



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

## AGRICULTURE & FISHERIES



05.06.09

### Agriculture and Rural Development

The future shape of the EU Common Agricultural Policy is at stake in Brno - 02/06/09

Throughout the whole meeting of the informal Council in Brno, the Ministers of Agriculture and Fisheries engaged in discussions of the future shape of the simplified system of direct payments and a more even distribution that would result in a fairer competitive environment on the single market. According to Agriculture Minister Šebesta, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) must continue to adapt to the changing conditions and we are currently addressing the issue of its shape after 2013, as it is closer than it seems. The Czech Presidency expects that the discussions of the Ministers at the informal Council meeting result in useful suggestions that will govern the future shape of the CAP, not only regarding direct payments, but also the new system of which has been chosen as a priority of the Presidency and as a topic of the ministerial meeting.

The topics of the ministerial meeting, in particular, the future shape of the direct payments after 2013 and a more even distribution that would result in a fairer competitive environment on the single market, reflects the long-term efforts of the Czech Republic as a new Member State and the Czech agriculture diplomats to create a more efficient CAP. The topic is highly relevant also in the context of the current economic crisis as it will eventually enable farmers to face new challenges, such as the increasing volatility of markets and climate change. Furthermore, the CAP should ensure a prospective sustainable development of rural areas in the EU. The Ministers further observed that in the future direct payments should be considered in the context of market instruments and funds allocated to rural development and they should complement these instruments appropriately.

Moreover, Agriculture Minister Šebesta emphasised that in the light of the crisis, the EU has a unique opportunity for a concrete and open discussion leading to a future Common Agricultural Policy that will enhance the global competitiveness of European agriculture and focus on long-



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term diversification and prevention of risks; it will also bring young entrepreneurs into the field of agriculture.

Although the ministerial meeting addressed the system of direct payments, the results of the ministerial discussions are certain to find application when the EU addresses its new financial perspectives for 2014 – 2020. [Click here](#) for more information

### **COM (2009) 250 COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND TO THE COUNCIL with regard to the state of play on the control of food-borne *Salmonella* in the EU**

The purpose of this Communication is to inform the European Parliament and the Council on the state of play on implementation of the Community provisions intended to control *Salmonella* and the results since adoption of Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 November 2003 on the control of *Salmonella* and other specified food-borne zoonotic agents<sup>1</sup> and of Directive 2003/99/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 November 2003 on the monitoring of zoonoses and zoonotic agents. This Communication additionally covers other Community legislation and activities to ensure/improve control of *Salmonella* along the food chain.

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the (EFSA) reported 151,995 human cases of salmonellosis in 2007 in the EU27, being an incidence of 31.1 per 100,000 population. It is, however, evident that the number of human cases is seriously underestimated and underreported. The *Salmonella* outbreaks affected 22,705 victims, of whom 14% were hospitalised and 23 died. *Salmonella* Enteritidis and *Salmonella* Typhimurium were responsible for 95% of outbreaks with known serotype.

Humans can acquire the *Salmonella* infection through consumption of contaminated food (most cases) or drinking water. Products of animal origin, mainly eggs and meat or meat products are reported as the main food sources, but bakery products, fruit, vegetables and chocolate have also caused *Salmonella* outbreaks.

The Commission established a Task Force on the control and eradication of animal diseases to improve the efficiency of the measures taken by the Member States as well as to improve the cost-benefit ratio of the control programmes co-financed by the Community such as those on *Salmonella*.

Between September 2007 and March 2009, four regional meetings were organised specifically addressing *Salmonella* control. The Commission and the Member States present examined the national control programmes for poultry, shared experience as regards their implementation



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and identified areas where further actions are needed. The Commission will continue to organize meetings for those Member States with approved co-financed *Salmonella* control programmes.

Since Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 on zoonoses control was adopted, the awareness and motivation of competent authorities and stakeholders to tackle *Salmonella* has increased significantly, often resulting in action before the Community provisions became mandatory. The effect on public health can already be seen in the trend of salmonellosis in humans from 2004 until 2007. Furthermore, a significant reduction could be expected from 2009 (restrictions on table eggs) and from 2011 (food safety criterion on poultry meat).

Climate change: Commission welcomes fall in 2007 greenhouse gas emissions for third consecutive year

Here below is the data compiled by the European Environment Agency and has been submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

European Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas welcomed the news that EU greenhouse gas emissions have fallen for the third consecutive year. The emissions inventory compiled by the European Environment Agency for 2007, the latest year for which complete data is available, shows that EU-15 emissions dropped by 1.6% from 2006 while the economy grew by 2.7 %. The reduction takes EU-15 emissions to 5.0% below their levels in the base year (1990 in most cases). This puts the EU-15 well on track to meet its Kyoto Protocol target of reducing emissions in the 2008-2012 period to an average of 8% below the base year level. EU-27 emissions fell 1.2% over the year to stand 12.5% lower than in the base year. Emission increases in the EU-27 were recorded in transport, cement production and public electricity and heat production, as well as refrigeration and air conditioning.

