



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



5323/06 (Presse 7)

## **PRESS RELEASE**

2703rd Council Meeting

### **Agriculture and Fisheries**

Brussels, 23 January 2006

President

**Josef PRÖLL**

Federal Minister for Agriculture, Forestry, the Environment  
and Water Management of Austria

# **P R E S S**

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5323/06 (Presse 7)

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## **Main Results of the Council**

*The Council took note of the presentation by the Commission of the Biomass action plan and held a thorough exchange of views on this issue.*

*Under A items the Council formally adopted the Regulation on accompanying measures for sugar protocol countries affected by the reform of the EU sugar regime.*

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

<b>PARTICIPANTS.....</b>	<b>5</b>
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**ITEMS DEBATED**

THE PRESIDENCY'S PROGRAMME OF WORK .....	7
BIOMASS ACTION PLAN .....	8
FOODSTUFFS QUALITY .....	10
CYPRriot NATIONAL AID .....	12
COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN ON THE PROTECTION AND WELFARE OF ANIMALS 2006-2010 .....	13
OTHER BUSINESS .....	14
– Avian Influenza .....	14
– Sugar .....	15
– Poultry meat.....	16
– Future Council proceedings.....	16

**OTHER ITEMS APPROVED***AGRICULTURE*

– Avian influenza .....	17
– ACP Sugar - Accompanying protocol* .....	17

*FISHERIES*

– EU - Seychelles Agreement.....	18
----------------------------------	----

*ENLARGEMENT*

– Turkey - Accession partnership.....	18
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- <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.
  - 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.

*EXTERNAL RELATIONS*

- Liberia - Restrictive measures ..... 19
- EU neighbourhood policy - Technical assistance and information exchange programme ..... 19
- Ivory Coast - Restrictive measures ..... 20
- Bosnia and Herzegovina - Arms control ..... 21

*TRADE POLICY*

- Antidumping measures ..... 21

*CUSTOMS UNION*

- Simplification of formalities in trade in goods ..... 22

*INSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS*

- Council rules of procedure - Weighting of votes ..... 23

*ENVIRONMENT*

- Infrastructure for spatial information in the Community\* ..... 23
- Protection of groundwater against pollution\* ..... 24

*TRANSPARENCY*

- Public access to documents ..... 24

*APPOINTMENTS*

- Court of Auditors ..... 25

## 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

### Czech Republic:

Mr Jan MLÁDEK

Minister for Agriculture

### Denmark:

Mr Hans Christian SCHMIDT

Minister for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries

### Germany:

Mr Gert LINDEMANN

State Secretary, Federal Ministry of 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 Dominique BUSSEREAU

Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries

### Ireland:

Ms Mary COUGHLAN

Minister for Agriculture and Food

Mr Brendan SMITH

Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture and Food (with special responsibility for Food and Horticulture)

### Italy:

Mr Giovanni ALEMANNI

Minister for Agricultural and Forestry Policy

### Cyprus:

Mr Timmy EFTHYMIU

Minister for Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment

### Latvia:

Mr Mārtiņš ROZE

Minister for Agriculture

### Lithuania:

Ms Kazimira Danutė PRUNSKIENE

Minister for Agriculture

### Luxembourg:

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

Ms Octavie MODERT

State Secretary for Relations with Parliament, State Secretary for Agriculture, Viticulture and Rural Development, State Secretary for Culture, Higher Education and Research

### Hungary:

Mr József GRÁF

Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development

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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  
Director-General

M. Andrä RUPPRECHTER

**Poland:**

Mr Krzysztof JURGIEL

Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development

**Portugal:**

Mr Jaime SILVA

Minister for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries

**Slovenia:**

Ms Marija LUKAČIČ

Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Food

**Slovakia:**

Mr Ján GOLIAN

State Secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture

**Finland:**

Mr Juha KORKEAOJA

Minister for Agriculture and Forestry

**Sweden:**

Ms Ingrid HJELT AF TROLLE

Deputy Permanent Representative

**United Kingdom:**

Ms Margaret BECKETT

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

Ms Mariann FISCHER BOEL

Member

Mr Andris PIEBALGS

Member

Mr Markos KYPRIANOU

Member

The Governments of the Acceding States were represented as follows:

**Bulgaria:**

Mr Nihat KABIL

Minister for Agriculture and Forestry

**Romania:**

Mr Mugur CRACIUN

Secretary of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Forests and  
Rural Development

## **ITEMS DEBATED**

### **THE PRESIDENCY'S PROGRAMME OF WORK**

Mr Josef Pröll, President of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council, gave an brief overview of the working programme and the issues to be debated during Austria's Presidency<sup>1</sup>.

