to the socio-economic challenges faced by the fishing industry, both upstream and downstream, in line with the Common Fisheries Policy Basic Regulation.”

STATEMENT BY FRANCE, ITALY AND SPAIN on the improvement of demersal stocks assessments in the Western Mediterranean

“Based on the experience of the model review for hake in EMU1 performed during 2025 and considering the need to reinforce scientific assessments carried out under the WestMed MAP.

France, Italy and Spain request the Commission to work intensively on stock assessments review for the rest of the stocks included in the MAP to improve scientific advice. If more positive results are achieved during the year as a result of that exercise, the Commission should propose an in-year Council's decision amendment, in order to recognise that situation. A multiannual assessment could be contemplated to cater for socioeconomic needs.”

Ad "A" item 2: **Council Regulation fixing for 2026, 2027 and 2028 the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks, applicable in Union waters and, for Union fishing vessels, in certain non-Union waters**
Adoption

STATEMENT BY BELGIUM, DENMARK, GERMANY, ESTONIA, IRELAND, SPAIN, FRANCE, LITHUANIA, THE NETHERLANDS, POLAND, PORTUGAL AND SWEDEN on the application of Article 15(9) in the Basic Regulation in 2026

“Given that for:

- **EU only TACs:** COD/03AS.; NEP/8CU25; SOL/3ABC24; RNG/03-; SBR/09S-3411;
- **EU-UK TACs:** SAN/234_3R; SAN/234_4; SAN/234_5R; SAN/234_7R; COD/07A.; COD/7XAD34; HAD/7X7A34; WHG/07A.; BLI/24-; BLI/03A-; PRA/2AC4-C; PLE/7DE.; SRX/2AC4-C; SRX/67AKXD; RJE/7FG.; RJE/07E.; RJF/67AKXD; SRX/07D.; RJU/8-C.; RJU/9-C.; JAX/4BC7D; NOP/2A3A4.; BSF/56712-; ALF/3X14-; RNG/5B67-; RNG/8X14-; SBR/678-;
- **EU-UK-Norway TACs:** COD/2A3AX4; COD/5BE6A; COD/07D; POK/2C3A4; POK/56-14;
- **EU-Norway TACs:** COD/03AN; PRA/03A.

(i) there are analytical assessments according to which the biomass is below Blim; (ii) there are precautionary assessments recommending either zero catches or suspending the targeted fisheries; (iii) only by-catches or scientific fisheries are permitted; or (iv) the EU and the relevant third country or countries have excluded the application of such flexibility, and in order to ensure the recovery of the stocks, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Spain, France, Germany, Ireland, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal and Sweden undertake not to make use of year-to-year flexibility under Article 15(9) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 with regard to these stocks in 2026. This undertaking is a response to the current exceptional circumstances for these stocks.”

STATEMENT BY THE COMMISSION, SPAIN AND PORTUGAL on scientific information on Sole species in ICES divisions 8cde, 9 and 10

“Currently, in ICES divisions 8c, 8d, 8e, 9 and 10, common sole (*Solea solea*), Senegalese sole (*Solea senegalensis*) and sand sole (*Pegusa lascaris*) are managed under a combined TAC (SOO/8CDE34). ICES only provides advice for common sole in divisions 8c and 9a.

In October 2025, ICES published a special request advice confirming that it would be possible for it to provide advice for both Senegalese sole and sand sole in ICES divisions 8c and 9a. The Commission will therefore request ICES to issue separate advice for Senegalese and sand sole for 2027.

Given the limited data available, ICES is likely to provide a precautionary approach advice (ICES category 5) for 2027. However, with improved data, ICES might be in a position to deliver MSY advice (ICES category 3) in the medium term. Portugal and Spain commit to continuing efforts to improve data availability, with the aim of enabling a higher category advice by ICES.”

