



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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Agriculture and Fisheries

Brussels, 17 May 2010

President **Ms Elena ESPINOSA**
Minister for the Environment and the Rural and Marine
Environment

P R E S S

Rue de la Loi 175 B – 1048 BRUSSELS Tel.: +32 (0)2 281 8239 / 6319 Fax: +32 (0)2 281 8026
press.office@consilium.europa.eu <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/Newsroom>

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Main results of the Council

*Ministers held an exchange of views on the **international competitiveness of the European agri-food model** and on **gender equality in rural areas**.*

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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.
- Documents for which references are given in the text are available on the Council's Internet site (<http://www.consilium.europa.eu>).
- 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 Council's Internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

PARTICIPANTS

The governments of the member states and the European Commission were represented as follows:

Belgium:

Ms Sabine LARUELLE

Minister for SMEs, the Self-Employed, Agriculture and Science Policy

Bulgaria:

Mr Miroslav NAYDENOV

Minister for Agriculture and Food

Czech Republic:

Ms Jana REINIŠOVÁ

Deputy Permanent Representative

Denmark:

Mr Henrik HØEGH

Minister for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries

Germany:

Ms Ilse AIGNER

Federal Minister for Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection

Mr Robert KLOOS

Permanent State Secretary

Estonia:

Mr Helir-Valdor SEEDER

Minister for Agriculture

Ireland:

Ms Geraldine BYRNE NASON

Deputy Permanent Representative

Greece:

Ms Katerina BATZELI

Minister for Rural Development and Food

Spain:

Ms Elena ESPINOSA

Minister for the Environment and the Rural and Marine Environment

Mr Joaquim LLENA i CORTINA

Minister for Agriculture of the Autonomous Community of Catalonia

Mr Josep PUXEU ROCAMORA

State Secretary for the Rural Environment and Water

France:

Mr Bruno LE MAIRE

Minister for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries

Italy:

Mr Vincenzo GRASSI

Deputy Permanent Representative

Cyprus:

Mr Demetris ELIADES

Minister of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment

Latvia:

Mr Jānis DŪKLAVS

Minister for Agriculture

Lithuania:

Mr Raimundas KAROBLIS

Deputy Permanent Representative

Luxembourg:

Mr Romain SCHNEIDER

Minister for Agriculture, Viticulture and Rural Development

Hungary:

Mr József GRÁF

Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development

Malta:

Ms Theresa CUTAJAR

Deputy Permanent Representative

Netherlands:

Ms Gerda VERBURG

Minister for Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality

Austria:

Mr Nikolaus BERLAKOVICH

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

Poland:

Mr Artur ŁAWNICZAK

Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development

Portugal:

Mr António SERRANO

Minister for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries

Romania:

Mr Mihail DUMITRU

Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development

Slovenia:

Mr Dejan ŽIDAN

Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food

Slovakia:

Mr Vladimír CHOVAN

Minister for Agriculture

Finland:

Ms Sirkka-Liisa ANTTILA

Minister for Agriculture and Forestry

Sweden:

Mr Magnus KINDBOM

State Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries

United Kingdom:

Ms Caroline SPELMAN

Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Commission:

Mr Dacian CIOLOȘ

Member

ITEMS DEBATED

GENDER EQUALITY IN RURAL AREAS

Ministers held an exchange of views on gender equality in rural areas. This discussion was structured by a presidency paper and questionnaire ([9184/10](#))

The ministers shared the presidency's views that gender equality was one of the fundamental principles of EU law and one of the Union's objectives to be followed in all policies. They highlighted the role women play in rural areas as backbones of the social fabric, diversifying the rural economy and preserving the environment, while recognising that women's current situation is sometimes particularly precarious.

Ministers in general stressed the importance of taking equality into account in all EU policies, including in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Several delegations outlined their efforts in favour of gender equality at national level, made mainly in the framework of their rural development programmes.

Many ministers considered that in the first pillar of the CAP gender equality has already been achieved since all farmers have equal access to direct payments, irrespective of their gender. They therefore questioned if the first pillar was the most appropriate instrument for improving gender equality in rural areas.

Ministers referred to the existing instruments promoting gender equality within the second pillar and gave some examples of measures taken in this field at national level (e.g. under the Leader programme). Several delegations pointed out that, if new measures for gender equality were to be elaborated, this would best be done in the second pillar, which allows for better targeting and greater flexibility. Some ministers stressed also the need for more statistical data on this issue and an overview of existing national measures.

As regards the next reform of the CAP, most ministers expressed the view that the Common Agricultural Policy should continue to promote equal working conditions for men and women in rural areas.

The presidency paper which formed the basis for the discussion reflects the conclusions reached at a seminar on "Women in the Sustainable Development of the Rural World" held by the Spanish Ministry of the Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs in Cáceres (Spain) on 27-29 April 2010. One of the most important outcomes of this seminar was the recognition that gender equality is essential to keeping the rural environment alive.

INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS OF THE EUROPEAN AGRI-FOOD MODEL

The Council held an exchange of views on the competitiveness of the European agri-food model.

Ministers in general considered that the European agri-food model meets the requirements of the European citizens and generated substantial benefits for society. The model was considered sustainable and the need to maintain the high level of EU standards was not questioned. Some ministers recalled the importance of public support to producers in order to meet the additional costs involved in providing these benefits, as well as the reduction of unnecessary administrative burdens, and of a fair distribution of profits along the food chain.

Most of the delegations acknowledged that the European agri-food model was not sufficiently recognised at international level. Several options were discussed for taking advantage of the model's specific nature: the application of all EU standards to imports (i.e. reciprocity), the broader adoption of these standards internationally (e.g. through international organisations or bilaterally) and a better explanation of the added value of the European model (by promotion campaigns or labelling).

Most delegations shared the view that the current instruments for agri-food promotion are useful. Several ministers outlined, however, possible improvements, such as strengthening efficiency and increasing flexibility.

The debate took place on the basis of a presidency paper ([9263/10](#)), containing in its annex a set of recommendations elaborated at a seminar on the "External competitiveness of the European agri-food model" which was organised under the auspices of the Spanish presidency in Seville on 15 and 16 April 2010.

While recognising the additional costs for producers associated with the EU model, the Commission representative recalled the benefits of this model and the possibility to improve its recognition. He reminded the Council that the standards in the EU model covered several issues ranging from food safety (within the competence of Commissioner Dalli) to environment or animal welfare.

The Commission is expected to publish by the end of 2010 a detailed situation report on EU imports of agricultural products from third countries.

OTHER BUSINESS

Preparing forests for climate change

The presidency informed the Council about the follow-up to the conference which took place on 6 and 7 April 2010 in Valsáin (Spain) and on the draft Council conclusions ([9305/10](#)).

In a declaration, the Austrian, German, Latvia and Swedish delegations referred to the fact that forest protection is an integral part of sustainable forest management lying and which must remain within the competence of the member states ([9785/10](#)). Several other ministers took the floor and supported this declaration. Others, however, asked for the extension of existing EU measures.

Draft Council conclusions on "Preparing forests for climate change: Forest protection and information in the EU" will also be presented for approval to the Environment Council taking place on 11 June 2010.

Paying agencies

The Council was briefed on the general conclusions drawn after the 27th conference of EU paying agencies held in Oviedo on 28-30 April 2010 ([9185/10](#)).

Trade negotiations with Mercosur

A large number of delegations expressed their concerns about the Commission's decision to resume trade negotiations with Mercosur countries and possible further concessions in the agricultural field, on the basis of a note presented by eight member states (Austria, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Luxembourg and Poland) ([9686/10](#)).

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

AGRICULTURE

Partnership agreement against illegal logging between EU and Congo

The Council adopted a decision on the signing of a voluntary partnership agreement between the EU and Congo on forest law enforcement, governance and trade in timber and derived products to the European Union (FLEGT) ([7256/10](#)). The agreement is the second to be signed, following the agreement signed with Ghana in November 2009.

Within the margin of the meeting of the Agriculture Council, the President Ms Elena ESPINOSA, Minister for Agriculture of Spain, and Mr Henri DJOMBO, Minister of Sustainable Development, Forestry and Environment of Congo, signed the partnership agreement.

ENVIRONMENT

Biocidal products - Committee procedure

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption by the Commission of a decision aimed at including N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide and dazomet in the list of active substances that have been assessed and considered to be acceptable for use in biocidal products (Annex I to Directive 98/8 on the marketing of biocidal products).

In accordance with the regulatory procedure with scrutiny, the Commission may now adopt its decision unless the European Parliament opposes it.

Emissions of volatile organic compounds - Committee procedure

The Council opposed the adoption by the Commission of a draft directive introducing technical adaptations to Annex III to Directive 2004/42 on the limitation of emissions of volatile organic compounds.

The Council supports the substance of the draft Commission Directive. However, a qualified majority of delegations opposed its adoption on the grounds that, by requiring member states to draw up correlation tables, the Commission exceeds the implementing powers provided for in the basic act, which is Directive 2004/42 in this case.

Under the regulatory procedure with scrutiny, the Council may oppose the adoption of new measures on the grounds that they exceed the implementing powers provided for in the basic act, are not compatible with the aim or the content of the basic act or do not comply with the principles of subsidiarity or proportionality.

TRADE POLICY**Originating status for non-originating materials - Adoption of EU position**

The Council adopted three decisions on the position to be taken by the EU in negotiations with Denmark and the Faroe Iceland, Iceland and Norway concerning the list of working or processing required to be carried out on non-originating materials in order that the product manufactured can obtain originating status ([6449/10](#) + [6486/10](#) + [6489/10](#)).
