



Tuesday, 09 February, 2016

European Commission and Colombia to start negotiations on the trade of organic products

The European Commission and the government of Colombia announced today the start of negotiations towards a bilateral agreement on trade in organic products. Such an agreement would allow a larger market for organic farmers, a reduced burden for companies and ensure availability of more organic products to consumers. The announcement took place during the official visit of the Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development to Colombia. In Cali, Phil **Hogan** said: *"I welcome the start of negotiations with Colombia with a view to concluding an agreement on trade in organic products. The organic sector continues to be one of the most dynamic production sectors the EU agri-food sector, and Colombia has great potential to develop opportunities for organic farmers and businesses, with the guarantee for the consumer of a solid control system. We have to be open to examining further technical dialogue and cooperation between the EU and Colombia on matters such as organics. Today's high level event constitutes a good example of how the organic sectors of both the EU and Colombia can cooperate and both benefit in building a long-term vision"*. Although not part of the Trade Agreement in force since 2013 between the EU and Colombia and Peru, this new agreement will be earmarked in the privileged relationship of cooperation and trade facilitation that has been established since then. The organic sector in the European Union has been rapidly developing in recent years with a total area of 10.3 million hectares cultivated as organic in 2014 compared to 6.4 million hectares in 2005. This means an average yearly growth of 5.5% over a 10-year period. The organic area represented nearly 6% of the total utilised agricultural area in 2014. More information [here](#).

High-level seminar in Sicily addresses alarming depletion of fish stocks in the Mediterranean

EU Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Karmenu **Vella** participated in a [high-level seminar](#) addressing the long-term issue of the depletion of fish stocks in the Mediterranean Sea. Taking place on 9 and 10 February in Catania, in the Italian island of Sicily, the seminar is organised by the Commission and the Mediterranean Advisory Council. It brings together government ministers, delegations and stakeholders from all eight Mediterranean EU Member States. Opening the seminar Commissioner **Vella** stressed the leading role of the European Union. *"The EU must lead the way by example. We need to face up to our responsibilities now, as policy makers, fishermen, scientists and civil society. I want to ensure that we all contribute to solutions."* The seminar is the starting point for the development of a new strategy for the Mediterranean. Once EU Member States have agreed on strong alignment and committed themselves to cooperate within the EU, the plan is to bring neighbouring countries on board within the international setting of the General Fisheries Commission for the

Mediterranean (GFCM). Commissioner **Vella**'s speech is available [online](#) and further information on [DG MARE website](#).

Agriculture: The Commission approves two new Protected Geographical Indications for Italy

The Commission has approved today the addition of two new products to the register of Protected Geographical Indications (PGIs). These are, for Italy, '[Cappellacci di zucca ferraresi](#)', fresh pasta filled with cooked butternut squash pulp, grated cheese and nutmeg produced in the Ferrare province, and '[Mortadella di Prato](#)' made of a fine mixture of pigmeat, sea salt, garlic, spices and alchermes and produced in the territory of the municipality of Prato and the municipalities of Agliana, Quarrata and Montale in the Province of Pistoia. These two denominations will be added to the list of over 1,300 products already protected. More information: webpages on [quality products](#) and [DOOR database](#) of protected products.

Commission welcomes landmark deal on CO2 standards for aircrafts

The Commission welcomes the agreement reached yesterday within the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) on the first ever-global standard to cap CO2 emissions from aircraft. Over the period until 2040, this standard could help save up to 650 million tonnes of CO2. EU Commissioner for Transport Violeta **Bulc** said, *"This agreement is an important step to curb aviation emissions. An ambitious climate policy is an integral part of the Commission's plan to create an Energy Union, and a priority of the new Aviation Strategy. The EU played a central role in brokering this deal, as it did at the COP21 in Paris. I hope this will create further momentum for the creation of a Global Market-Based Measure to offset CO2 emissions from international aviation, which we hope to achieve this autumn at the ICAO General Assembly."* Meeting in Montreal, the ICAO's Committee on Aviation and Environmental Protection (CAEP) agreed on a CO2 standard, which will guide the certification of aircraft towards greater fuel-efficiency. The stringency and the applicability dates, which the CO2 standard imposes, will depend on the weight of the aircraft and whether it concerns a "new type" aircraft or an "in-production" aircraft. Yesterday's agreement concludes six years of international negotiations. It will be brought before the 39th ICAO Assembly in September for political endorsement, and is expected to be formally adopted by the ICAO Council in early 2017. More details can be found [here](#).

