



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



8908/11

**PROVISIONAL VERSION**

PRESSE 103  
PR CO 24

## **PRESS RELEASE**

3084th Council meeting

### **Agriculture and Fisheries**

Luxembourg, 14 April 2011

President            **Mr Sándor FAZEKAS,**  
Minister for Rural Development of Hungary

# **P R E S S**

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## **Main results of the Council**

*Concerning Fisheries, the ministers had an exchange of views on the **review of fishing effort management in western waters**.*

*As regards Agriculture, a proposal for renewing the **inclusion of carbendazim as active substance** was presented to the Council for adoption. No qualified majority was reached either for or against the renewal.*

*The Council had also an exchange of views on **agricultural product quality schemes**.*

*Finally, ministers were briefed on **freshwater aquaculture and inland fishery within the CFP reform, the price volatility of agricultural raw material, the state of play of the negotiations with Mercosur and the impact of CAP changes on developing countries**.*

*During lunch, ministers had a discussion on **the role of innovation in revitalising the traditional way of life in rural areas**.*

**CONTENTS<sup>1</sup>**

**PARTICIPANTS..... 5**

**ITEMS DEBATED**

*FISHERIES* ..... 7

Review of fishing effort management in western waters..... 7

*AGRICULTURE*..... 9

Carbendazim ..... 9

The quality package: agricultural product quality schemes..... 10

ANY OTHER BUSINESS..... 11

**OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**

*ENVIRONMENT*

– EU Emissions Trading System..... 14

– EU Ecolabel..... 14

– Ozone-depleting substances ..... 15

*CONSUMER PROTECTION*

– Safety requirements - Gymnastic and training equipment - Corded stores and devices..... 15

*DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION*

– Generalised tariff preferences - Extension of current scheme ..... 16

*CUSTOMS UNION*

– Euro-Mediterranean convention on preferential rules of origin \* ..... 16

<sup>1</sup> • Where declarations, conclusions or resolutions have been formally adopted by the Council, this is indicated in the heading for the item concerned and the text is placed between quotation marks.  
• Documents for which references are given in the text are available on the Council's Internet site (<http://www.consilium.europa.eu>).  
• Acts adopted with statements for the Council minutes which may be released to the public are indicated by an asterisk; these statements are available on the Council's Internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

*FOREIGN AFFAIRS*

- Association with Croatia ..... 17
- Association with Turkey..... 17

*APPOINTMENTS*

- Committee of the Regions ..... 17

**PARTICIPANTS**

**Belgium:**

Ms Sabine LARUELLE

Mr Kris PEETERS

Minister for SMEs, the Self-Employed, Agriculture and Science Policy

Minister-President of the Flemish Government and Minister for Institutional Reform, Ports, Agriculture, Sea Fisheries and Rural Policy

**Bulgaria:**

Mr Tzvetan DIMITROV

Deputy Minister for Agriculture and Food

**Czech Republic:**

Mr Ivan FUKSA

Minister for Agriculture

**Denmark:**

Mr Henrik HØEGH

Minister for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries

**Germany:**

Mr Robert KLOOS

State Secretary, Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection

**Estonia:**

Mr Gert ANTSU

Deputy Permanent Representative

**Ireland:**

Mr Simon CONVENY

Minister for Agriculture, Marine and Food

**Greece:**

Mr Ioannis KOUTSOUKOS

Mr Andreas PAPASTAVROU

Ms Georgia BAZOTI-MISONI

State Secretary for Rural Development and Food

Deputy Permanent Representative

General Secretary for Food and Agriculture

**Spain:**

Mr Josep PUXEU ROCAMORA

Mr Samuel JUAREZ CASADO

Mrs Rosa QUINTANA

State Secretary for the Rural Environment and Water

Minister for Rural Environment of the Autonomous Community of Galicia

Minister of Sea of the Autonomous Community of Galicia

**France:**

Mr Philippe LEGLISE-COSTA

Deputy Permanent Representative

**Italy**

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Minister for Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policy

