



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



14446/04 (Presse 319)

PRESS RELEASE

2619th Council Meeting

Agriculture and Fisheries

Brussels, 22-23 November 2004

President

Mr Cees VEERMAN

Minister for Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality of the
Netherlands

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14446/04 (Presse 319)

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Main Results of the Council

*The Council reached a long awaited political agreement on a Regulation on the **protection of animals during transport**.*

*The Council reached political agreement on a Regulation for **deep sea species** for the acceding Member States in 2004. This agreement might facilitate the further adoption of the TACs and quotas for 2005.*

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- 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.
- The documents whose references are given in the text are available on the Council's Internet site <http://ue.eu.int>.
- 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 abovementioned Council Internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

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PARTICIPANTS

The Governments of the Member States and the European Commission were represented as follows:

Belgium:

Ms Sabine LARUELLE

Minister for Small and Medium-sized Businesses, the Liberal Professions and the Self-Employed and Agriculture

Mr Yves LETERME

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

Mr Benoît LUTGEN

Minister of the Walloon Government for Agriculture, Rurality, Environment and Tourism

Czech Republic:

Mr Miroslav TOMAN

First Deputy Minister for Agriculture, State Secretary

Denmark:

Mr Hans Christian SCHMIDT

Minister for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries

Ms Lene ESPERSEN

Minister for Justice

Germany:

Ms Renate KÜNST

Federal Minister for Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture

Estonia:

Ms Ester TUIKSOO

Minister for Agriculture

Greece:

Mr Evangelos BASIAKOS

Minister for Rural Development and Food

Spain:

Ms Elena ESPINOSA MANGANA

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

France:

Mr Hervé GAYMARD

Minister for Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and Rural Affairs

Ireland:

Ms Mary COUGHLAN

Minister for Agriculture and Food

Italy:

Mr Giovanni ALEMANNI

Minister for Agricultural and Forestry Policy

Cyprus:

Mr Efthymios EFTHYMIOU

Minister for Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment

Latvia:

Mr Mārtiņš ROZE

Minister for Agriculture

Lithuania:

Mr Jeronimas KRAUJELIS

Minister for Agriculture

Luxembourg:

Mr Fernand BODEN

Minister for Agriculture, Viticulture and Rural Development, Minister for Small and Medium-sized Businesses, the Liberal Professions and the Self-Employed, Tourism and Housing

Hungary:

Mr Imre NÉMETH

Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development

Malta:

Mr Francis AGIUS

Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture and Fisheries, Ministry of Rural Affairs and the Environment

Netherlands:

Mr Cornelis Pieter VEERMAN

Minister for Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality

Austria:

Mr Josef PRÖLL

Federal Minister for Agriculture, Forestry, the
Environment and Water Management**Poland:**

Mr Wojciech OLEJNICZAK

Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development

Portugal:

Mr Carlos COSTA NEVES

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Slovenia:

Mr Milan POGAČNIK

Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Food

Slovakia:

Mr Zsolt SIMON

Minister for Agriculture

Finland:

Mr Juha KORKEAOJA

Minister for Agriculture and Forestry

Sweden:

Ms Ann-Christin NYKVIST

Minister for Agriculture

United Kingdom:

Ms Margaret BECKETT

Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural
Affairs**Commission:**

Ms Mariann FISCHER BOEL

Member

Mr Janez POTOČNIK

Member

Mr Markos KYPRIANOU

Member

Mr Joe BORG

Member

ITEMS DEBATED

AGRICULTURE

– *Animal welfare during transport*

The Council reached political agreement by qualified majority on a Regulation on the protection of animals during transport, as set out in document *14305/04* amended during the meeting on the basis of a compromise drawn up by the Presidency, which the Commission could endorse. The Danish delegation indicated it would vote against, while the Belgian, German, Luxembourg and Swedish delegations indicated their intention to abstain. The Regulation will be adopted as an "A"-item by the Council at a forthcoming meeting.

Most of the amendments adopted by the European Parliament and accepted by the Commission have been inserted into the Regulation.

The two changes made during the meeting to the abovementioned document are as follows:

- as regards the revision clause (Article 32), additional sentences have been added in order to take into account the Commission's report, the socio-economic implications of this Regulation, the implementation of the satellite navigation system and scientific evidence on welfare needs of animals;
- concerning the case of farmers transporting their own animals from farm to farm or for sale on a market (Article 6(7)): the administrative requirements will not be applied for this category of transporters transporting animals up to a maximum distance of 65 km (instead of 50 km) counted from the place of departure to the place of destination.

