



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



13129/04 (Presse 286)

PRESS RELEASE

2611th Council Meeting

Agriculture and Fisheries

Luxembourg, 18 October 2004

President

Mr Cees VEERMAN

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Netherlands

P R E S S

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Main Results of the Council

*In agriculture, the Council had a comprehensive policy debate on the orientations to be given to the **fruits and vegetables** sector.*

*Commissioner FISCHLER, attending for the last time, comprehensively summarised the state of play regarding the latest **international trade negotiations**.*

*As regards fisheries, the Council held a public debate on the future **Community Fisheries Control Agency**.*

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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

Czech Republic:

Mr Jaroslav PALAS

Minister for Agriculture

Denmark:

Mr Hans Christian SCHMIDT

Minister for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries

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

Mr Pat the COPE GALLAGHER

Minister for Agriculture and Food

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government

Italy:

Mr Giovanni ALEMANNO

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:

Ms Dalia MINIATAITĖ

Deputy 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 Regional 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 Józef Jerzy PILARCZYK

State Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural
Development

Portugal:

Mr Carlos COSTA NEVES

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Slovenia:

Ms Marija MARKEŠ

State Secretary for Agriculture

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

Mr Ben BRADSHAW

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of the
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Commission:

Mr Franz FISCHLER

Member

Mr David BYRNE

Member

ITEMS DEBATED

AGRICULTURE

– *Fruit and vegetables*

The Council has had a political exchange of views, based on a Presidency questionnaire (13265/04), on the report from the Commission on the simplification of the Common Market Organisation in fruit and vegetables.

The Council has invited the Special Committee on Agriculture to prepare the Conclusions to be adopted at the November meeting of the Agriculture/Fisheries Council.

As regards the first question, a large majority of delegations supported the existing principles and objectives of the 1996 reform of the CMO for both fresh and processed products. Some delegations supported a more market oriented approach for the CMO and the implementation of a decoupled payment in line with the principles laid down by the 2003 CAP reform.

Concerning the functioning of Producer Organisations (POs), several delegations suggested that improvements could be made by introducing greater flexibility and subsidiarity to Member States. However, some delegations underlined the risk of trade distortion in making such flexibility possible.

Some delegations suggested introducing a harvest insurance mechanism and buying-in operation as additional management tools to address market crises. A few delegations opposed the existing withdrawal mechanism in case of surpluses, while others considered it necessary to maintain it.

Finally, all delegations acknowledged the positive health aspects of fruits and vegetables and encouraged the increase of their consumption at EU level. Some delegations suggested the introduction of additional instruments in the CMO. Other delegations indicated that the promotion of fruits and vegetables already existed outside Regulation (EC) 2200/96 through horizontal promotional programming and that such promotion should be done within existing financial resources.

Commissioner FISCHLER provided a positive assessment of the CMO for fresh fruits and vegetables since its reform in 1996 but stressed the need to focus on the quality of the products and the grouping of supply through the strengthening of Producer Organisations. As regards processed fruits and vegetables, he indicated that a discussion should be held prior to the presentation of legislative proposals. Concerning crisis management he suggested including fruits and vegetables into a wider and broader project covering various sectors. Finally, he favoured the use of horizontal instruments within rural development (second pillar) to promote the consumption of fruits and vegetables.

The Commission report (*11889/04+ADD 1*) was submitted to the Council on 10 August 2004 with a view in particular to providing input in the discussion in the Council, the European Parliament and the sector concerned by raising strategic questions on possible improvements to the basic Regulation (EC) 2200/96.

– ***European action plan for organic food and farming (EAPOFF) - Council conclusions ****

The Council adopted the following Conclusions on the EAPOFF (13411/04):

"The Council of the European Union:

1. Welcomes the Commission Communication of June 2004 on the European Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming as an important step towards the realisation of an overall policy concept for the whole chain of organic production, processing, distribution and trade.
2. Fully shares the analysis given by the Commission on the current state of development of the organic sector in the European Union.
3. Generally supports the proposed comprehensive set of 21 actions. Their rapid and consistent implementation can make an important contribution to the removal of existing impediments to growth and thus to the strengthening and expansion of the organic sector. These actions are concentrated on the following main axes:
 - the organic food market;
 - public policy and organic farming;
 - standards and inspection.
4. Attaches particular importance to the following lines of action, which should be appropriately reflected in the timing of their implementation:
 - increase public information and consumer awareness by way of information and promotion campaigns including the EU logo;
 - improve the collection and analysis of relevant statistical data on the whole chain of organic production, processing, distribution and trade, and of other information relevant to the competitiveness of the sector;
 - optimise integration of organic farming into the rural development programmes;

- strengthen research on organic production, processing methods and marketing of organic products, making full use of the possibilities granted within the framework of EU research programmes;
- define the basic principles of organic production, both in the context of Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91 and in international fora such as FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius and IFOAM;
- complete and further harmonise the standards for organic production, considering also the need for extending their scope to areas which are not covered for the present;
- clarify GMO-related issues;
- adapt inspection rules and improve cooperation among inspection bodies, following a risk based approach for compliance inspections, in order to streamline bureaucratic procedures and ensure product traceability;
- implement measures to facilitate trade in particular the market access for developing countries, including the improvement of equivalency-based opportunities for trade of organic products with third countries.

5. Regarding implementation of these priority actions, the Council calls upon the Commission and the Member States, each within their respective competencies, to:

- reinforce close coordination between EU-wide campaigns initiated by the Commission and campaigns or other relevant activities at the national or regional level in order to adapt to specific requirements at these levels, making full use of possible cooperation with relevant operators;
- increase the recognition of the EU logo without excluding the use of other logos;
- reinforce the means for the collection and analysis of data, while avoiding unjustified costs and administrative burdens for economic operators and public authorities;
- ensure that organic production is an integral part of the common agricultural policy, the rural development policy and of its instruments;
- give due regard to voluntary initiatives to establish rural areas for the advancement of value-added production, such as that of organic, typical and traditional products;

- improve coordination and cooperation in research and dissemination of the results;
 - review Community legislation relevant for organic production in the light of a definition of the basic principles therewith encouraging harmonisation of standards, and where possible reduce the level of detail;
 - develop a legislative framework which ensures the proper functioning of the free circulation of organic products, in particular in relation to private and national standards and inspection systems;
 - amend Annex III of Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91 by 1 July 2005, using a risk-based approach, in order to adapt it to the new inspection provisions laid down in Regulation (EC) No. 392/2004 and develop cross-control procedures within the inspection system;
 - ensure that the new system replacing the current national derogation for imports is known to the involved sectors well in advance of the derogation expiry.
6. The Council invites the Commission to advance implementation of the Action Plan on the basis of concrete measures with the view to assure simplification and overall coherence and to bring forward proposals in this regard as soon as possible in the course of 2005.

Member States will be kept informed about the progress within the framework of the Standing Committee on Organic Farming."