STATEMENT BY GERMANY, SPAIN, FRANCE AND PORTUGAL on exchanges of quotas

“To guarantee to the extent possible the use of fishing opportunities for cod, herring and redfish in Norwegian waters of ICES areas 1 and 2, France and Germany will endeavour to make 20 % of each of their quota for haddock (HAD/1N2AB.), saithe (POK/1N2AB.), Greenland halibut (GHL/1N2AB.), and other species (OTH/1N2AB.) available for exchanges with Member States not having sufficient quota for these stocks. Portugal, Spain and other Member States concerned are to request exchanges by January 31, 2026. Requests are not to exceed needs to cover unavoidable by-catches in fisheries for cod, herring and redfish. Any unused quantities not transferred are to be returned to the Member States that initially contributed to the exchange. Unless otherwise agreed, Member States not having sufficient quotas for such unavoidable by-catches will endeavour to provide in return quotas of cod (COD/1N2AB.). Where the above-mentioned quantities do not allow these Member States to cover their unavoidable by-catches, France and Germany will endeavour to agree to further exchanges based on availability of quota and on the global balance of the exchange.”

STATEMENT BY BELGIUM, DENMARK, GERMANY, ESTONIA, IRELAND, SPAIN, FRANCE, ITALY, LATVIA, LITHUANIA, THE NETHERLANDS, POLAND, PORTUGAL, FINLAND AND SWEDEN on the multiannual plans

“Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Spain, France, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Finland, and Sweden urges the Commission to swiftly submit a proposal for an amendment of the multiannual plans for the Baltic Sea, the North Sea, the Western Waters and the Western Mediterranean concerning articles 4(6) / 4(7) / 4 (3) to provide legal clarity and coherence between the relevant Articles of the MAPs. The proposal should be accompanied by an impact assessment of problems raised within their practical application, criteria and terms of application and duly take into account all objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy. Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Spain, France, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Finland, and Sweden will be dedicated to sustainable stock management and will cooperate constructively with the Commission and the European Parliament in order to find a balanced solution of identified concerns.”

STATEMENT BY DENMARK on the Danish Mackerel Exceptional Priority

“In 1983, the Council granted Denmark The Mackerel Exceptional Priority in return for Denmark renouncing fishing opportunities for mackerel in Western Waters. Subsequently, in accordance with its provisions, the Mackerel Exceptional Priority was activated in 1997, 2005, 2006, 2007 and in 2008. Denmark regrets that the Council did not respect The Mackerel Exceptional Priority in 2024, although the conditions were clearly met given the agreed Total Allowable Catch.

However, taking into account the extraordinary situation of the mackerel stock this year, and in solidarity with other Member States, Denmark will not apply the Danish Mackerel Exceptional Priority in 2025.

The Danish Mackerel Exceptional Priority should be respected in setting fishing opportunities for mackerel in the years to come.”

STATEMENT BY DENMARK, GERMANY, IRELAND, SPAIN, FRANCE, THE NETHERLANDS, PORTUGAL AND SWEDEN on quota exchanges for blue whiting following the EU-NO consultations for 2026

Due to the collective efforts of Member States, it was possible to increase the amount of blue whiting in the quota exchange with Norway with 13 000 tons. A significant amount of quota from Portugal and Spain is being transferred to Germany and the Netherlands still in 2025. In order to take into account relative stability, the following quantities of blue whiting (WHB/1X14), for 2026, are added or taken from the share of Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden:

DE	-4.014,4t
DK	2.475,2t
ES	2.098,2t
FR	1.721,2t
IE	1.916,2t
NL	-5.003,7t
PT	195t
SE	612,3t

Member States will endeavour to make the appropriate transfers of blue whiting available as soon as possible in 2025 and 2026.”

JOINT STATEMENT BY DENMARK, GERMANY, IRELAND, FRANCE, THE NETHERLANDS, POLAND, PORTUGAL AND SWEDEN on Atlanto-Scandian herring

“Denmark, Germany, Ireland, France, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal and Sweden recall that in the sharing agreement in 2007 for Atlanto-Scandian herring the EU decreased its share from 8.38 percent to 6.51 percent to the advantage of Norway provided access to Norwegian waters would be provided. The aforementioned Member States noted that no such access had yet been agreed.”