– *Cooperation in the field of agriculture-related research*

The Council discussed the Presidency conclusions on its report "Towards cooperation between research funders and programme managers in the domain of Agriculture, Food, Rural Development and Fisheries in the European Union", which received broad support.

The Presidency took note of the readiness of the Commission to organise a high-level meeting on the basis of the Standing Committee for Agricultural Research (SCAR) platform under the Luxembourg Presidency in February 2005. The Presidency conclusions stressed the need for strengthened cooperation between Ministries of Agriculture and Ministries for Research, and noted the existence of a common desire for Member States to develop common approaches.

The Slovak, German, Slovenian, United Kingdom, Greek and Luxembourg delegations welcomed the Presidency's initiative.

Commissioner Potočnik, responsible for science and research, noted the increasing expectations of consumer as regards food quality and sustainable agriculture. He warmly welcomed the initiative of the Presidency to launch a survey on the current and future projects on agriculture-related research. He indicated that a high-level meeting would take place in February 2005, enabling Member States to discuss themes for cooperation within the Standing Committee for Agricultural Research (SCAR). With that in mind, Member States would have to nominate two experts to attend this meeting. He stressed that the sixth framework programme had been used as an implementing tool with the funding of agricultural and aquacultural projects. He expressed his hopes to present in early 2005 new proposals included in the new seventh framework programme.

Commissioner Fischer Boel supported the goal of a competitive and sustainable agricultural sector, stressing that research was a priority of the Lisbon agenda.

– *Sugar reform*

The Council completed its thorough examination of the Commission's communication on the sugar sector reform. The Council and the Commission noted the range of views expressed by delegations at this stage of the process. The Commission, having heard today's debate, as well as the debates that preceded at previous meetings, will now prepare its legislative proposal.

With regard to the questionnaire (14631/04), the Presidency concluded:

- concerning the need for reform: all delegations agreed that the status quo existing in the common market organisation for sugar was not sustainable;
- concerning the external aspects of the sugar dossier: a large majority of delegations underlined the need to explore further contacts with ACP countries and LDCs and to clarify the pending WTO issues;
- concerning the envisaged schedule: a legislative proposal is unlikely to be presented before May 2005 with the result that the communication's deadline for implementing the reform (June 2005) would be delayed;
- that the competitive position of the EU sugar sector needed to be strengthened.

– *Rural development/CAP financing*

The Council held a policy debate on the proposals for Regulations on support for rural development from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and CAP financing.

On the basis of a questionnaire drawn up by the Presidency (14876/04), the Council confirmed the remit given to the Special Committee on Agriculture with a view to continuing the work that should lead to the adoption by the Council of these two Regulations at one of its forthcoming meetings.

The Presidency noted that the decision-making process on this dossier was still at an early stage as the opinion of the European Parliament had not yet been given.

In general, Member States could agree with the general objectives of the European rural development policy and the general structure of the rural development Regulation. Nonetheless, a majority of delegations expressed their concern as regards the minimum Community spending rates for each of the three priority axes (15%, 25% and 15%) and for the LEADER axis (7%), and the need for greater flexibility. Several delegations also opposed the envisaged level of the reserve for the LEADER axis.

Commissioner Fischer Boel pointed out that this dossier would be at the top of her agenda for the next five years and stressed the need for political agreement to be reached during the first half of 2005. She underlined that the draft Regulation on CAP financing was mainly intended to clarify and simplify the existing financing rules.

FISHERIES– *EC/NORWAY bilateral agreement*

The Council held an exchange of views on the EC/Norway bilateral agreement. On this occasion, the Council noted that political agreement on a "cohesion" code for 2005 had been reached, involving transfers from the EC to Norway of ling and tusk (deep sea species) to make up for a reduction in transfers of Greenland halibut in Community waters and capelin in Greenland waters.

The Council was informed by Commissioner Borg, responsible for fisheries and maritime affairs, of the two remaining outstanding items concerning the ongoing negotiations with Norway:

- the request by the European Community for a higher quota of anglerfish in Norwegian waters;
- a request from Norway for a higher quota of Greenland halibut in Greenland waters.

Commissioner Borg also informed the Council that the meeting with Norway would continue during this week with a view to concluding the negotiations by 2005.

Some delegations expressed their concerns with regard to the level of Greenland halibut transfers of quotas to Norway, and the transfer of anglerfish quotas to the EC. A few other delegations raised other issues concerning the evolution of the sole stocks in the North Sea and the closure of fishing areas for cod in the North Sea.

