



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



9039/08 (Presse 118)

PRESS RELEASE

2867th Council meeting

Agriculture and Fisheries

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President **Iztok JARC**
Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Food

P R E S S

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9039/08 (Presse 118)

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Main results of the Council

The substantial progress made on the placing of plant protection products on the market should lead to a breakthrough in June.

Without debate, the Council adopted a common position on a framework directive concerning sustainable use of pesticides.

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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 Valeri TSVETANOV

Minister for Agriculture and Food Supply

Czech Republic:

Mr Stanislav KOZÁK

Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Commodities Section

Denmark:

Ms Kjer Eva HANSEN

Minister for Food

Germany:

Mr Horst SEEHOFER

Federal Minister for Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection

Estonia:

Mr Helir-Valdor SEEDER

Minister for Agriculture

Ireland:

Mr Brendan SMITH

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (with special responsibility for Children)

Greece:

Mr Alexandros CONTOS

Minister for Rural Development and Food

Spain:

Ms Elena ESPINOSA MANGANA

Ms Pilar MERINO TRONCOSO

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Minister for Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Agriculture of the Autonomous Community of Canary Islands

France:

Mr Michel BARNIER

Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries

Italy:

Mr Luca ZAIA

Ms Francesca MARTINI

Minister for Agricultural and Forestry Policy
State Secretary, Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policy

Cyprus:

Mr Panicos POURIOS

Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment

Latvia:

Mr Mārtiņš ROZE

Minister for Agriculture

Lithuania:

Ms Kazimira Danutė PRUNSKIENĖ

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
State Secretary for Relations with Parliament, State Secretary for Agriculture, Viticulture and Rural Development, State Secretary for Culture, Higher Education and Research

Ms Octavie MODERT

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 Josef PRÖLL

Federal Minister for Agriculture, Forestry, the
Environment and Water Management**Pologne:**

Mr Marek SAWICKI

Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development

Portugal:

Mr Jaime SILVA

Minister for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries

Romania:

Mr Dacian CIOLOȘ

Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development

Slovenia:

Mr Iztok JARC

Ms Branka TOME

Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Food
State Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and
Food**Slovakia:**

Ms Zdenka KRAMPLOVÁ

Minister for Agriculture

Finland:

Ms Sirkka-Liisa ANTTILA

Minister for Agriculture and Forestry

Sweden:

Mr Eskil ERLANDSSON

Minister for Agriculture

United Kingdom:

Mr Hilary BENN

Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural
Affairs

Mr Richard LOCHHEAD

Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment,
Scottish Government**Commission:**

Mr Janez POTOČNIK

Member

Ms Mariann FISCHER BOEL

Member

Ms Androulla VASSILIOU

Member

ITEMS DEBATED

PESTICIDES

The Council took note of the progress made on a regulation concerning the placing of **plant protection products** on the market¹ following first reading under codecision with the European Parliament ([11755/06](#)).

The Council instructed the Permanent Representatives Committee to find a solution to the outstanding issues, with a view to reaching political agreement on a common position in June.

The proposed regulation is intended to replace the existing legislation in this field², thoroughly revising the procedures for considering the safety of active substances and for authorising plant protection products. It will repeal Council Directive 79/117/EEC prohibiting the placing on the market and use of plant protection products containing certain active substances.

The main aim of the proposal is to maintain a high level of **protection** for humans, animals and the environment, **reduce** the administrative **burdens** of current approval and authorisation procedures and achieve a higher level of **harmonisation**. In summary, it contains the following elements:

- the establishment at EU level of a **positive list of active substances**, safeners and synergists based on a scientific assessment by the member states and the European Food Safety Authority;
- the definition of **three geographical zones** for the authorisation of plant protection products and the **compulsory mutual recognition** of authorisations in Member States belonging to the same zone, except in very specific, duly justified cases. The functioning of the system of mutual recognition should be **reviewed** within **five years**;
- the comparative assessment of products with a view to encouraging the substitution of dangerous substances by safer alternatives. The **criteria** for approving active substances guarantee the **highest level of public health** protection while ensuring sufficient **plant health protection** within the Community;
- detailed and simplified rules on data protection and transparency, with regard to studies necessary for the renewal of an authorisation[, without hampering competition and market access, especially for small enterprises;
- provisions on packaging, labelling and advertising;
- an obligation to keep records and carry out checks;

¹ The Council adopted the common position on a framework directive concerning sustainable use of pesticides without discussion.

² Council Directive 91/414/EEC

- simplified procedures for low-risk substances and products.

The initial Commission proposal for a "pesticides regulation" was submitted to the Council and the European Parliament in July 2006. The European Parliament delivered its first reading opinion on 23 October 2007. In the light of the amendments adopted by the Parliament, the Commission presented an amended proposal on 11 March 2008.

OTHER BUSINESS

- (a) World Trade Organisation (WTO)-Doha Development Agenda (DDA) negotiations

The Council was briefed by Commissioner Fischer-Boel on progress in the negotiations on agriculture issues, in the run-up to a possible WTO ministerial meeting in Geneva in June.

It held an exchange of views.