STATEMENT BY GERMANY, ESTONIA, SPAIN, FRANCE, LITHUANIA, POLAND AND PORTUGAL on Arctic cod in the Norwegian Exclusive Economic Zone

“Germany, Estonia, Spain, France, Lithuania, Poland and Portugal recall that in 2021, due to the fishing stops issued by Norway, a total of 5 143 tonnes of the EU cod quota of the bilateral exchanges could not be fished in the Norwegian Exclusive Economic Zone. The Member States express their disappointment that Norway has still not made that quantity available to the EU in the bilateral exchanges.

Germany, Estonia, Spain, France, Lithuania, Poland and Portugal call on the Commission to resume immediately the high-level political dialogue with Norway on the above issue, as well as other open fisheries issues, and to resolve it as soon as possible. In any case, the aforementioned Member States further call on the Commission to table a proposal, latest in the second in-year amendment of the Regulation on fishing opportunities for 2026, with an additional EU quota for Arctic cod to be fished in international waters of ICES area 1 and 2, in order to solve the above-mentioned debt issue.”

STATEMENT BY GREECE on tuna fishing opportunities

“Greece supports the Presidency's final compromise text on the Council Regulation determining the fishing opportunities in the Atlantic and the North Sea for the years 2026, 2027 and 2028.

However, our country wishes to clearly record that **the allocation key to the Member States for bluefin tuna creates long-standing inequality to the detriment of Greece**, a fact that had already been recognized in a Joint Declaration of the **Council of December 1999**.

This situation continues to disproportionately affect coastal and small-scale fisheries, which play an important social and economic role and have a low environmental impact.

In order to **effectively address this long-standing problem** and to strengthen fleets disadvantaged by the very small historical quotas, Greece considers it necessary to **create an EU solidarity reserve from unused quantities of bluefin tuna**.

This is particularly important in the current situation where the situation of the stock has improved substantially, allowing the total allowable catch of bluefin tuna to be increased.

Such a reserve would allow targeted and proportionate support to small-scale coastal tuna fisheries of Member States with limited capacity, without affecting the principle of relative stability.

Greece requests that this issue be taken seriously into account in the next discussions on the internal allocation and on the use of new or unallocated quantities, as it pertains to the **fair treatment and equal participation of all member states** in the management of the stock.”

STATEMENT BY FRANCE on top-down deductions

“The Member States appreciate the collaborative approach of the Commission, which enhances the transparency of the calculation and verification of top-down deductions, as they have a significant impact on the setting of fishing opportunities.

The Commission should maintain the calculation methodology retained for 2026, for top-down deductions arising from the de minimis rule and high-survivability exemptions to the landing obligation.”

STATEMENT BY IRELAND on the Hague Preferences

“The Hague Preferences constitute an integral part of Relative Stability, reflecting the need to safeguard the special needs of regions where local populations are especially dependent on fisheries and related industries. This is expressly recognised in the Common Fisheries Policy and was set down in Council Regulation No. 170/83, Council Regulation No. 3760/92, Council Regulation No. 2371/2002 and the current Common Fisheries Policy Regulation, Council Regulation No. 1380/2013.

When Relative Stability was first established, Ireland accepted lower Relative Stability shares for many stocks — in exchange for the guarantee of the protection of the Hague Preferences Ireland invoked the relevant Hague Preferences for 2026 in accordance with the procedure in place for more than 30 years and deeply regrets their non-application in the Regulation following opposition from certain Member States.

This breaks the historic agreement which establishes relative stability as the cornerstone of the CFP and is the means by which resources have been shared since 1983. All elements of the 1983 agreement, made by compromise by all parties after six years of negotiations, remain as vital as each other.

Ireland is fully cognisant of the concerns of other Member States about the impact of quota reductions and made clear its willingness to engage with Member States affected by the Hague Preferences. However, our willingness to take exceptional compromises in 2026 was not reciprocated.

This blocking of a well-established mechanism which has been part of the overall architecture of the CFP is deeply disappointing and directly contrary to the spirit of solidarity, close co-operation and compromise that underpins the CFP.

Ireland asserts that changes to any aspect of Relative Stability, including the application of the Hague Preferences should only be considered arising from a full examination of all aspects of relative stability in a structured review of the CFP.

Therefore, Ireland will be invoking the relevant Hague Preferences at the appropriate time in respect of fishing opportunities for 2027 and welcomes and looks forward to engaging with Member States.”