He mentioned, among the main priorities, the need to consolidate the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) under the financial framework for the period 2007-2013 recently agreed on at the European Council on 15-17 December 2005 and the contribution of the European model of agriculture to the Lisbon Strategy. As regards the Common Market Organisations (1st pillar of the CAP), the Presidency will finalise the draft Regulation on the sugar reform as agreed under the United-Kingdom's Presidency in November 2005 so that the Council can adopt it as an "A" item - without debate - in the next few weeks.

As regards rural development, he noted that the Presidency would aim at ensuring that Member States would be able to plan and implement their national programmes in good time since agreement had been reached at Council level on the financial framework for the period 2007-2013 (EUR 69.5 billion) for the Regulation on rural development adopted in September 2005<sup>2</sup>.

The negotiations at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the follow up of the Hong-Kong Ministerial Conference and the avian influenza issue would be dealt with at all sessions of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council under Austria's Presidency.

Amongst the Presidency's top priorities would certainly be the Action Plan on Biomass (see next item), organic farming and the issue of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs), crops and products and their coexistence with conventional and organic crops, on which a conference would be organised in Vienna (4-6 April).

As regards the issues of food safety and animal health, a conference would be held at the end of March on the action plan on animal welfare presented at this Council meeting (see below).

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<sup>1</sup> For further information see the Austrian Presidency website:  
[http://www.eu2006.at/includes/Download\\_Dokumente/0512draft\\_operationalprogrammeEN.pdf](http://www.eu2006.at/includes/Download_Dokumente/0512draft_operationalprogrammeEN.pdf)  
pages 37-40

<sup>2</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 of 20 September 2005 (OJ L 277, 21 October 2005, p. 1-40).

## **BIOMASS ACTION PLAN**

The Council held a fruitful first exchange of views on the agricultural aspects of the Communication from the Commission on the biomass action plan. The presentation of the Action Plan was made by Commissioner Fisher-Boel, responsible for agriculture and rural development, and Piebalgs, responsible for the energy sector. The Council concluded that exploiting biomass offered one of the best means of reducing the Community's dependence on fossil fuels.

As soon as possible the Council would examine the Communication on Biofuels that would be presented next month by the Commission, and which complemented the Action Plan presented today. Before the end of Austria's Presidency, following preparatory work at the appropriate technical level, the Council would continue the discussion begun today.

The main items discussed at Council level can be summarised as follows:

- in general a very large number of delegations welcomed the Action Plan and acknowledged its future positive impact, particularly with regard to securing the Community supplies of renewable energy, reducing the Community's dependency on fossil energies, providing viable alternative agricultural production and rural activities for farmers, improving sustainable development and biodiversity and maintaining rural activities;
- several delegations insisted on the need to keep sufficiently high import tariffs to make the development of Community biomass production possible and to avoid excessive imports of renewable sources of energy such as bio ethanol;
- some delegations stressed the importance of using different types of bio energies, including bio products, bio plastics and animal by-products;
- some delegations expressed their concern regarding possible further certification for sustainable sources of energy, pointing out the fact that it would increase the administrative burden on operators;
- more specifically a few delegations, underlining the insufficient amount of money spent on renewable energy in agriculture, suggested an increase either of the current level of EUR 45/hectare for the "carbon credit" premium and/or an increase in the current maximum eligible area (1,5 million hectares);



Commissioner Fischer-Boel reminded delegations that cross-compliance rules were the only specific requirements to be applied and fulfilled for growing energy crops. Commissioner Piebalgs indicated that with respect to the trade agreements, a balance had to be found between EU's commitments under the World Trade Organisation agreements (WTO) and the necessary impulse to be given to the biomass sector in the Community. He confirmed that all possible sources of renewable energies would be used. It should be recalled that a first assessment of the implementation of the "carbon credit" premium - inter alia, the conditions for eligibility and its level - introduced by the CAP reform in 2003 will be carried out by the Commission at the end of the year.

