



AGRICULTURE Council

22 October 2015 in Luxembourg

The Council meeting will address agricultural and fisheries matters; it will start at 10.00 on Thursday, 22 October 2015. The Council will be chaired by Mr Fernand Etgen Luxembourg's Minister for Agriculture, Viticulture and Consumer Protection.

*Regarding fisheries, ministers will try to reach a political agreement on **fishing opportunities for 2016 for certain fish stocks in the Baltic Sea**. They will then hold an exchange of views on the **EU-Norway annual consultations***

*On agricultural issues, the Council will hold a debate on the **contribution of agriculture to climate change mitigation**.*

*Finally, the Council will be briefed on a ministerial meeting on **antibiotic resistance**, a meeting of the Visegrad group on **agricultural markets**, the **greening of plant protection**, provisions regarding **foodstuffs intended for particular nutritional uses** and a conference on **GMO free agriculture**.*

*The Presidency will invite ministers for a lunch to discuss "**The impact of a recent decision of the European Patent office (EPO) on the plant breeders' rights regime**".*

A press conference will be held at the end of the meeting (around 18.45).

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Press conferences and public events by video streaming: <http://video.consilium.europa.eu>

Video coverage in broadcast quality (MPEG4) and photo gallery: www.eucouncil.tv

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¹ This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office.

FISHERIES

Fishing opportunities in the Baltic Sea for 2016

Ministers will try to reach a political agreement on fishing opportunities for 2016 for certain fish stocks in the Baltic Sea ([11675/15](#)).

The Commission proposal aims at fixing for 2016 the maximum quantities of fish (total allowable catches (TACs) and quotas) for the commercially most important stocks in the Baltic Sea.

The proposed measures have been established taking into account available scientific advice and, in particular, the reports drawn up by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES).

The landing obligation for stocks caught in certain fisheries has been applicable since 1 January 2015. In the Baltic Sea these fisheries cover stocks under TACs and quotas in this Regulation, namely: small pelagic fisheries (herring and sprat stocks), salmon fisheries (salmon stocks), as well as, cod fisheries (cod stocks), where the species define the fishery. Catches of species that do not define the fisheries but are covered by TACs, i.e. plaice will be covered by the landing obligation in the Baltic from 1 January 2017. All five pelagic stocks (four stocks of herring and one sprat stock) and western cod stock in the Baltic Sea are to be fished at maximum sustainable yield (MSY) levels in 2016. The TACs proposed therefore correspond to the MSY fishing mortality.

The fishing opportunities in the Baltic Sea for 2016 should be available for the member states as of 1 January next year.

According to article 43(3) of the Lisbon Treaty it is incumbent upon the Council to adopt measures on the fixing and allocation of fishing opportunities in the framework of the common fisheries policy (CFP). Therefore, the European Parliament's participation and the Economic and Social Committee's opinion are not required in this case.

EU/Norway: annual consultations for 2016

The Council will hold an exchange of views on the annual consultations between the EU and Norway under their bilateral fisheries agreement. The first round of consultations will take place from 16 to 20 November 2015 in Copenhagen (Denmark) and the second round from 30 November to 4 December 2015 in Bergen (Norway).

In the exchange of views, the Presidency would like member states to focus on the following questions:

- Which approach should be taken by the EU on the main jointly managed shared stocks in the North Sea and Skagerrak?
- How to proceed in the consultations and which other stocks of interest to Norway could be identified and used for the reciprocal exchange of quotas with Norway?

The main issues for the consultations this year are:

- detailed management arrangements for the seven jointly managed fish stocks in the North Sea (cod, haddock, plaice, whiting, herring, mackerel and saithe) and Skagerrak (cod, haddock, whiting, plaice, shrimp, herring and sprat) involving notably the establishment of the TACs and quotas for the respective Parties, in accordance with the long-term management plans and agreed sharing arrangements;
- possible adjustments to the long-term management plans for North Sea stocks of haddock and herring in the light of new ICES advice; and
- the exchange of reciprocal fishing possibilities in order, among other things, to enable the continuation of a number of fishing operations which are important for the fishermen of both parties, including fishing opportunities for Arcto-Norwegian cod in Norwegian waters, as well as other measures in fisheries of mutual interest.

The 1980 bilateral fisheries agreement between the EC and Norway covers joint stocks in the North Sea, some jointly-managed, others not. Annual TACs are set jointly by the EU and Norway for the jointly managed joint stocks. There are joint long-term management plans for cod, haddock, herring and saithe and basic principles for a long-term management plan for plaice. A ten-year agreement with Norway on mackerel was concluded in January 2010, including mutual access in the North Sea. This agreement is contingent on a satisfactory overall bilateral agreement. The reciprocal exchange of quotas needs to be in overall balance across the agreement.

