New record in EU agri-food exports in September 2016

The monthly value of EU agri-food exports in September 2016 reached a record value of almost €11.5 billion exceeding the export values in September of previous years by about €500 million. Highest increases in monthly export values (September 2016 compared to September 2015) were recorded for the USA and Japan. Agri-food exports to other Asian countries also increased notably (South Korea, Vietnam, India, Hong Kong). Analysing the EU export performance over the last 12 months per product category, export values increased in particular for pig meat (€+1.2 billion; +31% compared to export values in the 12-months period one year ago), fresh vegetables (€+480 million; +18%), meat offal, other meat and fat, olive oil, food preparations and live animals. However, exports of milk powders lost most in export values in the last 12 months. The full report with the latest figures is online.

EUROSTAT: Euro area international trade in goods surplus €26.5 billion

The first estimate for euro area (EA19) exports of goods to the rest of the world in September 2016 was €176.7 billion, an increase of 2% compared with September 2015 (€173.2 bn). Imports from the rest of the world stood at €150.2 bn, a fall of 2% compared with September 2015 (€154.0 bn). As a result, the euro area recorded a €26.5 bn surplus in trade in goods with the rest of the world in September 2016, compared with +€19.2 bn in September 2015. Intra-euro area trade remained nearly stable at €148.3 bn in September 2016, compared with September 2015. A press release is available here.

Deep-sea fishing opportunities: unanimous agreement by Ministers on quotas for the next two years

The EU fisheries ministers have agreed on fishing limits (or Total Allowable Catches) for 19 deep-sea stocks for 2017 and 2018. It is the first time in six years that a unanimous agreement was reached on deep sea quotas. One of the TACs agreed, the roundnose grenadier in Northern areas, will be fished for the very first time in accordance with Maximum Sustainable Yield levels, i.e. levels that allow the fishing industry to take the highest amount of fish from the sea, while keeping fish stocks healthy. Deep sea fish are by nature special and vulnerable species. They grow slowly and can reproduce only as of 20 or 30 years of age. Therefore long-term sustainable management is necessary for these stocks. Furthermore, a new element in yesterday’s agreement is the addition 3 small, scientific TACs for deep-sea sharks. Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Karmenu Vella welcomed the outcome and its implications for deep-sea stocks: "For the first time we will have one deep-sea stock fished at MSY in 2017, which is good progress. For those stocks for which scientists are unable to give us MSY advice, our
comp rise recognises that we need to manage these sensitive stocks with caution, as we know little about them and as they recover very slowly. Combined with all this, the new element on sharks makes me feel confident that we have taken another important step for both our stocks and our fishermen”. A Press release and details of the outcome are available online.

**Green light to 8 new initiatives to strengthen the EU's external action**

Today the European Commission has approved eight new projects totalling more than €32 million under the Partnership Instrument (PI) to boost cooperation with partner countries in priority areas. These actions will support the European Union’s strategic objectives in external relations through enhancing partnerships with third countries worldwide. The latest package of actions cover a range of policy areas, including the external dimension of the EU's digital single market strategy, the greening of economies and sustainable environmental practices, from China, to the Arctic and the Gulf countries; fighting illegal wildlife trafficking; civil aviation; and reinforcing policy dialogues with key partner countries. A full press release, in all EU languages, is available online. For more information, visit the websites of the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments and of the Partnership Instrument.

**Independent evaluation of the Investment Plan reinforces proposal for extension**

The European Commission welcomes the independent evaluation of the Investment Plan for Europe published by EY. The report strengthens the case for reinforcing, extending and expanding the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the heart of the Investment Plan for Europe. The Commission proposed this extension on 14 September in the context of President Juncker's State of the Union Address in order to build on the achievements already delivered in strengthening Europe's competitiveness and stimulating investment in order to create jobs. The report confirms that the EFSI mechanism works to mobilise additional investments in the real economy: EFSI allows the European Investment Bank (EIB) to take on more risk; the EU budget guarantee functions well; SME financing under the EFSI has been a great success; and there is a clear need for technical assistance to strengthen the stable pipeline of projects in Europe. Vice-President Jyrki Katainen, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, said: "Today's report endorses the direction of travel in which we are taking the Investment Plan. We will take all this feedback on board and we will continue to work closely with our partners at the European Investment Bank to take the Plan to its next phase. Our aim under the Investment Plan has always been to bring Europeans back into jobs and to boost growth. The most recent data shows we are on the right track, and it is satisfying that independent evaluators agree with our approach." The report will feed into the legislative process for the extension of the EFSI along with the Commission's 14 September evaluation and the EIB's 6 October evaluation. For more information see here.

**EUROSTAT: GDP up by 0.3% in the euro area and by 0.4% in the EU28**

Seasonally adjusted GDP rose by 0.3% in the euro area (EA19) and by 0.4% in the EU28 during the third quarter of 2016, compared with the previous quarter, according to a flash estimate published by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. In the second quarter of 2016, GDP also grew by 0.3% and 0.4% respectively. A press release is available here.
ANNOUNCEMENTS

Vice-President Šefčovič speaks at meeting of National Parliaments

Today in Bratislava, Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič takes part in a meeting of the Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs of Parliaments of the EU (COSAC), hosted by the Slovak Council Presidency. Vice-President Šefčovič delivers a keynote speech on "2016: Energy Union's year of delivery" during the first session of today's conference. More information is available on the COSAC website here.

Commissioner Jourová visits Slovenia to discuss the European Public Prosecutor

Commissioner Jourová is in Ljubljana to make progress on the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO), one of her priority files. She will present the current state of play of the Regulation to the Minister of Justice, Goran Klemenčič. With the Minister of Finance, Mateja Vraničar Erman, she will discuss the importance of including VAT fraud, as a competence of the European Public Prosecutor. She will cover how this new body will work in practice with State Prosecutor General Fišer. Commissioner Jourová spoke this morning in the Slovenian National Assembly to the Justice and EU Affairs Committee, where she said: "I am deeply convinced that the EPPO will bring more justice to Europe and will equip us better to tackle big cross border VAT fraud. I know that the Slovenian judicial and law enforcement authorities work well. They investigate and prosecute cases of fraud very actively. But their area of activity is Slovenia and not the EU. The crime we are talking about here is spread all over the EU. This is a European, not a national problem. This is why we need a European solution by joining our efforts." The European Public Prosecutor Regulation is currently in its final stages in the Council of Member States and the Slovak Presidency aims to come to a political agreement by the end of 2016. This would allow the formal adoption of the Regulation in the first half of next year, so that it can take up its functions as of 2019.

MEX/16/3725

Find out here what will be discussed next week in the European Commission, the European Council and the European Parliament.