**Cyprus:**

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Deputy Permanent Representative

**Latvia:**

Mr Armands KRAUZE

Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture

**Lithuania:**

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Minister for Agriculture

**Luxembourg:**

Mr Romain SCHNEIDER

Minister for Agriculture, Viticulture and Rural Development

**Hungary:**

Mr Sándor FAZEKAS

Mr György CZERVÁN

Minister for Rural Development

State Secretary, Ministry of Rural Development

**Malta:**

Mr George PULLICINO

Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs

**Netherlands:**

Mr Henk BEKER

Minister for Agriculture and Foreign Trade

**Austria:**

M. Harald Günther

Deputy Permanent Representative

**Poland:**

Mr Marek SAWICKI

Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development

**Portugal:**

Mr António SERRANO

Minister for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries

**Romania:**

Mr Valeriu TABÁRÁ

Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development

**Slovenia:**

Mr Dejan ŽIDAN

Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Food

**Slovakia:**

Mr Peter JAVORČÍK

Deputy Permanent Representative

**Finland:**

Ms Minne-Mari KAILA

State Secretary for Agriculture

**Sweden:**

Mr Eskil ERLANDSSON

Minister for Rural Affairs

**United Kingdom:**

Mr Richard BENYON

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Environment,  
Food and Rural Affairs

**Commission:**

Mr Dacian CIOLOȘ

Member

Mrs Maria DAMANAKI

Member

**ITEMS DEBATED**

**FISHERIES**

**Review of fishing effort management in western waters**

Ministers had an exchange of views on a Commission communication on the review of fishing effort management in western waters ([16257/10](#)).

Most of the delegation noted the interest of maintaining this specific fishing effort regime which they consider as a useful management instrument for the limitation of catches on sensitive areas. . They all agree that an update of the regime is needed and wait for the measures proposed by the Commission. The future Common fisheries policy (CFP) reform process offers the opportunity to make this effort regime consistent with the other measures in place.

In November 2010, the Commission presented the communication, which had as its objective to assess the western waters fishing efforts regime of 2003 under 3 aspects:

- the implementation by member states,
- the access conditions to outermost regions in the South Atlantic, and
- the effectiveness of the specific effort rule in the Biologically Sensitive Areas ("BSA").

The western waters regime was first established in 1995 with the objective to safeguard balances that existed at the time of full integration of Spain and Portugal into the common fisheries policy, and to avoid an increase in fishing effort compared to levels observed before such integration. This effort regime was updated in 2003. This update showed overall significant decreases in the allocation of maximum allowable effort to member states and was also characterised by simplification. This regime distinguishes itself from effort regimes under multi-annual management plans: the effort allocation is fixed and does not evolve year-by-year with management targets or quota allocations for underlying stocks.

The conclusions of the communication highlighted that while the 2003 effort regime has succeeded in creating the circumstances for the full integration of Spain and Portugal in the CFP, a better articulation with the long term objectives is needed. In addition, while the BSA contributed to an improved status of some stocks, there is a need to further improve the link between future restrictions and resource management objectives.

The Commission indicated the need to conduct the revision of the 2003 effort regime in parallel with the ongoing reform of the CFP. With this idea in mind, a roadmap will be presented in the spring of 2011 in order to highlight the priorities to be addressed in the near future.



**AGRICULTURE**

**Carbendazim**

Proposal for a directive amending Directive 91/414 to renew the inclusion of carbendazim as active substance has been presented to the Council for adoption. No agreement was reached either in favour of or against this renewal.

Active substances to be used as plant protection products are assessed and authorised at EU level and are listed in Annex I to Directive 91/414 creating an harmonised framework for the authorisation and placing on the market of these substances. Under the current provisions, it is still possible to include in Annex I a hazardous substance providing that the exposure is restricted to acceptable levels.

Carbendazim is a controversial fungicide, due to its intrinsic toxicological properties. Therefore, the initial inclusion was highly restrictive and limited in time. However, once the new pesticides regulation (i.e. regulation 1107/2009) will apply, substances of these types cannot be authorised anymore.

