



Friday, 04 December, 2015

EU agri-food exports still at record level

After a slow-down in August, the value of EU agri-food exports has resumed the positive trend (+13%), as monthly exports in September exceeded imports by €2 billion. The exports to the US (+19%) and China (+18%) did particularly well. Russia fell down to fourth position as destination for EU agri-food exports, after US, China and Switzerland. Most significant increases in monthly export values were witnessed for wine, spirits and liqueurs and for chocolate and confectionaries. Imports to the EU in September also went up compared to the previous month (+4.5%), especially for oilseeds other than soyabeans, coffee and tea, and cocoa beans. In the 12 months period from October 2014 to September 2015, EU agri-food exports to third countries are still at record level with an increase by 6.0% in value compared to the same period one year ago. More detailed statistics are available [online](#).

Food: Commission publishes results of control plan on labelling of fishery products

Today the Commission is publishing the results of the first EU-wide control plan to assess the prevalence on the market of mislabelled white fishery products (i.e. white fishery products that do not match with the declared species on the label). Agreed with the Member States in February 2015, the control plan was implemented over the summer and has resulted in the testing of nearly 4000 white fish samples of 150 different species, taken from all stages of the food production chain. These tests confirmed that in 94% of the cases the species declared on the label were correct. As for the 6% of samples that were found to be mislabelled, it is for the Member State to identify on a case-by-case basis the causes and motives of the non-compliances. They may be the result of a bad or ill-informed practice and not necessarily of a fraudulent one. Member States have already been taking appropriate action to end violations, including through the application of penalties, in accordance with national rules. The Commission will monitor the situation and continue its awareness-raising campaigns on labelling requirements for fishery products. It will also carry out a series of fact-finding missions on labelling and traceability of fishery products that will start in December 2015. This coordinated control plan on fishery products is part of the Commission's action against fraudulent practices in the food chain. Recent activities in this area include the launch, earlier this year, of a dedicated IT tool (the Administrative Assistance and Cooperation (AAC) system), intended to facilitate the exchange of information regarding possible cross-border violations of food chain rules between national enforcement authorities. The full results are available [here](#).

GMOs: Commission authorises 2 GMOs for food/ feed uses

The Commission adopted today 2 GMOs for food/ feed uses, MON87427 maize and NK603xT25 maize. These GMOs have gone through the different steps of the authorisation procedure foreseen by the legislation, and have received a favourable scientific assessment by the [European Food Safety Authority](#) (EFSA). The risk assessment has been done by EFSA in collaboration with Member States. The GMOs approved today have received "no opinion" votes from the Member States in both the Standing and Appeal Committees. The authorisations are valid for 10 years, and any products produced from these GMOs will be subject to the EU's strict labelling and traceability rules. The authorisation decisions do not cover cultivation on the EU territory. For more information please see [here](#).

Preparation of the Eurogroup meeting

Today in Brussels, Vice-President Dombrovskis, Commissioner Hill and Commissioner Moscovici will participate in the meeting of euro area finance ministers (Eurogroup). The ministers will be informed on the state of play regarding Greece and will be debriefed on the main findings of the [4th post-programme surveillance mission to Ireland](#). The Eurogroup will be briefed by the [Single Supervisory Mechanism](#) (SSM) Chair, while the SSM audit and a thematic discussion on pension systems are also on the agenda. The meeting will be followed by a press conference, transmitted [by EbS](#)

Refugee Crisis: Greece activates EU Civil protection mechanism, agrees Frontex operation at border with former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and triggers RABIT mechanism

Yesterday, Greece has taken three actions to address the refugee crisis, activating EU mechanisms designed to assist in crisis situations. The country has activated the [EU Civil Protection Mechanism](#) to benefit from material support to help cope with the influx of refugees and asylum seekers in the country. Greece has also agreed an [operational plan](#) with Frontex for a new operation at the Greek border with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, where the agency will assist with the registration of migrants. The deployment of additional officers will begin next week. Finally, Greece has put in a formal request for the deployment a [Rapid Border Intervention Team](#) operation to provide immediate border guard support at its external border in the Aegean islands. Frontex will now process the request as a matter of priority. Over 50,000 people have arrived in Greece since 1 November. The scale is immense and the Commission is working very closely with the Greek authorities to assist them in this challenge. European Commission President **Juncker** asked the Director General for the Structural Reform Support Service to follow this process very closely and the Commission's teams have been working hand in hand with the Greek authorities for months. A press release can be found [here](#).

Justice and Home Affairs Ministers adopt proposal for Europol regulation

Today, the Justice and Home Affairs Council adopted the Commission's proposal for a new legal basis for Europol, the European Union's law enforcement agency. Earlier this week, the European Parliament's Committee for Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs had already endorsed the proposal. The draft regulation should now be formally approved by the Parliament, in Plenary. Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris **Avramopoulos** said: *"This agreement on the Europol regulation is a particularly important achievement in times when security and the fight against terrorism rank at the top of the political agenda. Europol is now fully prepared to fulfil its mission to help achieve a safer Europe for the benefit of all EU citizens."* The swift adoption of the Europol regulation was one of the objectives highlighted in the European Agenda on Security adopted in April 2015. The Europol reform aligns Europol's

legal basis with the requirements of the Lisbon Treaty and equips Europol with the means to become the EU's hub for information exchange between Member States' law enforcement authorities.