The Action Plan aims at increasing the use of energy from forestry, agriculture and waste materials, in particular by introducing measures to increase the development of biomass energy from wood, wastes and agricultural crops and by creating market-based incentives for its use and removing barriers to the development of the market.

This initiative constitutes a first, coordinating step. It includes measures to promote biomass in heating, electricity and transport, and also cross-cutting measures under the Action Plan. It is accompanied by a general impact assessment.

As regards, in particular, cross-cutting measures, the Communication deals with questions relating to energy crops and measures to encourage the supply of such crops in the framework of the reformed CAP.

The Plan announces more than twenty actions; most of them will be implemented from 2006 onwards. For transport bio fuels, they include promotion of "bio fuels obligations", through which suppliers include a minimum proportion of bio fuels in the fuel they place on the market. In 2006, the Commission will produce a report on the possible revision of the bio fuels Directive.

The reformed Common Agriculture Policy introduced the "energy crop payment", under which a premium of EUR 45 per hectare is available, with a maximum guaranteed area of 1,5 million hectares as the budgetary ceiling (a total of EUR 67,5 million available), for the production of energy crops. This measure, considered as crucial by the Commission was applied to 300 000 hectares in 2004 and 500 000 hectares in 2005. The Commission representative indicated that the possibility of using set-aside land would also be considered. At present set aside is mandatory with exemptions for organic production, as well as non-food and non-feed production. Land under set-aside schemes may be subject to rotation.

## FOODSTUFFS QUALITY

The Council took note of the Commission's presentation of the four proposals on foodstuffs quality, including two proposals on organic production and amending Council Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91<sup>1</sup>, one proposal on agricultural products and foodstuffs as traditional specialities guaranteed (TSG) and replacing Council Regulation (EEC) No 2082/92, and one proposal on the protection of geographical indications (GI) and designations of origin (DO) for agricultural products and foodstuffs and replacing Council Regulation (EEC) No 2081/92<sup>2</sup> (5101/06, 5099/06 and 5098/06).

As regards the proposals on GIs, DOs and TSGs, the Council invited the Special Committee on Agriculture to continue its examination of those proposals with a view to reaching agreement at a forthcoming Council meeting, taking into account the deadline of 3 April set in the context of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) for implementation of the Panel.

As regards proposals on organic production, the Council invited the Special Committee on Agriculture to begin detailed examination of them.

The original Community legislative framework for organic production, TSGs, GIs and DOs was set up in the early nineties. In the meantime, following legislative changes, enlargement and in particular legal claims lodged by third countries (Australia and the United-States) at the World Trade Organisation as well as technical problems with implementation, the need for an overall change in those Regulations has become apparent.

Comparison of the two proposals on GIs/DOs and TSGs with Council Regulations (EEC) No 2082/92 and 2081/92, shows that the main changes are:

- the introduction of a single document (Article 5(3)(c) 5099/1/06) for applications containing the name, a brief description of the product, specific rules concerning packaging and labelling, a definition of the geographical area from which the agricultural product or foodstuff comes, and proof of the link between the product and its geographical origin; this single document aims at ensuring that key information is published officially before registration in order to allow any operator to exercise his right of objection, and the authorities to guarantee protection for the names registered in each Member State. It will also ensure greater homogeneity and equal treatment for applications; in the case of TSGs, only the restricted product specification (Article 6, 5098/06) need be transmitted to the Commission;

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<sup>1</sup> See press release:  
<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/05/1679&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=fr>

<sup>2</sup> See press release:  
<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/06/2&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=fr>

- the possibility for third countries' operators of submitting registration applications directly through the Commission (Article 5(9), 5099/1/06 and Article 7(7), 5098/06);
- to bring Community legislation into line, all provisions relating to equivalence and reciprocity for products from third countries are deleted (former Articles 12 to 12d) in order to allow all names corresponding to geographical areas in third countries to have access to the Community scheme for the protection of GIs; in the same spirit the draft proposal allows third countries as well as Member States or operators to object directly to a registration proposed by groups of producers (Article 7, 5099/1/06).

The two proposals on organic production and amending Council Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91, include new definitions and objectives which aim at avoiding misleading labelling for consumers and rules allowing a certain degree of flexibility in the production rules for Member States to take account of local climatic, development and specific production conditions. While excluding a compulsory EU logo for organic products for the time being, the proposals also provide for the use of a simple standardised text EU-ORGANIC in cases where the product does not bear the EU logo (Articles 18 and 19 of the draft). Products containing GMOs cannot be labelled as organic, except if the GMO content is due to accidental contamination and does not exceed 0,9%. The proposal also aims at developing permanent import rules based on direct access for fully compliant or equivalent products.

