



Brussels, 13 June 2006

## Draft

### BACKGROUND <sup>1</sup>

#### *AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES COUNCIL*

**Luxembourg, 19 June 2006**

*The Council will start on Monday 19th June at 10:00 with the agriculture items, including a first exchange of views, on Communication from the Commission on an EU forest Action Plan, an update by Commissioner Fischer-Boel on the World Trade Organisation negotiations, the presentation and the expected adoption as a false "B" point of a draft Council Decision laying down the annual Community support to rural development for the period 2007-2013 - after the financial deal brokered under the Austrian Presidency on the EUR 69.75 billions for rural development - and the minimum amount for regions eligible under the Convergence objective .*

*In the afternoon (2:30 pm), the Council will hold an exchange of views that will be broadcast and may possibly adopt conclusions on Animal Welfare - on the basis of a Community Action Plan on the protection and welfare of Animals 2006-2010 - a policy debate on a draft Directive on broilers, and will be informed by Commissioner Kyprianou on the monthly state of play concerning the Avian Influenza (H5N1).*

*The meeting will be chaired by Mr Josef PRÖLL, Federal Minister for Agriculture, Forestry, the Environment and Water Management of Austria.*

*The Presidency press conference will be held before lunch (+/-13h15).*

*The Council is expected **to successfully adopt a political agreement on the Council regulation for a European Fisheries Fund (EFF)**, after it failed to do so twice. This adoption will embody the efforts achieved under the Austrian Presidency to reach an agreement on a financial framework of EUR 3.8 billions for 2007-2013 and will provide a stable and constructive framework for the fishers during the upcoming period.*

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<sup>1</sup> This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the Press Service.

# AGRICULTURE

## FORESTS

The Council will take note of the presentation by Commissioner Fischer-Boel of a Communication on an EU forest Action Plan, and will hold a first exchange of views on the subject. This Communication has been adopted in the follow-up of the request of the Council<sup>2</sup> to the Commission to present an EU Forest Action Plan in 2006. It has four main objectives and 18 key actions related:

- improving long-term competitiveness, by encouraging research, promoting the exchange of experiences, the use of forest biomass for energy purposes, improving cooperation and training ;
- improving and protecting the environment, through improving the compliance of the EU to international requirements (Kyoto Protocol), and the creation of a European Forest Monitoring Programme to replace the current Forest focus which will end by 2006;
- contributing to the quality of life, notably by working with local communities in planning, creating, managing and using urban and peri-urban forests.
- fostering coordination and communication, through strengthening the role of the Standing Forestry Committee (SFC) with a yearly work programme, joint meetings between the members of the SFC and the Advisory Group on Forestry and Cork<sup>3</sup>, as well as with other consultative bodies like the Advisory Committee on Community Policy regarding Forestry and Forest-based Industries<sup>4</sup>, and encouraging the use of wood and other forest products from sustainably managed forests.

The five-year Action Plan (2007–2011) consists of a set of key actions which the Commission proposes to implement jointly with the Member States. It also points out additional actions which can be carried out by the Member States according to their specific conditions and priorities, with support from existing Community instruments, although implementation may also require national instruments.

## WTO NEGOTIATIONS

The Council *will be updated* by Commissioner Fischer-Boel on the latest state of play of the negotiations at the World Trade Organisation. At the last Committee 133 on trade and commercial affairs on 9 June, the Commission representative indicated that the two chairmen of the Non Agricultural Market Access (NAMA) Committee and the Agriculture Committee at the WTO will present their reports during the week starting on 19 June with a view to preparing for the WTO Ministerial meeting to be held from the end of June to early July in Geneva.

At the GAERC on 12 June, the Council adopted its conclusions on WTO<sup>5</sup>.

It is reminded that the EU presented its last - conditional - offer on agriculture and NAMA on 28 October 2005<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Council Conclusions on an EU Forest Action Plan, 2662nd meeting of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council, 30–31 May 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Decision 2004/391/EC (OJ L 120, 24.4.2004, p. 50).

<sup>4</sup> Decision 97/837/EC (OJ L 346, 17.12.1997, p. 95).

<sup>5</sup> See : [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/gena/90011.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/gena/90011.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> For further details on this offer see:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/05/400>

and

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/05/1358>

## **RURAL DEVELOPMENT (10016/06)**

The Council *is expected to adopt a Decision* laying down the amount of Community support (EUR 69.75 billions) to rural development for the period 2007-2013, its annual breakdown and the minimum amount to be concentrated in regions eligible under the convergence objective (EUR 27.699 billions). The overall amount will be distributed for the EU-25 plus Bulgaria and Romania, according to the agreement on the financial perspectives reached under the British Presidency and finalised under the Austrian Presidency.

## **ANIMAL WELFARE (5734/06+add1) - public debate**

The Council *will hold an exchange of views and is expected to adopt the conclusions drawn up by the Presidency* which summarise the main concerns emerging from a Conference held on 30 March 2006 in Brussels on Animal Welfare. During this Conference, representatives of the Member States, of the European Institutions, international parties and a wide range of stakeholders representing the whole of the food chain discussed and commented the Communication, which mainly covers the welfare of animals kept for food production. The debate will be open to the public through broadcasting.