STATEMENT BY IRELAND on Bluefin Tuna

“Ireland recalls that at the ICCAT annual meeting for 2025, agreement was reached on setting the Bluefin Tuna Total Allowable Catch and allocations for the next three years. This agreement, as supported by the EU, provides for allocations for new entrants and increases for existing, smaller CPCs.

If the EU can support this position at international level, then it must also be prepared to apply the same position internally.

Member States, such as Ireland, with a strong case for a national allocation for Bluefin Tuna and smaller existing EU-quota holders should not receive less favourable treatment than Third Countries.

In light of this, Ireland reiterates its call to open a discussion on the internal reallocation of the EU Bluefin Tuna quota.”

STATEMENT BY GERMANY, ESTONIA, IRELAND, SPAIN, FRANCE, LATVIA, LITHUANIA, THE NETHERLANDS, PORTUGAL AND SWEDEN on unsustainable fishing of North-East Atlantic mackerel

“The above Member States regret the unsustainable fishing of mackerel carried out by certain North-East Atlantic third countries. This unsustainable fishing has led to the stock being below safe biological limits and on the verge of collapse, despite the European Union’s stable and responsible quota setting. The decline of the stock and the lack of level playing field has caused severe consequences for Union fishing industries and communities.

The above Member States regret the lack of cooperation of certain North-East Atlantic third countries with the European Union to manage mackerel and other North-East Atlantic pelagic stocks. The above Member States note that all other NEAFC Contracting Parties voted against the European Union proposal on management measures for mackerel for 2026 at the 11-14 November 2025 meeting of the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) to set the TAC for 2026 for mackerel in line with the ICES advice. The above Member states are deeply concerned that four third countries agreed on an annual total allowable catch that deviates from the headline ICES advice without providing justification, and agreed on a sharing arrangement that does not include all NEAFC Contracting Parties. In addition, in NEAFC, four Contracting Parties opposed the ban of transshipments, thus allowing unmonitored and uncontrolled transshipments of catches of pelagic stocks to continue. Furthermore, the above Member States note that the European Union has been excluded from fisheries consultations regarding this and other pelagic stocks such as Atlanto-Scandian herring, and that certain North-East Atlantic third countries continue to refuse to engage in meaningful discussions on sharing arrangements with the European Union.

The above Member States call on the European Commission to identify suitable measures to respond to this crisis. They recall Regulation (EU) No 1026/2012 on certain measures for the purpose of the conservation of fish stocks in relation to countries allowing non-sustainable fishing.”

STATEMENT BY FRANCE, SPAIN AND THE COMMISSION on the scientific advice for seabass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*) in divisions 8.a–b (northern and central Bay of Biscay)

“The assessment model for seabass in divisions 8.a-b has been benchmarked in 2025, resulting in a change in the perception of the stock and in an advice value for 2026 between 187% and 190% higher than the advice value for 2025. The Council decided to limit the total removals for the year 2026 to 3 883 tonnes for both commercial and recreational catches and discards, corresponding to an increase of 48% compared to 2025. France has called for more predictability and stability in setting the fishing opportunities for this stock, notably via the provision of a multiannual advice, i.e. an advice covering a period of two or more years.

The Commission will consult ICES via a special request on the possibility to provide a multiannual advice for this stock. The Commission will also consult ICES on the possibility to include scenarios projecting different recreational bag limits (up to 5 fish per day) in the multiannual advice.”

STATEMENT BY FRANCE, SPAIN, PORTUGAL AND THE COMMISSION on the scientific advice for Pollack (*Pollachius pollachius*) in Subarea 8 and Division 9.a (Bay of Biscay and Atlantic Iberian waters)

“Following the stock assessment’s benchmark in 2023, the advice for Pollack (*Pollachius pollachius*) in Subarea 8 and Division 9.a is given based on ICES Stock Data Category 3. Additional scientific effort, notably from the ACOST project (2021-2025) led by the French National Institute, Ifremer, may deliver results to help refine knowledge of the stock and update existing data.

The Commission will consult ICES on the possibility to conduct a benchmark on this stock to be held once the results of the additional scientific research are available and if appropriate.”