As the request for renewal of this substance was based on the current legislation, the data on carbendazim have been initially evaluated by a rapporteur member state (Germany), and afterwards by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). Both came to the conclusion that, as it is possible to predict acceptable uses, carbendazim may be expected to satisfy the requirements laid down in directive 91/414, provided that adequate risk mitigation measures are applied, and the current restrictive approach is maintained. For this reason, an inclusion for the concerned substance was proposed, with specific conditions of use, a close monitoring and a limitation of the validity of authorisations.

At its meeting on 23 November 2010 the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health was unable to achieve the qualified majority necessary to deliver an opinion for or against the renewal of inclusion for carbendazim. In the absence of an opinion it is to the Council to act on the Commission proposal within a three month period.

Today, the Council noted that there was not a qualified majority either in favour of or against the following the proposals for renewing the inclusion of carbendazim in the Annex I of directive 91/414. The Council having concluded its proceedings on this issue, the Commission is now entitled to finalise the decision-making procedure in respect of this proposal.

**The quality package: agricultural product quality schemes**

The Council had an exchange of views on a proposal for a regulation on agricultural product quality schemes ([17672/10](#))

Delegations generally welcomed the Presidency views on a 'local farming and direct sales' scheme because of the development of this particular sector and the consumer demand. However some member states feared that this scheme could constitute an administrative burden and insist on keeping the simplification of the CAP legislation in mind. In addition, many member states do not want a European scheme on this issue to interfere with national measures already in place.

Most of delegation are in favour of rules for products of mountain farming supported by the "quality package" but insist on the definition and the criteria for this production. Some delegations mentioned the possibility to develop rules for agricultural products coming from very specific areas.

For both issues, a lot of member states wait for the impact assessments scheduled by the Commission to define better their views.

In December 2010, the Council was briefed by the Commission on a "quality package" consisting of two texts:

- a proposal for a regulation on agricultural product quality schemes ([17672/10](#)); and
- a proposal amending regulation No1234/2007 "Single CMO" ([17677/10](#)).

On the basis of the Council conclusions of 22-23 June 2009 on agricultural product quality ([10722/09](#)), the Commission prepared the "quality package", which consists of a set of proposals designed to put in place a coherent agricultural product quality policy aimed at assisting farmers to better communicate the qualities, characteristics and attributes of agricultural products to consumers.

This proposal provides for clarification and simplification of the current procedures for the quality schemes already in place. In addition, the Commission proposes a reinforcement of the traditional specialities guaranteed scheme which, together with protected designations of origin and protected geographical indications, constitute the main elements of agricultural product quality policy in the EU

The Commission think that harmonised rules for direct sales and products of mountain farming would help to provide added value to these products and facilitate their recognition by the consumer.

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**Freshwater aquaculture and inland fishery**

Ministers were briefed by the Czech delegation on a declaration also supported by Austria, Hungary, Luxembourg and Slovakia concerning the future role of freshwater aquaculture and inland fishery within the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) reform ([8081/11](#)).

A majority of member states supported the declaration highlighting the important role of aquaculture as an important complement of the fisheries activities. They are also in favour of specific measures for aquaculture. However, some delegations pointed out that this activity should stay market orientated.

In the perspective of the upcoming reform of the CFP, the landlocked countries Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Luxembourg and Slovakia drew the attention to their common priorities in relation to freshwater aquaculture and inland fisheries. In this context, a joint declaration was adopted by these six countries and was already presented to the Commission in the margins of the agriculture Council in February 2011.

This declaration highlights the potential of aquaculture and insist on the following points for the future:

- increase the share for freshwater aquaculture in the new European fishery fund;
- enhance support of applied research;
- focus on the needs of small enterprises as well as to simplify and harmonize administrative and financial measures;
- find common solutions on veterinary and disease control issues; and
- promote freshwater aquaculture products as an environmentally friendly alternative to endangered marine fisheries resources.

The declaration emphasizes the distinction between the marine and inland fishery and underlines the specific role of proper management of inland fishery resources that can support rural development and improve biodiversity of freshwaters.