These four proposals are being dealt with under the advisory procedure (Article 37 of the Treaty) and therefore the Opinion of the European Parliament is not legally binding. The adoption of the EP's Opinion is scheduled on 13 March 2006 for the two proposals on GIs, DOs and TSGs. These proposals do not have a financial impact on the Community budget.

**CYPRIT NATIONAL AID**

The Council adopted a Decision authorising Cyprus to grant an exceptional EUR 39,33 million State aid to its farmers (*14543/1/05 + COR 1 +ADD 1 and 15050/05*). The Danish, Dutch, Swedish and United Kingdom delegations abstained.

At the November Council meeting on agriculture, the Cypriot delegation drew the attention of the Council and the Commission, on the basis of a document (*14543/1/05*), to the need to grant national aid of EUR 39,33 million to Cypriot farmers to enable them to repay part of the agricultural debt which they had incurred before 31 December 1998 due to exceptional circumstances before and up to that particular date. The rest of the debt would be transformed into long-term loans repayable over a period of fifteen years. It is estimated that over 15 000 farmers will be eligible under the proposed national aid scheme.

Pursuant to Article 88(2) of the Treaty, the Council has to adopt a position within three months of a Member State's application for authorisation to grant aid. If no decision has been taken within that period, the Commission will give its decision.

## **COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN ON THE PROTECTION AND WELFARE OF ANIMALS 2006-2010**

The Council took note of Commissioner Kyprianou's presentation of the Community Action Plan on the protection and welfare of animals for the period 2006-2010, and of the comments of some delegations. The Council agreed to return to this issue and consider it more thoroughly at its meeting on 20 February.

Commissioner Kyprianou indicated that the Action Plan:

- would try to upgrade animal welfare on the basis of scientific standard;
- would aim at informing citizens better;
- would support initiative on the issue of animal welfare in international fora, such as the WTO;
- would try to set indicators and benchmarks to determine the level of animal welfare;
- would encourage research in this sector.

The Swedish delegation welcomed the action plan on animal welfare, the issue of the protection of animals being very important in its country. The Italian, Spanish and Portuguese delegations expressed their concern regarding the working document annexed to the Action Plan, which was not available in all official languages.

## OTHER BUSINESS

### – *Avian Influenza*

Commissioner Kyprianou gave the Council a written update (5543/06) on the state of play regarding avian influenza.

The German delegation expressed concern regarding the illegal transport of goods and animals from risk countries and envisaged the possibility of a self-declaration form for travellers as a customs requirement when public health was at stake. The German delegation, supported by the French and Austrian delegations, also asked for a long-term viable mechanism to deal with health crisis situations and for the setting up of a veterinary-expert task force to cope rapidly and efficiently with outbreaks of avian influenza. The German delegation, supported by the Austrian delegation, also recommended closely monitoring the situation in Africa because of migratory bird flows and the lack of reliable data in that part of the world concerning the outbreak.

The Greek delegation, having said it had strengthened its veterinary staff and experts to prepare itself against any possible outbreak, called on the Commission and the Member States to step up their efforts to protect the Community from avian influenza. The Cypriot delegation expressed concern as the Turkish authorities had not responded to their initial suggestion that they send veterinary experts to Turkey in the framework of cooperation with a neighbouring country and have a mutual exchange of information. The Cypriot delegation also indicated that investigations were hard to carry out in the northern part of Cyprus.

Commissioner Kyprianou suggested the reinforced use of information leaflets to be distributed to passengers when travelling as one of the best ways of raising the public's awareness of the dangers of importing goods illegally. However, he emphasised that a declaration would not be helpful in the case of the intention to import goods illegally, but agreed to come back to this issue at Permanent Representatives Committee level. As regards a Community rapid intervention task force as suggested by some delegations, he pointed out that such a task force already operated and had offered the Community's expertise to some neighbouring third countries recently (Romania, Russia and Turkey), but agreed to strengthen the operating structure in order to save time. In that regard, he noted that it would be worth discussing the operational aspects of that task force as well as its budgetary implications for the future. Finally, he noted that the situation in Africa was being monitored closely by the Community in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Office International des Epizooties (OIE), in particular to increase surveillance programmes.

