



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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Agriculture and Fisheries

(Agriculture items only)

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President **Mr Cees VEERMAN**
Minister for Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality of the
Netherlands

P R E S S

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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.***

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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 Wallon Government for Agriculture and Rural Areas

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

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 they 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 session.

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

The two changes brought during the meeting to the above-mentioned document are as follows:

- as regards the revision clause (Article 32) additional sentences have been added in order to take into account in the report of the Commission, 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 has 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 have received a broad support.

The Presidency took note of the readiness from 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 initiative of the Presidency.

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 will take place in February 2005 enabling Member States to discuss themes for cooperation within the Standing Committee for Agricultural Research (SCAR). In that perspective Member States will 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 has completed its thorough examination of the Commission's Communication on the sugar sector reform. The Council and the Commission have noted the range of views expressed by delegations at this stage of the process. The Commission, having heard today's debate, as well as those which have preceded it in previous sessions, will now prepare its legislative proposal.

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

- concerning the need for a reform: all delegations agreed that the existing status quo 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 might not be issued before May 2005 which would lead to the implementation of the reform at a later stage than initially envisaged;
- that the competitive position of the EU sugar sector needed to be strengthened.

– ***Rural development/CAP financing***

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 the CAP financing.

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

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 been given yet.

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 concerns as regards the minimum community spending rates for each of the three priorities 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 on top her agenda for the next five years and stressed the need for a political agreement to be reached during the first semester 2005. She underlined that the draft Regulation on CAP financing mostly intended to clarify and simplify the existing financing rules.

OTHER BUSINESS

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

The Council took note of an 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 recently faced similar problems on the exports of animal products. He underlined that export certificates depend 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 already made exploratory contacts with the Russian authorities which will 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 the Community level.

– ***The marketing of "conservation variety" seed***

The German delegation, supported by the Danish delegation drew the attention of the Council on the need of EC rules allowing the use and the 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 on the regulations in question.

Commissioner Kyprianou indicated that a change of the legislation required a 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 an information provided by the Spanish delegation, supported by the Portuguese delegation, on the need to conclude the association agreement with Morocco so that the Community funds could be allocated to co-finance within the Community budget actions aiming at surveying and fighting against 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 for the 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.

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

The Council took note of a request for financial support of the Slovak delegation, after a storm struck the most famous national park of the country last week. Damages caused by the weather include, according to the evaluation made by the Slovak delegation, the destruction of 12000 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 this 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 will have sent a detailed request with an assessment of the damages and invited this delegation to submit its request so that her Institution could examine it as soon as possible. She also mentioned the possible financial contribution of 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 the 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 the extension of the Agreement, taking into account the positive reforms 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 the EC Regulation 1493/99 on Common Market Organisation of wines (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 include the 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 fruit 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 aiming 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 for agricultural products in, respectively, the internal market and third countries. 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 the 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

Agreement EEC/Comoros

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 Comoro Islands on fishing in Comoro waters for the period from 28 February 2004 to 31 December 2004 (10 months) (13981/04).

The fishing opportunities, expressed in number of vessels (tuna seiners and surface longliners), provided for in the protocol concern Spain, France, Italy and Portugal. The financial contribution for the above mentioned 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 Protocol of Montreal was adopted under the Vienna Convention for the protection of the ozone layer.