The majority of sectors have recorded emission reductions between the base year and 2007. Emissions from industrial processes were down 14.1%, from energy without transport by 7.4%, from use of solvents and other products 23.7%, **from agriculture 11.3%** and from waste 38.9%. By contrast, emissions from transport in general rose by 23.7% and from road transport by 24.7%. There is no EU-27 emissions target under the Kyoto Protocol since the EU-12 were not Member States at the time. However, all of the EU-12 have individual Kyoto commitments to cut emissions to 6% or 8% below base year levels, except Cyprus and Malta which have no targets. [Click here](#) for more info



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### Other news

The European Commission approved an aid scheme notified by France after storm Klaus, which crossed the south-west of the country on 24 January 2009 and devastated forests. The compensation scheme provides for a total budget of approximately €800 million. The scheme authorised provides for several measures to be implemented simultaneously, including: aid to reopen forest roads and tracks (€6 million), aid to move timber affected by the storm (€364 million), aid to strengthen the personnel resources of the sector's promotional bodies (€6 million) and aid to clean up and restore the damaged forests (€415 million). The aid will be provided in the form of direct grants, loans with interest-rate subsidies, guarantees and subsidised services. For further details [click here](#)

### Fisheries

MEUSAC Core Group discusses the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) with Commissioner Joe Borg – 29<sup>th</sup> May 2009

Commissioner for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs, Joe Borg was present for this month's Core Group meeting. Dr Borg outlined his work during the past years as Commissioner responsible for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs. Commissioner Borg explained the Commission's exclusive role - that of being in the driving seat of new EU legislation, since it is the institution which proposes legislation, acts as the guardian of EU law, and of its treaties and sets out the agenda and involves itself at the international level. Particularly on the subject of Fisheries, he highlighted one of the most important initiatives taken up by his Commission – that of involving a wide variety of stakeholders in the process of decision making. The Commissioner also pointed out the fact that his office is one out of six Commissioners to be responsible of European funds. Council Regulation (EC) No 1198/2006 establishes a new European Fisheries Fund (EFF) for the period 2007-13.

He explained that his Office adopted a policy whereby all interested parties are involved in the decision-making process through 7 Regional Advisory Councils (established for the Baltic Sea; the Mediterranean Sea, the Council for which was created only last year; the North Sea; the north-western waters, the south-western waters; the pelagic stocks; and the high seas/long distance fleet) which represent fishermen, scientists, environmentalists as well as trade unions. The involvement of stakeholders to seek their views in the consultation process reflects what MEUSAC has been doing to facilitate such participation at an early stage. The process of consultation must lead to a better and a simpler common policy to be adopted at the local level, whilst the Commission's role will be that of putting objectives on the table.



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Moreover, Joe Borg reiterated the need to overcome the negative attitude that surrounds the Fisheries policy. The Commission are doing so by: creating discussion with the respective stakeholders; establishing a multi annual planning where fishermen are given more stability; strengthening further the scientific advice; starting the work on discards and highgrading in order to apply sustainable management and finally by initiating the CFP reform consultation process to attempt to arrive to a much simpler policy. Nevertheless, scientific advice is also taken into account, which mainly is the reason why the Commission from year to year does not exclude changes to its proposals for fishing opportunities.

He also commented on the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) which was communicated earlier on this year initiating a consultation process ending in December 2009. In addition, in relation to Fisheries, he also remarked that co-decision is not applicable till now. However, while the decision to ratify the Lisbon Treaty has not been taken by all Member States, this Treaty establishes co-decision as the main decision-making procedure for matters falling under the CFP.

Members of the Core Group came up with several points of discussion. As regards Iceland's possible membership, Commissioner Borg said that when Iceland applies formally for EU membership, the Commission will issue its Opinion on the matter, possibly by December, following which the European Council at the December Summit will decide whether to open negotiations with Iceland. He stated that Iceland will not have any CFP opt-outs but it may be granted special arrangements similar to those granted to Malta.

Commissioner Borg also addressed the questions of how the criteria of fish quotas is calculated, as well as how would the CFP be integrated with third countries. He stated that fish quotas are first and foremost less stringent in the Mediterranean when compared to other coastal zones. In fact, the only quotas for the Mediterranean region have been imposed on the fishing for swordfish and bluefin tuna to maintain a sustainable level. The Commissioner explained that these quotas are agreed upon by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). The Commission has a Recovery Plan Programme for tuna and both EU and non-EU Mediterranean states have to abide by the quota. Furthermore, Mr. Borg added that on 1 January 2010, a new law regulating illegal fishing will come into force and if bluefin tuna is captured and exceeds the quota limit, then they will be considered as illegal and cannot access the EU market. Add to this, something which can be considered as positive is the complete backing of Japan on the illegal fishing issue.

Another matter which was discussed was the system of penalties for fishermen who commit illegalities in light of all those families, especially in Malta, who are dependent on the fishing sector. Thus, it would leave a substantial impact from a social aspect point of view. Commissioner Borg stated that they are often criticised for taking the middle road approach.



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Moreover, he said that the over exploitation of natural resources is very hard to recover. If natural resources can be recovered, it will definitely take a very long time. In fact, cod is an example and the Commission is looking to avoid such depletion. Therefore, someone has to be on the forefront and stop this depletion from happening. Henceforth, if a country or fisherman is blacklisted, this would be of a huge detriment and that is why it is in the fishermen's interest to abide by the laws. Even so, there are on-going discussions to reach a compromise on such penalties and sanctions. An example of such a compromise which is already in place is that fishing vessels which are 8 metres or under are exempted.

Additionally, as regards the issue of surveillance, Commissioner Borg emphasised the importance of having joint-surveillance amongst the Member States and it would even be prolific if it was a multi-purpose one. Such patrols could incorporate inspections not only regarding fishing, but also including the environment, drugs etc (except for defence and national protection because this is considered to be a sensitive area). This joint-surveillance could also be extended to third countries in the Mediterranean.