– *Sugar*

The German delegation, supported by the Austrian, Danish, French, Dutch, Belgian and Swedish delegations, drew the Council's and the Commission's attention to the need for emergency measures to stabilise the Community sugar market in order to cope with exceptional quota sugar surplus (over 2 million tonnes) (5478/06). The German delegation suggested a 10% cut in the sugar quotas for the marketing year 2006/2007, to be applied before spring, so that prices for next year's harvest would remain stable, and that it be decided on as a matter of urgency in order to give beet growers time to react accordingly. All export possibilities in accordance with the WTO Panel ruling, should also be used. The German delegation also insisted that current intervention sugar stocks should not be brought onto the sugar market for the time being.

The Italian, Portuguese and Polish delegations, stressing the fact that the newly agreed reform of the Common Market Organisation (CMO) on sugar in November 2003 might reduce their current national quotas by more than 50% in 2005, suggested that the quota cut for 2006-2007 be applied only to Member States where the national quotas would be reduced by less than 50% as a result of the planned reform. The Latvian, Finnish, Lithuanian, Hungarian and Irish delegations suggested applying a quota cut only to "B" quota sugar used for exports and eligible for export refunds, and possibly to "C" quota. The Slovenian, Spanish and Czech delegations stated their opposition to the German request.

Commissioner Fischer-Boel noted the limited possibilities for intervening to stabilise the sugar market and reduce stocks. She pointed out that the restructuring fund provided for in the sugar reform to accompany the changes in the sector would not yet be operational in early 2006. As regards the surpluses, she made it clear that withdrawal of the huge quantities - between two and three million tonnes - from the market was not an option, and that export possibilities were very much reduced owing to WTO Panel and budgetary constraints. Finally she stressed that storing the surpluses would increase the storage costs and would create more imbalance on the market. She concluded that a cut would be necessary as a temporary measure in order to relieve the pressure of stocks on the market during the transitional period between the old sugar regime and the new one and indicated that :

- a Commission communication would be published in the Official Journal at the end of January announcing a future cut in the Community quota so that beet growers could plan and organise their sowing and the subsequent harvest in good time;
- the Council Regulation on the sugar reform would then be officially adopted as an "A" item, probably at the next meeting of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council on 20 February;
- once the Council Regulation had been adopted, the management committee on sugar would propose applying a quota cut at the end of February.

– *Poultry meat*

The Italian delegation, supported by the Greek, Cypriot, Polish, French, Spanish, Maltese and Hungarian delegations, raised its concern regarding the economic impact of avian influenza on the poultry industry in the EU and asked the Commission to take appropriate emergency measures to support the businesses severely affected by the fall in prices for poultry meat (5519/06).

Commissioner Fischer-Boel reminded delegations that after a major fall in prices during the autumn of 2005, mostly owing, according to her, to the media campaign following the outbreak of avian influenza, mostly in Asia and in some east European countries, the poultry market had recovered by Christmas. She acknowledged, nevertheless, that the situation was still fragile and might deteriorate again following the media coverage of the outbreak of bird flu in Turkey. However, she stressed that the Common Market Organisation for poultry did not provide for any specific instrument other than export refunds and that her Institution did not envisage using any other method of supporting the market.

In that connection she noted that the Commission had already used that method by increasing the level of export refunds (from EUR 24/100 kilos to EUR 26/100 kilos) for whole chickens at the management committee meeting on poultry and eggs on 18 January. That EUR 2/100kilos increase followed the increase in export refunds for one-day-old chicks, chicken and turkey hatching eggs and chicken cuts in November. Finally, she suggested waiting for the positive effects of those increases on the market and reminded delegations that a Russian import quota would soon be reallocated to European operators.

– *Future Council proceedings*

The next meeting of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council will be held on Monday 20 February 2006.

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In the margins of the Council, Ministers were briefed over lunch by Commissioner Fischer-Boel on the negotiations on agriculture at the World Trade Organisation (WTO).



## **OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**

### **AGRICULTURE**

#### **Avian influenza**

The Council adopted a Decision fixing an EU financial contribution to measures for the eradication of avian influenza (5001/06).

The adoption of that Decision followed the political agreement reached by the Council on 20 December 2005 amending Decision 90/424/EEC on expenditure in the veterinary field (*see press release 15479/05*).