New safety features to protect EU citizens from falsified medicines

Safety for medicines will be further reinforced with the introduction of new obligatory features like a unique identifier and an anti-tampering device. Such safety features will protect European citizens against the health threat of falsified medicines, which may contain ingredients, including active ingredients of low quality or in the wrong dosage. The safety features will guarantee medicine authenticity for the benefit of patients and businesses, and will strengthen the security of the medicine supply chain - from manufacturers to distributors to pharmacies and hospitals. The act in question, published today in the [Official Journal](#), supplements the [Falsified Medicines Directive \(2011/62/EU\)](#), which aims to prevent falsified medicines to reach patients, to allow EU citizens to buy medicines online through verified sources, and to ensure that only high quality ingredients are used for medicines in the EU. The delegated Regulation will enter into force three years after publication. For more information see [here](#).

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of joint control of Hydro Dolomiti Enel by Macquarie European Infrastructure Fund and Dolomiti Energia

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of joint control over Hydro Dolomiti Enel by Macquarie European Infrastructure Fund (“MEIF4”) and Dolomiti Energia. MEIF4 is active, through its portfolio company Renvico, in the generation and wholesale supply of electricity in Central-Southern Italy. Dolomiti Energia operates mainly in Northern Italy in several areas, including generation and supply of electricity and heat, distribution of electricity and methane gas, water services and collection and disposal of municipal waste. Hydro Dolomiti Enel is active in the generation and wholesale supply of electricity with a portfolio of hydro plants located in Northern Italy. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition will raise no competition concerns, because the companies have a limited position on the markets where their activities overlap. The market share increment brought about by the transaction is therefore small and will not significantly alter the market structure. The transaction was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.7869](#).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ljubljana becomes European Green Capital 2016

Today, European Commissioner for the Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Karmenu **Vella**, will officially hand over the title of European Green Capital for 2016 from Bristol to Ljubljana. The [European Green Capital Award](#) rewards EU cities' efforts and commitment to improving the urban environment, boosting awareness of the need for environmental change at the city level. As European Green Capital 2016, Ljubljana will act as ambassador for sustainable urban development, sharing and promoting best practices that have been tried and tested in the Slovenian capital. The Commission is also developing a new voluntary tool which any city can use to benchmark and monitor its environmental performance, based on the 12 criteria used to select Green Capitals. The aim is to invite all European cities to improve their urban environment and quality of life. The tool is expected to be launched in June. More information on [DG Environment website](#).

Commissioner Navracsics kicks off debate-series for young people to express their views on the future of Europe

What is the way forward for Europe? This question will be the main focus of a series of debates involving European citizens – and in particular young people - due to take place across the EU throughout 2016. At the first such event today, Tibor **Navracsics**, the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, will launch this second phase of the 'New Narrative for Europe' project. This project was originally initiated by the European Parliament and developed under the previous Commission, culminating in [a declaration](#). The 'New Narrative for Europe' project aims to help bring Europe closer to its citizens, and to revive a "European spirit" based on the core values of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, and respect for human rights. The programme of the Brussels launch event is available [here](#).

Commission and International Maritime Organisation to work together for safer and greener shipping

Today EU Commissioner for Transport Violeta **Bulc** received Mr Kitack Lim, newly appointed Secretary General of the International Maritime Organization (IMO). The Commission and the IMO share the commitment to a safe and secure shipping sector. Today's meeting offered the first opportunity for both parties to exchange views on some priority files, such as the decarbonisation of maritime transport. Building on the momentum of the COP21 agreement in Paris, the Commission is advocating ambitious global measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from shipping. In 2016, the Commission will work towards the adoption at IMO level of a mandatory system to globally collect and report emissions from ships. Other matters on today's agenda were passenger ships safety and trade facilitation, where the Commission intends to work together with IMO to promote quality shipping and unlock the full potential of maritime transport.

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