– *European Fisheries Fund*

The Council held a policy debate on the proposal for a Council Regulation on a European Fisheries Fund, on the basis of a questionnaire (14127/04) drawn up by the Presidency, and invited Coreper to continue discussions on this proposal.

Nearly all the delegations took the floor to answer the five questions in the questionnaire.

- In general, the principles laid down in the proposal were accepted by a vast majority of Member States, including the five priority axis proposed for the 2007-2013 period.
- Several delegations supported the principles of the CFP reform of December 2002, whereby the Council decided to end subsidies for renewal of fishing vessels and to limit aid for their modernisation to works aimed at improving safety, hygiene and working conditions on board and did not concern fishing capacities. However, other delegations asked for the reintroduction of the aid for renewal and/or modernisation, in particular taking into account specific circumstances such as the situation of outermost regions and small-scale fisheries. Some delegations also insisted on the need to maintain a premium for young fishermen.
- As regards the two-year limit for the implementation of national plans for the adjustment of fishing effort, several delegations asked for a longer period of time. Some delegations also questioned the mandatory nature of the socio-economic measures proposed.
- Several delegations requested that explicit reference be made to inland fisheries support in the proposal, as it is currently dealt with within FIFG.
- A number of delegations also requested extension of the aid to aquaculture and processing sectors to medium-sized enterprises and processing businesses.
- Finally, a large number of delegations asked for increased flexibility and subsidiarity in the setting of criteria for the eligibility of fishing coastal areas.

Commissioner Borg noted the broad support expressed by delegations for the Commission proposal, and said he looked for bilateral meetings to be held with delegations in order to go into the proposal in further detail.

– *Deep sea species for new Member States*

The Council reached political agreement by a qualified majority on a Regulation concerning fishing opportunities for deep sea species for the Member States which acceded in 2004, on the basis of a compromise drawn up by the Presidency (14907/04), as amended during the meeting. The delegations of Estonia, Poland, Latvia and the United Kingdom indicated their intention to abstain. The Council instructed Coreper to finalise the legal and technical aspects with a view to adoption as an "A" item at a forthcoming meeting of the Council.

Amendments made to the compromise were as follows:

- a joint statement was added referring to the exceptional nature of the reference period used for 2004;
- figures concerning Estonia, Poland, Lithuania and Latvia were changed as regards black scabbardfish, roundnose grenadier and blue ling in Annex 1 to Regulation (EC) No 2340/2002.

– *Management of fisheries in the Baltic Sea*

The Council held an exchange of views on the management of fisheries in the Baltic Sea on the basis of a questionnaire drawn up by the Presidency (14904/04).

OTHER BUSINESS***– Situation in the area of phytosanitary control in relation to Russia***

The Council took note of information provided by the Estonian delegation concerning a ban imposed by the Russian Federation on plant products exported from Estonia since August 2004 (14824/04).

Commissioner Kyprianou reminded the Council that other Member States had recently faced similar problems with exports of animal products. He emphasised that export certificates depended on the responsibility of Member States and that on the basis of a mandate, his Institution would be able to provide technical assistance. However, he mentioned that the Commission had already conducted exploratory contacts with the Russian authorities which would continue.

Estonia is one of several Member States that are currently experiencing trade disruption related to phytosanitary measures imposed by the Russian Federation, which has demanded that any problems in this area be addressed at Community level.

– The marketing of "conservation variety" seed

The German delegation, supported by the Danish delegation, drew the Council's attention to the need for EC rules allowing the use and marketing of regional plant varieties for nature conservation (14804/04). According to this delegation conservation varieties are of increasing importance for the conservation of plant genetic resources, in particular in the interests of nature preservation. The German delegation asked the Commission to report to the Council on progress with the regulations in question.

Commissioner Kyprianou indicated that a change of legislation required broad consultation of the seeds industry, the NGOs and other stakeholders. He mentioned that a draft legislation on the marketing of seeds was a high priority for 2005, as well as appropriate measures to be taken in order to tackle this issue.

– ***Bluetongue : Association Agreement with Morocco***

The Council took note of information provided by the Spanish delegation, supported by the Portuguese delegation, on the need to conclude the association agreement with Morocco so that Community funds could be allocated to co-finance within the Community budget actions aimed at surveying and combating animal diseases, especially Bluetongue (14875/04).

Commissioner Kyprianou agreed on the need to take further action at Community level, but also with Mediterranean neighbouring countries in order to solve this problem. He noted that a similar approach should be carried out with rabies. Together with Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner, responsible for external relations and European neighbourhood policy, he would seek approval of the action plan by the Commission before submitting it to the Council. In that framework, he indicated that he could support specific action and that he would report to the Council on the progress made by the Moroccan authorities.