The Commission agrees with the principles provided by the declaration and hope to initiate specific measures for aquaculture in the framework of the CFP reform.

### **Price volatility of agricultural raw material**

The Council was briefed by Belgium on a proposal for European mechanism allowing to cope with the current situation in the pigmeat sector, where low prices are combined with high input cost for primary producers ([8814/11](#)).

If most of the member states acknowledge the observations on the situation on the pig meat sector established by Belgium, many think, together with the Commission, that the definition of the appropriate instruments for mitigating the price volatility in the pig meat sector should be discussed within the enlarged advisory group set up by the Commission.

On 13 December 2010, Belgium presented to the Council the outcome of a reflection day on the "the pigmeat sector towards 2020". Further to this reflection day, the Commission decided to convene an enlarged advisory group on pig meat and invited agricultural non governmental organisations, members of the advisory group on pig meat, to three meetings held jointly with representatives of members states. A last meeting will be organised on 6 May 2011 with a view to drawing conclusions on the situation of the pig meat market.

The Council has on several occasions discussed the adverse impact of price volatility on primary producers, most recently in January 2011 in the larger context of the situation on the international agricultural markets. In addition, price volatility and the functioning of the food supply chain were also major issues raised in the Presidency conclusions on the Commission communication on *the CAP towards 2020*. Furthermore, France has made commodity price volatility one of the priorities of its G20 Presidency. A G20 ministerial meeting is scheduled for 22-23 June in Paris.

### **Negotiations with Mercosur**

At the request of Ireland, the Council was briefed on the state of play of EU trade negotiations with Mercosur ([8868/11](#)).

The Irish request was largely supported by member states recalling the risks of a further opening of the European market to agricultural products from Mercosur. This could have a negative impact on several agricultural sectors including the beef sector.

An initial exchange of views on relaunching negotiations with Mercosur took place at the Agriculture Council in May 2010 and ministers were also briefed on this issue at the last meeting of the Agriculture Council. Since then, as four negotiating rounds had already taken place with the last one organised in Brussels last month, Ireland, supported by several delegations further requested the Commission to provide an outline of its views on the future prospects for these negotiations. They believe that offers should not be made until member states have had sufficient time to fully evaluate the content of the impact assessments currently being prepared within the Commission and after full debate in Council.

The Commission decided on 4 May 2010 to relaunch negotiations with Mercosur (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, with Venezuela in the process of joining). These free trade agreement negotiations began in 1995 and were suspended without agreement in October 2004. A successful EU-Mercosur agreement would need to address all aspects of the negotiations and in particular the core areas of industrial goods, services and agriculture.

The Commission confirmed that the impact assessment on these negotiations should be discussed soon in an expert working group and that the member states will be kept informed of any offer made to Mercosur on agricultural issues.

### **Impact of CAP changes on developing countries**

The Netherlands delegation briefed the Council about the impact of Common agricultural policy (CAP) changes on developing countries ([8880/11](#))

Some delegations supported the approach developed by the Netherlands which would like the consequences of the CAP changes on farmers in developing countries, to be taken into account in the impact assessment on the CAP changes scheduled by the Commission.

In its communication on *the CAP towards 2020*, the Commission stated that improved production capacity needs to respect EU commitments in international trade and Policy Coherence for Development. Recognizing the role of EU agriculture on the global markets, the Netherlands pointed out the need to closely monitor the impact CAP changes may cause in third markets.

The Commission recalled that the impact of the CAP on developing countries is far less substantial now that it has been some years ago. However, the consequences of the changes for developing countries will be analyzed within the impact assessment which will be presented by the Commission in the second part of this year together with the legislative proposals on the CAP after 2013.

**OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**

**ENVIRONMENT**

**EU Emissions Trading System**

The Council did not oppose planned restrictions of the use of international emission credits from projects involving certain industrial gases in the EU Emissions Trading System ([6650/11](#)). From 1 January 2013, the use of international credits from projects involving the destruction of trifluoromethane (HFC-23) and nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O) from adipic acid production will in principle be prohibited. The use of credits from such industrial gas projects is thought to stimulate the continued production and use of chlorodifluoromethane (HCFC-22) in registered plants. This could undermine the accelerated phase-out of this a potent ozone depleting and greenhouse gas substance, agreed in the framework of the Montreal Protocol.

**EU Ecolabel**

The Council did not oppose the proposed revised ecological criteria for the award of the EU Ecolabel to:

- Personal computers ([6829/11](#));
- Notebook computers ([6843/11](#));
- Light sources ([6964/11](#));
- Copying and graphic paper ([6965/11](#)).

The four draft Commission decisions are subject to the so-called regulatory procedure with scrutiny. This means that now that the Council has given its consent, the Commission may adopt the acts, unless the European Parliament objects.

The draft Commission regulation is subject to the so-called regulatory procedure with scrutiny. This means that now that the Council has given its consent, the Commission may adopt the regulation, unless the European Parliament objects.

## **Ozone-depleting substances**

The Council did not oppose the proposed mechanism for allocating the quotas for laboratory and analytical uses of ozone-depleting substances to producers and importers to which no production or import license was issued in the years 2007 to 2009 ([6574/11](#)).

The draft Commission regulation is subject to the so-called regulatory procedure with scrutiny. This means that now that the Council has given its consent, the Commission may adopt the regulation, unless the European Parliament objects.

## **CONSUMER PROTECTION**

### **Safety requirements - Gymnastic and training equipment - Corded stores and devices**

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption by the Commission of decisions on the safety requirements, pursuant to directive 2001/95/EC, to be met by European standards concerning:

- gymnastic equipment ([7051/11](#));
- stationary training equipment ([7324/11](#)); and
- risks posed to children by internal blinds, corded window coverings and safety devices ([7491/11](#)).

The draft decisions are subject to the regulatory procedure with scrutiny. This means that now that the Council has given its consent, the Commission may adopt them, unless the European Parliament objects.

Directive 2001/95/EC on general product safety<sup>1</sup> establishes that the specific requirements intended to ensure that products conform with the European safety standards shall be determined in accordance with the regulatory procedure with scrutiny.

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 11, 15.1.2002, p. 4.

**DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION**

**Generalised tariff preferences - Extension of current scheme**

The Council agreed on temporary extension of the validity of the current scheme of generalised tariff preferences until a new scheme enters into force ([10/11](#)).

This measure will allow the current Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP), which runs until 31 December 2011, to ensure continuity in the operation of the scheme beyond that date, until the next GSP is adopted.

Since 1971, the European Union has granted trade preferences to developing countries in the framework of its GSP. The GSP has been implemented through successive regulations with periods of application of three years at a time. The current scheme was established by regulation 732/2008 as from 1 January 2009.

**CUSTOMS UNION**

**Euro-Mediterranean convention on preferential rules of origin \***

The Council adopted a decision authorising the signature, on behalf of the EU, of the regional Convention on pan-Euro-Mediterranean preferential rules of origin ([9124/3/10](#) and [8519/11 ADD1 REV2](#)).

The decision, which was called for by the European Council on 24/25 March, aims at replacing the current pan-Euro-Mediterranean system of cumulation of origin based on individual protocols applicable between two partner countries, with a single legal instrument in the form of a regional convention on preferential rules of origin ([9429/10](#)).

*For more information see press release [9101/11](#).*



**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Association with Croatia**

The Council endorsed the position of the European Union for the 7th Stabilisation and Association Council meeting (to be held in Brussels on 19 April).

**Association with Turkey**

The Council endorsed the position of the European Union for the 49th EU-Turkey Association Council meeting to be held in Brussels on 19 April.

**APPOINTMENTS**

**Committee of the Regions**

The Council appointed Mr Artur MAS GAVARRÓ (Spain) as a member of the Committee of the Regions for the remainder of the current term of office, which runs until 25 January 2015 ([8550/11](#)).

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