AGRICULTURE

Agriculture and climate

Ministers will hold an exchange of views on the contribution of agriculture to climate change mitigation on the basis of a document prepared by the Presidency ([12693/15](#)). This debate is convened in the framework of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 21), which will take place in Paris from 30 November to 11 December this year.

Agriculture has an impact on climate change: agriculture is a source of greenhouse gases (GHG) as well as a sink, notably through the storage of carbon in the soil organic matter and in biomass. But on the other hand, climate change also has an impact on agriculture which has to adapt to new climatic conditions observed in several areas: drier summers, milder and rainy winters, an increase of extreme weather events with an important impact on soil erosion and, indirectly, an increase in CO₂ content in the atmosphere that favours photosynthesis. The close links between agriculture and climate change can affect the environment and biodiversity as well as food security.

How can agriculture contribute to climate change mitigation? In this regard, the agricultural sector could be a key player in terms of directly or indirectly reducing GHG emissions, for example by helping to mitigate the waste sector emissions through the bio-methanisation of organic waste. Effects can also be amplified by the use of nitrogen-fixing crops. The contribution of research in this area is essential as gaseous exchanges between agricultural systems and the atmosphere are the main subject of several research projects.

Obtaining a cleaner agricultural sector will require Europe to tackle the main sources of GHG emissions in this sector in particular those linked to animal production. Through the production of dedicated biomass for energy and biomaterial, agriculture also has an important role to play in shifting the current fossil-based economy towards a green circular economy. In that regard knowledge transfer from research to agricultural practice to support innovation seems a critical step. In any case, farmers should be actively involved in actions aimed at mitigating GHG emissions, such as optimised animal nutrition or the sustainable use of commodities produced on the farm.

With a view to structuring the exchange of views the Presidency will invite member states to reflect in particular upon the following questions:

1. Today agriculture does already implement a number of instruments to mitigate the effects of climate change. In your opinion, which existing actions should be prioritised in order to address climate mitigation in an effective way? Are there new actions that should be implemented as a priority?
2. How could we improve the link between science and agricultural practice at EU level, including the different stages of knowledge-transfer, in order to tackle climate change challenges in the agricultural sector?

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Sustainable plant protection

The delegation from the Netherlands will keep the ministers informed on an initiative for accelerating sustainable plant protection ([12769/15](#)).

This initiative aims at promoting a broader, greener range of measures and authorised substances, including alternative lower-risk plant protection methods and techniques, basic substances and low-risk substances and products. Following its presentation at the Council in July, the Netherlands proposes setting up an expert group with all interested member states to explore further which short-term and long-term actions could contribute to the "greening" of the farmers toolbox of plant protection.

Specialised nutrition

The ministers will be briefed by the French delegation on the continuation of the legislative work on foodstuffs intended for particular nutritional uses (PARNUTs) ([12735/15](#)).

According to the existing legislation on PARNUTs, two reports on milk-based drinks and similar products for young children and food for sportsmen should have been published this summer. The conclusions of those reports are intended to provide guidelines for updating the regulatory framework applicable to those products. France is therefore requesting the publication of those reports to ensure the continuation of the legislative work on foodstuffs intended for particular nutritional uses.

G7 health ministers meeting - Antimicrobial resistance

The Council will be briefed by the German delegation on the outcome of a meeting of the G7 health ministers which took place in Berlin (Germany) on 8 and 9 October 2015 ([12933/15](#)).

The agenda of the meeting included an item on resistance to antibiotics. On this occasion Germany underscored the need to set up measures in agriculture and veterinary medicine to ensure responsible use of antibiotics and detailed its own experience in minimising the administration of antibiotics to livestock.

Visegrad group and other countries meeting - Agricultural markets

The Czech delegation will give the Council the main conclusions of the meeting of the Visegrad group countries (Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic) plus Bulgaria, Austria, Romania and Slovenia (V4+4) which took place on 26 August 2015, in České Budějovice (Czech Republic) ([12914/15](#)).

The debate between agriculture ministers of those countries was focused on the difficulties which agricultural markets are currently facing, in particular the dairy market. Ministers also discussed the school regime for milk, frauds in the food chain and best practices in land management.

Ministerial conference - GMO-free agriculture in Europe

Ministers will be briefed by the Slovenian delegation on the outcomes of a ministerial conference on "How to maintain GMO-free agriculture in Europe" which took place on 21 August 2015 in Ptuj (Slovenia) ([12600/1/15 REV 1](#)).

Ministers and representatives from Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Kosovo, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Poland, Serbia and Slovenia exchanged views on whether maintaining GMO-free agriculture constitutes a competitive challenge but also an opportunity for agriculture in Europe, and what measures need to be adopted in this regard. At the end of the conference a Joint Declaration laying down guidance and specific action proposals to contribute to the development of a GMO-free agriculture model was adopted by most of the participants.