The decision fixes at 50% the Community co-financing rate for highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) and low pathogenic avian influenza (LPAI), for the costs incurred by the Member States in compensating livestock owners for the killing of poultry or other captive birds and for the destruction of animals or animal products, the cleaning and disinfection of holdings and equipment and the destruction of contaminated feedingstuffs and equipment where such equipment cannot be disinfected.

The Community may also reimburse 100% of vaccine costs and 50 % of the costs incurred in carrying out emergency vaccination.

Under current legislation -Decision 90/424/EEC- a Community financial contribution is granted to Member States for some of the expenditure which they may incur when eradicating HPAI.

#### **ACP Sugar - Accompanying protocol\***

The Council unanimously adopted at first reading a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing accompanying measures for sugar protocol countries affected by the reform of the EU sugar regime. This adoption took place following the opinion delivered by the European Parliament on 15 December and on the basis of a compromise text accepted by the two institutions (*PE-CONS 3673/05 and 15978/05 + ADD 1*).

The accompanying measures are part of a multi-annual adaptation strategy which pursues the objectives of enhancing the competitiveness of the sugar and cane sector, where this is a sustainable process, in particular in terms of the long-term economic viability of the sector, taking into account the situation of the different stakeholders in the chain, and promoting the economic diversification of sugar-dependent areas. In 2006 a specific assistance plan will be defined giving special attention to cost effectiveness, sustainable impact and the clear definition and monitoring of objectives and indicators of achievement.

A financial amount of EUR 40 million has been scheduled to finance measures for 2006 for the eighteen ACP Sugar Protocol countries.

## **FISHERIES**

### **EU - Seychelles Agreement**

The Council adopted a Regulation approving a protocol setting out the fishing opportunities and the financial contribution provided for in the agreement between the EU and Seychelles on fishing off Seychelles for the period from 18 January 2005 to 17 January 2011 (13539/05).

The fishing opportunities provided for in the protocol are expressed in vessel numbers (40 tuna seiners and 12 surface longliners) and concern Spain, France, Italy and Portugal.

The financial contribution is set at EUR 24 750 000 (EUR 4 125 000 to be paid annually over six years).

## **ENLARGEMENT**

### **Turkey - Accession partnership**

On the basis of the political agreement reached by the Council on 12 December 2005, the Council adopted a Decision on the principles, priorities and conditions included in the accession partnership with Turkey (15671/05).

The revised Accession Partnership is an important document focusing on Turkey's preparations for accession and adapting priorities to evolving needs. The revised Accession Partnership includes a set of priorities which relate to Turkey's capacity to meet the criteria defined by the Copenhagen European Council of 1993 and the requirements of the negotiating framework adopted by the Council on 3 October 2005. Those priorities, which concern both legislation and its implementation, have been selected on the basis that it is realistic to expect Turkey to be able to complete or take them substantially forward over the next few years. A distinction is made between short-term priorities, which it is expected can be accomplished within one or two years, and medium-term priorities, which it is expected can be accomplished within three to four years.

On 3 October, the Member States started negotiations with Turkey on its accession to the EU. The progress of the negotiations will be determined by Turkey's progress in preparing for accession, which will be measured, inter alia, against implementation of the Accession Partnership, as regularly revised.

Accession Partnerships with Turkey were adopted by the Council in 2001 and 2003. The Commission's 2004 recommendation on Turkey stressed that a revised Accession Partnership should be proposed in 2005. In December 2004, the European Council also concluded that the EU would continue to monitor the progress of political reforms closely on the basis of an Accession Partnership setting out priorities for the reform process.

Turkey is now expected to develop a plan with a timetable and specific measures to address the priorities of the Accession Partnership.

### **EXTERNAL RELATIONS**

#### **Liberia - Restrictive measures**

The Council adopted a common position renewing restrictive measures imposed against Liberia in order to implement the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1647(2005) (16076/05).

Adopted in December 2005, Resolution 1647(2005) renews the restrictive measures imposed on Liberia by UNSCR 1521(2003): for a further twelve months concerning measures on arms and travel and for a further six months for measures on diamonds and timber.

The Council adopted restrictive measures against Liberia for the first time in February 2004, in order to implement UNSCR 1521(2003).

