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PRESS RELEASE

Information and Consultation Seminar organised by *Forum Malta fl-Ewropa* on the reform of the wine sector.

Forum Malta fl-Ewropa, together with the Viticulture and Oenology Unit within the Ministry for Rural Affairs and the Environment, has today organised an information seminar on the Proposal for a Council Regulation on the common organisation of the market in wine and amending certain Regulations (COM(2007)372).

The seminar was well attended both by wine processors and producers, and proved to be a good opportunity for all present to gain insight on the proposed developments within the sector, as well as share their views on this Proposal before the final decision.

In his opening address, the Hon. Francis Agius, Parliamentary Secretary responsible for Agriculture and Fisheries, stated that Government has taken an active role in the ongoing discussions on the wine reform at European level. He said that this sector is very important for the country's economic growth and henceforth, Hon. Agius believes that not only should this sector be recognised accordingly, but where possible it should also become economically viable. Malta's €1.6 billion financial allocation for the period 2009-2015 by the European Union for the wine sector is a major step forward to assist in enhancing competitiveness, as well as to better the final product.

The Parliamentary Secretary responsible for Agriculture and Fisheries, said that Member States' exigencies and challenges in relation to the wine sector vary from one State to another, and should therefore be offered solutions accordingly, rather than holistically. Hon. Agius mentioned the use of 'National Envelopes' as a good way of tackling each country's state of affairs within the block by allowing for measures to be addressed at a National level.

Hon. Agius thanked *Forum Malta fl-Ewropa* for the initiative taken in organising this information and consultation seminar, and encouraged all those present to take an active role in this consultation process.

Dr Philip von Brockdorff, Permanent Secretary within the Ministry for Rural Affairs and the Environment, emphasised the need for stake holders to participate in the renewal of this sector. He further emphasised that the use of 'National Envelopes' should strengthen the sector's competitiveness, enabling wines produced within the European block to compete with those imported from third countries.

Dr von Brockdorff mentioned the importance given to indigenous varieties by wine producers in the city of Porto, enabling them to attain a higher level of competitiveness, and emphasised that Maltese producers should exploit this reasoning to ensure that they may compete on the same level playing field. He also mentioned the need for stringent enforcement as described in the regulations issued by the Commission.

Mr Randall Caruana, from the Viticulture and Oenolgy Unit, presented a detailed overview of the Commission's Proposal while outlining the financial assistance available to Malta and the procedures therein, he also stated Malta's position that assistance to grubbing should be included in the 'National Envelopes' given the specific circumstances under which the wine sector operates locally. He also mentioned labelling and other documentation, as well as a pending proposal for the creation of organisations, also for producers.

This Proposal, explained Mr Caruana, focuses on how the wine sector can be made to become more competitive while ensuring that a high level of quality is maintained. This will be made possible by the abolition of all the inefficient market support measures as well as the ban of sugar for enriching wine. Furthermore, the Commission is supporting uncompetitive producers to leave the sector with attractive financial support.

The Proposal on the reform of the wine sector was adopted by the European Commission on the 4th July 2007 after one year's discussion with all parties on the ideas launched by a Communication in June 2006. The legislative process is expected to be finalised by the end of this year.

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STQARRIJA GĦALL-ISTAMPA

Laqgħa ta' konsultazzjoni organizzata mill-*Forum Malta fl-Ewropa* dwar ir-riforma fis-settur ta' l-inbid.

Forum Malta fl-Ewropa, flimkien mat-Taqsima tal-Vitikultura u l-Enoloġija fi ħdan il-Ministeru għall-Affarijiet Rurali u l-Ambjent, illum organizza laqgħa ta' informazzjoni u konsultazzjoni dwar il-Proposta għal Regolament tal-Kunsill dwar l-Organizzazzjoni Komuni tas-Suq ta' l-Inbid u li jemenda ċerti Regolamenti (KUMM(2007)372).

Dan is-seminar kellu attendenza tajba minn produtturi u proċessuri fis-settur ta' l-inbid. Dawn mhux biss kellhom l-opportunità biex jisimgħu aktar dwar dan l-iżvilupp, iżda kellhom ukoll opportunità biex jaqsmu l-veduti tagħhom dwar din il-Proposta, qabel ma tittieħed deċiżjoni finali dwarha.