– ***Damage caused by the weather in the Slovak Republic***

The Council took note of a request for financial support by the Slovak delegation, after a storm had struck the most famous national park in the country last week. Damage caused by the weather included, according to the evaluation made by the Slovak delegation, the destruction of 12 000 hectares of forest and more than 2,5 million m³ of wood. This major disaster might have important repercussions on tourism and on the regional economy of the country.

Commissioner Fischer Boel took note of the information provided by the Slovak delegation. She indicated that the EU solidarity fund could be used very rapidly for concrete measures once the Slovak delegation had sent a detailed request with an assessment of the damage, and invited this delegation to submit its request so that her Institution could examine it as soon as possible. She also mentioned a possible financial contribution from the EAGGF in the long term.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

AGRICULTURE

Prolongation of the International Agreement on Olive Oil and Table Olives

The Council adopted a Decision establishing the Community position with respect to the prolongation of the International Agreement on Olive Oil and Table Olives (IOOC) (13536/04).

The purpose of this Decision is to authorise the Commission, on behalf of the Community, to either vote in favour of prolongation of the Agreement until 31 December 2005, if IOOC Members achieve consensus on improving the functioning of the IOOC Secretariat, or to reject further extensions of the current Agreement, pending the results of the ongoing negotiations on both a new Agreement and a package of management measures proposed by the European Community. The Commission expressed the intention to come down in favour of extension of the Agreement, taking into account the positive results achieved by the IOOC in its internal reform.

The main objectives of the Agreement, signed in 1986, are:

- to promote international cooperation in the field of olive oil and table olives;
- to promote consumption of olive products in third countries;
- to harmonise quality standards for olive products.

Argentinean wines

The Council adopted a Regulation authorising imports of wines from Argentina, which may have undergone oenological processes, not provided for in Regulation (EC) No 1493/99 on the common organisation of the market in wine (13554/04).

The Regulation extends until 30 September 2005 the derogation granted for imports of wines for human consumption produced in Argentina by oenological processes not authorised within the EU. It concerns, in particular, the addition of malic acid to wines, an acid extracted from apples or synthetic acid in order to correct acidity, which is a practice authorised in Argentina but prohibited in EU-produced wines.

Negotiations with this country are currently underway with a view to concluding a long-term agreement on trade in wine, which includes mutual recognition of the respective oenological processes.

Fruit and vegetables - Presidency conclusions

The Council took note of the Presidency conclusions on the simplification of the common market organization in fruits and vegetables (*14788/04*).

The conclusions refer to possible adjustments in the common market organization (CMO) in fruit and vegetables in order to make it more market-oriented and to adapt it to the enlarged Union. These adjustments focus on producer organizations, market crisis, the opening of the CMO to additional products, simplification of operational funds and the promotion of consumption of fruits and vegetables.

Promotion of agricultural products

The Council adopted a Regulation aimed at improving the system of information and promotion actions for agricultural products within the Community and in third countries (*13624/04*).

The Regulation amends Regulations 2826/00 and 2702/99, concerning measures on information and promotion actions for agricultural products in the internal market and third countries, respectively. It will apply from 1 January 2005.

EC/Switzerland - Agricultural products

The Council adopted unanimously, by means of a Decision, a Community position on the amendment of Annex 11 to the Agreement between the European Community and the Swiss Confederation on trade in agricultural products (*14063/04*).

This amendment introduces a change following a decision of the Joint Veterinary Committee set up by the Agreement.

The Agricultural Agreement with Switzerland entered into force in June 2002.

FISHERIES**EEC/Comoros Agreement**

The Council adopted a Decision on the fishing protocol setting out the fishing opportunities and financial contribution provided for in the Agreement between the European Economic Community and the Comoros on fishing off the Comoros for the period from 28 February 2004 to 31 December 2004 (10 months) (13981/04).

The fishing opportunities, expressed in numbers of vessels (tuna seiners and surface longliners), provided for in the protocol concern Spain, France, Italy and Portugal. The financial contribution for the abovementioned period is fixed at EUR 291 875.

ENVIRONMENT**Ozone layer – Negotiations on the Montreal Protocol**

The Council adopted a Decision authorising the Commission to negotiate adjustments and amendments to the Montreal Protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer (14888/04).

Negotiations will take place in Prague from 22 to 26 November 2004.

The Montreal Protocol was adopted under the Vienna Convention for the protection of the ozone layer. <http://www.unepie.org/ozonaction/compliance/>