The draft conclusions insist in particular on setting up a European network of scientific institutes and laboratories responsible for questions relating to animal welfare, stress the need for an impact assessment and that the need to legislate shall be based on the results of sound scientific studies which demonstrate necessity and feasibility. Objective and measurable indicators on animal welfare are also considered as a high priority. It is also envisaged for the Commission to investigate possible options for a labelling scheme on animal welfare at EU level. Finally the conclusions support mutual recognition of animal welfare worldwide on the basis of multilateral standards.

The Communication outlines the Commission's intentions regarding future animal welfare initiatives.

On 20 February the Council held a first exchange of views on the Communication on the basis of a questionnaire (see 6083/06). During this exchange of views, a majority of delegations insisted on the need to check the socio-economic impact on the producers and the consumers prior to any modification of the existing minimum requirements; Several Member States agreed on the need for a sound-scientific basis for updating the existing minimum requirements; Several delegations were in favour of an information campaign in order to better inform farmers, retailers and consumers on animal welfare rules and on their application.

At the Council on 23rd January, Commissioner Kyprianou presented the Community Action Plan on the protection and welfare of animals for the period 2006-2010, and indicated that this 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.

## **BROILERS (9606/05+add1)**

The Council *will hold a policy debate on a* draft Directive laying down minimum rules of chickens kept for meat production ("broilers") on the basis of drafting suggestions of the Presidency.

The proposal was presented by Commissioner Kyprianou at the Council in July 2005 (see 10817/05). Since then, the working party of the veterinary experts met several times under the British and the Austrian Presidency, and the last report was sent to the Permanent Representatives Committee (Coreper) on 7 June 2006. The Special Committee on Agriculture also discussed the proposal on its socio-economic aspects (7522/06).

At the last Coreper, a very large number of delegations agreed with the main suggestions drawn up by the Presidency (10055/06) which broadly consists of extending the scope of the proposal to cover organic and free range chickens and envisaging the possible setting up of an upper maximum limit - to be defined - of the stocking density to be presented by the Commission, after a period of time during which data would be collected at national level on harmonised standards of welfare (mortality rate, stocking density, footpad lesions...). This upper limit would apply with enhanced welfare requirements. The initial minimum threshold of 30 kg live per square meter for the stocking density remains<sup>7</sup>.

The draft Directive sets out a basic stocking density of 30 kg live animals per square metre as well as a number of minimum conditions to ensure animal welfare. Farmers must ensure appropriate access to litter, drinkers and feed as well as proper ventilation. Buildings must have a certain amount of light and there must be at minimum two daily inspections. Any chickens that are seriously injured or in poor health must be treated or immediately culled. These minimum standards are supplemented by detailed record-keeping requirements on issues such as house temperatures, medical treatments administered or mortality rates. The evidence is that welfare problems are more likely above a stocking density of 30 kg/m<sup>2</sup>, but farms that meet enhanced welfare conditions will be allowed to stock up to 38 kg/m<sup>2</sup> as long as inspections at slaughter continue to prove that the animals have not suffered particular welfare problems. This is the first EU legislation in this specific area. Currently only the general requirements of Directive 98/58/EC on the welfare of farm animals apply, in addition to national legislation and codes of practice. The proposal requires the Commission to report within two years on a possible mandatory labelling scheme based on compliance with the animal welfare standards in the Directive. The European Parliament issued its Opinion on 14 February 2006.

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<sup>7</sup> A full report is available (see 10287/06).

## **Any other Business**

- Land Life Future of European Farmers - Presidency conclusions following the discussion on these issues held at the informal meeting of the ministers in Krems (Austria, 28-30 May 2006).
- United Nations Forum on Forests - written information from the Presidency (9949/06)
- Avian Influenza H5N1- written information from the Commission : as usual since the start of the Presidency, Commissioner Kyprianou will provide a written update to the Council on the latest developments concerning the identified cases of avian influenza H5N1 strain in the world and in the European Union. At present the virus H5N1 had been found in wild birds in 13 Member States (Greece, Slovenia, Italy, Austria, Hungary, Slovakia, Germany, France, Sweden, Denmark, Poland, Czech Republic and the United Kingdom), and in commercial flocks in four Member States (France, Sweden, Germany and Denmark). Since last month, H5N1 virus has been confirmed in backyard poultry in Denmark and control measures have been applied. On 9th June, Hungary informed the Commission of a possible case of H5N1 virus strain in a commercial holding in the South (Bacs-Kiskun) and of the elimination of 2300 breeding geese. On 2 June 2006 at the Health Council, Ministers failed to agree to proceed with the creation of a European strategic stockpile of anti-virals against influenza. A proposal to extend the import ban on Romanian live poultry and poultry products to cover the whole country has been endorsed by the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health, on the basis that the highly pathogenic H5N1 virus has been spreading rapidly in Romania since avian influenza began re-occurring in the country in mid-May. The measures will be reviewed in July 2006.
- UN Universal declaration on animal welfare - request from the Czech delegation

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