Fl-indirizz tal-ftuħ, l-Onor Francis Agius, Segretarju Parlamentari għall-Biedja u s-Sajd saħaq li l-Gvern Malti ħa rwol attiv f'taħdidiet li qed isiru fuq livell Ewropew fuq din ir-riforma. Huwa saħaq li dan is-settur huwa importanti għat-tkattir ta' l-ekonomija u għalhekk, kompla jgħid l-Onor. Agius, jemmen li għandu jkun wieħed stabbilit, kif ukoll li sa fejn hu possibli, dan is-settur ikun ekonomikament vijabli. Huwa qal li l-allokazzjoni li ġiet mogħtija lil Malta għal dan is-settur, jiġifieri €1.6 miljun għall-perjodu 2009–2015, se tgħin biex tissaħħaħ il-kompetittività, kif ukoll biex toħloq titjib tal-prodott.

Is-Segretarju Parlamentari għall-Biedja u s-Sajd kompla jgħid li l-Istati Membri msieħba fil-blokk Ewropew għandhom ħtiġijiet differenti u jiffaċjaw sfidi differenti, u għalhekk, sostna l-Onor. Agius, jinħass il-bżonn li dawn jiġu ndirizzati b'soluzzjonijiet imfassla għalihom. Huwa semma l-użu tan-*National Envelopes*, jew 'informazzjoni nazzjonali', li jippermetti li dan isir fuq livell nazzjonali biex b'hekk jindirizza ċ-ċirkostanzi partikulari ta' kull Stat Membru.

Waqt li rringrazzja lill-*Forum Malta fl-Ewropa* ta' l-inizjattiva tiegħu biex jorganizza din il-laqgħa ta' konsultazzjoni, l-Onor. Agius ħeġġeġ lil dawk preżenti biex jagħtu s-sehem attiv tagħhom f'dan il-proċess ta' konsultazzjoni.

Is-Segretarju Permanenti fi ħdan il-Ministeru għall-Affarijiet Rurali u l-Ambjent, Dr Philip von Brockdorff, sostna li l-parteċipazzjoni ta' l-i*stakeholders* hija essenzjali fil-proċess ta' tiġdid ta' dan is-settur. Huwa saħaq li n-*National Envelopes* għandhom isaħħu l-kompetittività ta' dan is-settur partikolarment biex inbejjed Ewropej ikunu jistgħu jikkompetu aħjar ma' inbejjed li għandhom il-provenjenza tagħhom minn pajjiżi terzi.

Dr von Brockdorff semma kif fil-Belt ta' Porto, produtturi ta' l-inbid taw importanza lil varjetajiet indiġeni biex jilħqu livell aqwa ta' kompetittività u saħaq li produtturi Maltin għandhom iħarsu lejn dan l-eżempju biex ikunu jistgħu jikkompetu aħjar fuq pjataformu usa'. Semma wkoll il-bżonn ta' kontrolli aħjar kif imsemmi fir-regolamenti maħruġa mill-Kummissjoni.

Randall Caruana, mit-Taqsima tal-Vitikultura u l-Enoloġija ta spjega dettaljata tal-Proposta tal-Kummissjoni waqt li semma' l-fondi ta' assistenza u d-diversi proċeduri li jridu jittieħdu. Is-Sur Caruana spjega liema fondi huma miftuħa għal Malta waqt li tenna jgħid li l-flejjes indikati għall-iskemi tal-qlugħ tad-dwieli għandhom ikunu nkluzi fin-*National Envelopes* minħabba ċ-cirkustanzi speċifiċi ta' Malta. Huwa aċċenna wkoll għat-tikketti u d-dokumenti marbutin mal-prodott, kif ukoll qal li qed jiġi maħsub li jinħolqu organizzazzjonijiet tal-produtturi u oħrajn.

Is-Sur Caruana spjega li din il-proposta tiffoka fuq kif is-settur jista' jsir aktar kompetittiv u ta' kwalità permezz tat-tneħħija ta' dawk il-miżuri li jwasslu għal swieq ineffiċjenti, u wkoll dwar l-abolizzjoni taz-zokkor fil-produzzjoni ta' l-inbid. Aktar minn hekk, il-Kummissjoni trid li tagħti inċentivi fiskali lil dawk il-produtturi li m'humiex effiċjenti, sabiex dawn iħallu s-settur. Bla dubju, din il-proposta jista' jkollha effetti konsiderevoli fuq l-industrija ta' l-inbid f'Malta.

Wara sena ta' konsultazzjoni mal-partijiet kollha kkonċernati, il-Kummissjoni Ewropea nhar l-4 ta' Lulju 2007 adottat il-proposta għar-riforma ta' l-organizzazzjoni komuni tas-suq ta' l-inbid. Dan il-proċess leġislattiv huwa mistenni li jintemm sa l-aħħar ta' din is-sena.

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