Commission's European Research Council awards 291 young researchers with €429 million in grants

The European Research Council (ERC) has today announced the award of its Starting Grants to 291 early-career researchers. On the occasion, Carlos **Moedas**, European Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, said: *"We need to keep our most talented researchers in Europe while attracting the new and diverse perspectives of top researchers from elsewhere in the world. These grants ensure many of the world's most exciting ideas are developed right here: giving researchers and scientists the freedom and security to pursue their careers and ambitions on our continent."* The funding, worth €429 million in total and up to €1.5 million per grant, will enable them to set up their own research teams and pursue groundbreaking ideas in all disciplines, covering topics like climate change, rare diseases and digital media. See [ERC press release](#) for more details.

State aid: Commission approves State financing for Poste Italiane's universal service obligation

The European Commission has found the compensation granted by Italy to Poste Italiane to fulfil its public service mission (so-called "universal service obligation") during the periods 2012-2015 and 2016-2019 to be in line with EU state aid rules. The Commission's assessment showed that the compensation granted to Poste Italiane is based on a robust and conservative methodology, which ensures that it will not exceed the cost of the public service mission. A full press release is available in [here](#)

State aid: Commission opens in-depth investigation into restructuring aid for the Danish Vestjysk Bank A/S

The Commission has opened an in-depth probe to assess whether aid granted by Denmark to Vestjysk Bank is compatible with EU State aid rules. It will in particular examine whether Vestjysk Bank's restructuring plan would restore its long-term viability without unduly distorting competition. In April 2012, the Commission temporarily approved up to DKK 8,941 million (€1.2 billion) State support for Vestjysk Bank A/S pending the submission of suitable restructuring measures for Vestjysk Bank A/S. The opening of an in-depth investigation gives interested third parties the opportunity to submit comments on the measures under assessment. It does not prejudge the outcome of the investigation. A press release is available [here](#).

Mergers: Commission continues investigation of Hutchison 3G /Telefónica UK merger without referral to UK

The European Commission has decided not to refer the planned acquisition of Telefónica UK by Hutchison to the UK competition authority. The Commission concluded that it was better placed to ensure consistency in the application of merger control rules in the mobile telecommunications sector across the European Economic Area (EEA). In deciding whether to refer a case upon such a request, the Commission particularly takes into account which authority is better placed to deal with the case at hand. In the case of Hutchison 3G UK/Telefónica UK, the Commission concluded that, given its extensive experience in assessing cases in this sector and the need to ensure consistency in the application of merger control rules in the mobile telecommunications sectors across the EEA, it was better placed to deal with the transaction. The Commission will continue to cooperate closely with the UK competition authority in the assessment of the case. The Commission will continue its [in-depth investigation](#) into the proposed transaction, which was

opened on 30 October 2015. The Commission has until 18 April 2016 to take a final decision. A full press release is available in [here](#). More information will be available on the [competition](#) website, in the Commission's [public case register](#) under the case number M.7612.

Antitrust: Commission closes proceedings against 13 investment banks in credit default swaps case

The Commission has decided to close antitrust proceedings against all 13 investment banks involved in its investigation into the credit default swaps market, namely Bank of America Merrill Lynch, Barclays, Bear Stearns, BNP Paribas, Citigroup, Credit Suisse, Deutsche Bank, Goldman Sachs, HSBC, JP Morgan, Morgan Stanley, Royal Bank of Scotland and UBS. [On 1 July 2013](#) the Commission adopted a Statement of Objections against Markit, the International Swaps and Derivatives Association (ISDA) and 13 investment banks. The Statement of Objections raised preliminary concerns that all parties had coordinated to foreclose from the credit default swaps market Deutsche Börse in 2007 and Chicago Mercantile Exchange in 2008. Today's closure decision regarding the 13 investment banks is based on a thorough analysis of all information received from the parties in their replies and during the oral hearing of May 2014, as well as on documents obtained through additional fact finding. The evidence was not sufficiently conclusive to confirm the Commission's concerns with regards to the 13 investment banks. This closure does not prejudice the outcome of the Commission's investigation regarding Markit and ISDA, which is ongoing. The Commission will also continue monitoring the practices of investment banks in financial markets, including in the credit default swaps sector.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Closing Ceremony for the European Year for Development on 9 December in Luxembourg

The European Year for Development is coming to an end and a closing ceremony is being organised in Luxembourg on Wednesday, 9 December 2015 to mark the culmination of a successful campaign. High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini** and Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven **Mimica** will attend the event. Other attendees are also expected to include Xavier **Bettel** (Prime Minister of Luxembourg), Lilianne Ploumen (Minister for Foreign Trade and Development of the Netherlands), Linda **McAvan** (DEVE Committee Chair/ European Parliament) and Marius **Wanders** (Ambassador of EYD2015 Civil Society Alliance). A Joint Declaration by the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council on the European Year for Development 2015 is expected to be endorsed at the closing ceremony which will take place at the Philharmonie du Luxembourg ("Petit auditorium") 1, Place de l'Europe, L-1499 Luxembourg. For registration, applications have to be made [online](#) via the portal (by registering for the Informal meeting of Ministers for Development Cooperation). For more information, contact Stacey.Vickers@ec.europa.eu or in Luxembourg, contact: Alexandra Allen EYD.Luxembourg@mae.etat.lu.

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Find out [here](#) what will be discussed next week in the European Commission, European Council and the European Parliament.