#### **EU neighbourhood policy - Technical assistance and information exchange programme**

The Council adopted a Decision enabling countries covered by the European neighbourhood policy (ENP) and Russia to benefit from the EU's technical assistance and information exchange programme (TAIEX) (12786/06).

The purpose of the decision is to support neighbouring countries in understanding and drafting legislation relating to ENP action plans and to help them with implementation and enforcement.

The TAIEX programme provides for five main services: documentation, information and advice on legislation, workshops and seminars, study visits to the EU, expertise to advise the beneficiary countries and databases.

The ENP objective, as stated in the Commission's strategy paper adopted in May 2004, is to share the benefits of the EU's 2004 enlargement with neighbouring countries and to use some of the instruments and experience gained during the enlargement process to bring partner countries closer to the EU, with the aim of gradual economic integration and a deepening of political cooperation.

Seven ENP action plans have been adopted -with Israel, Jordan, Moldova, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Tunisia and Ukraine- and five more are under preparation, with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Georgia and Lebanon.

Russia, which is not part of the ENP, adopted with the EU road maps for the creation of four common spaces setting out objectives similar to those of the ENP.

### **Ivory Coast - Restrictive measures**

The Council adopted a common position renewing and supplementing the restrictive measures imposed against Ivory Coast by common position 2004/852/CFSP<sup>1</sup> for a further period of twelve months in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1643(2005) adopted on 15 December 2005 (*16071/05*).

The common position restricts the provision of arms and military assistance to Ivory Coast and establishes the framework for a visa ban and freeze of assets on persons constituting a threat to peace and national reconciliation.

In addition to those measures it prohibits, in accordance with UNSCR 1643 (2005), the direct or indirect import of all rough diamonds from Ivory Coast into the Community, whether or not such diamonds originated in Ivory Coast.

It is applicable from 16 December 2005.

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 368, 15.12.2004, p. 50

**Bosnia and Herzegovina - Arms control**

The Council adopted a common position lifting an arms embargo imposed in 1996 on Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to take account of the fact that that country has now adopted, and is implementing, legislation on arms trade which meets EU standards (15498/05).

**TRADE POLICY****Antidumping measures*****India - Cotton-type bed linen***

The Council adopted a Regulation amending Regulation No 74/2004 imposing a definitive countervailing duty on imports of cotton-type bed linen originating in India (15542/05).

***India - Sulphanilic acid***

The Council adopted a Regulation amending Regulation No 1338/2002 imposing a definitive countervailing duty on imports of sulphanilic acid originating in India and amending Regulation No 1339/2002 imposing a definitive anti-dumping duty on imports of sulphanilic acid originating, inter alia, in India (15887/05 + COR3).

***India - Steel ropes and cables***

The Council adopted a Regulation amending Regulation No 1858/2005 imposing a definitive anti-dumping duty on imports of steel ropes and cables originating, inter alia, in India (5046/06).

***Russia - Aluminium foil***

The Council adopted a Regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 950/2001 imposing a definitive anti-dumping duty on imports of certain aluminium foil originating, inter alia, in Russia (5202/06).

***China - Tartaric acid***

The Council adopted a Regulation imposing a definitive anti-dumping duty and collecting definitively the provisional duty imposed on imports of tartaric acid originating in China (5216/06).

***Brazil and Israel - Polyethylene terephthalate film***

On 19 January the Council adopted, by written procedure, a Regulation amending Regulations Nos 1975/2004 and 1976/2004 extending definitive anti-dumping and countervailing duties on imports of polyethylene terephthalate film originating in India, to imports of polyethylene terephthalate film consigned from Brazil and from Israel, whether declared as originating in Brazil or Israel or not (*published in Official Journal L 17 of 21.1.2006, p. 1*).

***Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Libya, Lithuania, Romania and Ukraine - Urea***

On 13 January the Council adopted, by written procedure, a Regulation amending Regulation No 92/2002 imposing definitive anti-dumping duty and collecting definitively the provisional anti-dumping duty imposed on imports of urea originating in Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Libya, Lithuania, Romania and the Ukraine (*published in Official Journal L 12 of 18.1.2006, p. 1*).

***Laos - Ring binders***

On 9 January the Council adopted, by written procedure, a Regulation extending the definitive anti-dumping duty imposed by Regulation No 2074/2004 on imports of certain ring binder mechanisms originating in China to imports of the same product consigned from Laos (*published in Official Journal L 7 of 12.1.2006*).

**CUSTOMS UNION****Simplification of formalities in trade in goods**

The Council approved a position to be adopted by the Community within the EC-EFTA Joint Committee on a decision to amend the Convention on simplification of formalities in trade in goods.

The draft decision aims at preserving the consistency of the legal arrangements governing the use of a Single Administrative Document (SAD) in Europe, following amendments to EU rules on customs declarations. Given that the Community has revised the provisions on the use of the SAD in order to reduce the volume of data required of economic operators and to codify a certain amount of that data, the Commission proposed to adopt similar measures in the framework of the EC-EFTA Convention of May 1987 on simplification of formalities in trade in goods.

## **INSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS**

### **Council rules of procedure - Weighting of votes**

The Council adopted a Decision amending its rules of procedure in order to update the table on the population of EU Member States for 2006 for the purposes of qualified majority voting in the Council (14591/05).

The Council's rules of procedure provide that when a decision is to be adopted by the Council by a qualified majority, if a member of the Council so requests, it will be checked that the Member States constituting the qualified majority represent at least 62% of the total population of the Union.

For this purpose EU population figures are updated every year in accordance with data supplied by Eurostat.

For 2006 the threshold of 62% is established as 286 million people out of a total of 461 millions.

A qualified majority is the number of votes required in the Council for a decision to be adopted when issues are debated on the basis of article 205(2) of the EC Treaty. It is set at 232 votes out of a total of 321, representing a majority of the Member States.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

### **Infrastructure for spatial information in the Community\***

The Council adopted a common position on a proposal for a Directive establishing an infrastructure for the dissemination of spatial information for the benefit of environmental policy and providing public information (INSPIRE). The common position will be forwarded to the European Parliament for a second reading under the codecision procedure (12064/05 and 15148/05 ADD 1).

The draft directive focuses on information needed in order to monitor and improve the state of the environment, in particular information regarding air, water, soil and the natural landscape.

INSPIRE aims to optimise the use of data already available by documenting existing spatial data, rendering it more accessible and operable and by dealing with obstacles to the use and sharing of data. The beneficiaries of the Directive will be public authorities, legislators, universities, researchers and the media as well as citizens' organisations.

INSPIRE focuses on environmental policy, but is open for use by other sectors such as agriculture, transport and energy.

## **Protection of groundwater against pollution\***

The Council adopted a common position, by a qualified majority, Germany, Hungary, Italy and Sweden voting against, on a draft Directive on the protection of groundwater against pollution (12062/05 and 15149/05 ADD 1). The common position will be forwarded to the European Parliament for a second reading under the codecision procedure.

The draft Directive aims to prevent and control groundwater pollution by establishing criteria for the assessment of groundwater chemical status, for the identification and reversal of significant and sustained upward trends in pollutant concentrations in groundwater bodies, and for the definition of starting points for trend reversals. The draft Directive also aims to prevent or limit inputs of pollutants and to prevent deterioration in the status of groundwater bodies.

In particular, the draft Directive will enable Member States to set threshold values for certain pollutants according to hydro-geological circumstances at national level. For other pollutants, quality standards will be set at Community level.

*For further details, see press release 10074/05.*

## **TRANSPARENCY**

### **Public access to documents**

The Council adopted :

- the reply to confirmatory application 46/c/10/05 made by Mr David Cronin, the Swedish delegation voting against (15005/05);
- the reply to confirmatory application 47/c/01/05 made by Ms Anna Hakobyan (15772/05);
- the reply to confirmatory application 48/c/01/05, the Danish and Swedish delegations voting against (15918/05);
- the reply to confirmatory application 49/c/01/05 made by Mr Thomas Meyer-Falk (15938/05);
- the reply to confirmatory application 53/c/01/05 (16009/05).



**APPOINTMENTS****Court of Auditors**

The Council adopted a Decision (15742/05) appointing:

- Mr Olavi Ala-Nissilä,
- Ms Máire Geoghegan-Quinn,
- Mr Lars Heikensten,
- Mr Morten Louis Levysohn,
- Mr Karel Pinxten,
- Mr Juan Ramallo Massanet,
- Mr Vítor Manuel da Silva Caldeira,
- Mr Massimo Vari.

as members of the Court of Auditors for the period from 1 March 2006 to 29 February 2012.

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