- (b) The small-scale farm - still an important role to play in the future European agriculture

The Council took note of some reflections presented by the Romanian delegation, supported by the Austrian, Bulgarian, Cypriot, Greek, French, Irish, Luxembourg, Maltese, Polish and Portuguese delegations, on small-scale farms ([9283/08](#)).

Commissioner Vassiliou¹ confirmed that the "health check" should point out the broad scope and purpose of agricultural policy and ensure that it permitted an adequate response to the main challenges of the 21st century - in particular with regard to social cohesion and the environment - in the framework of rural development.

- (c) Agricultural market situation - evolution of agricultural and food prices

The Council held an exchange of views based on the information note from the Presidency (9290/08). Commissioner Fisher-Boel made an extensive presentation, analysing the temporary as well as structural and long-term factors responsible for the present situation of high food prices in Europe and the world. She noted that the response provided in the context of the EU agricultural policy should go hand in hand with the response provided in the framework of the EU development policy. She announced a Commission Communication for an EU policy response on this issue.

¹ On behalf of Mariann Fischer Boel who was invited to a meeting in the European Parliament.

Delegations noted in particular the importance of the upcoming "Health Check" review to provide for possible adjustments to the CAP in order to improve the capacity of EU agriculture to respond to the current market needs in Europe, but also of enhancing the agricultural production potential and productivity in developing countries in order to improve local market supplies. Encouraging research and technology transfer was mentioned as a means to achieve this objective. The important role several major international organisations, including FAO and WTO may play in this context was also mentioned.

The Presidency conclusions on the discussion are set out in document 9597/08.

(d) Situation on the milk market (Lithuania)

(e) Situation on the milk market (Latvia)

The Council took note of the Lithuanian and Latvian delegations' views on the situation of the milk market, those member states exporting a large part of their milk production to third countries ([9276/08](#) ; [9356/08](#)).

The Commission representatives pointed out that 2007 prices were still below the limit set by the Council in 2003 for intervention prices and above the prices recorded in 2006.

(f) Marketing standards for fruit and vegetables

The Council took note of the concerns raised by the Italian and Spanish delegations, supported by France and Hungary, regarding the ongoing discussions within the Management Committee concerning the simplification of implementing legislation on fruit and vegetable marketing standards ([9370/08](#)).

(g) Block Exemption Regulation

The Council took note of the concerns expressed by the Czech delegation, supported by the , Estonian, Hungarian, Latvian, Slovak, Swedish and Romanian delegations with regard to the planned review of the Commission legislation on "block exemptions" (exempting certain types of State aid from the requirement of prior notification and Commission approval) ([9337/08](#)).

(h) Antimicrobial resistance

The Council took note of the German delegation's views, supported by the Netherlands, French, Italian, Latvian, and Swedish delegations ([9413/08](#)) on the draft Council conclusions on antimicrobial resistance to be examined by the Council (Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer affairs) on 9 and 10 June 2008.

Commissioner Vassiliou pointed out that the Commission was already taking a number of initiatives to ensure a prudent use of antimicrobial medicines for public health, including for veterinary purposes.

She said that 3 key areas should be tackled: stepping-up existing monitoring, improving public education on the avoidance of self-medication and developing an inter-sector approach.

(i) Chemical decontamination of fresh meat

The Council took note of the French delegation's concerns, supported by the Austrian, Belgian, Bulgarian, Cypriot, Czech, Danish, Netherlands, Estonian, Finnish, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Latvian, Luxembourg, Portuguese, Romanian, Spanish and Swedish delegations, about the potential authorisation of the use of chemical substances in the decontamination of fresh poultry meat ([9427/08](#)).

Commissioner Vassiliou pointed out that experts from the Member States would have the opportunity to give their opinion in the framework of the Standing Committee of Food Chain and Animal Health (SCoFCAH), at the time of the submission by the Commission of a proposal reflecting European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) opinion on the matter.

She confirmed that chemical decontamination could not be permitted to replace good hygiene practices all along the food chain.

(j) Piracy of the Somali coast

The Council took note of an intervention by the Spanish delegation, supported by France, on the above matter ([9436/08](#)).

Commissioner Vassiliou welcomed the suggestion made by Spain to launch a study aiming at identifying means by which Member States could take action to ensure their security, especially when providing humanitarian aid by sea. She asked that further discussions take place in the Council (General Affairs and External Relations).

(k) Request for a state aid

The Cypriot delegation asked the possibility to grant exceptional State aid to its farmers. The State aid in question would compensate 37 000 farmers and 3 000 breeders. The graveness of the situation is due to an exceptional drought. Potable water is currently available only 30 hours per week.

Pursuant to Article 88(2) of the Treaty, the Council must adopt a unanimous position within three months of a Member State's application for the authorisation of aid.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**COMMON FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY****Border assistance mission at Rafah - Extension of the mandate**

The Council adopted a joint action amending joint action 2005/889/CFSP extending until 24 November 2008 the mandate of the EU Border Assistance Mission for the Rafah crossing point between Gaza and Egypt (EUBAM Rafah) (8709/08).

The Council established the mission on 25 November 2005. The aim of EU BAM Rafah is to provide a third party presence at the Rafah Crossing Point between Gaza and Egypt in order to contribute, in co-operation with the European Community's institution building efforts, to the implementation of the Israeli-Palestinian Agreement on Movement and Access, ensuring the opening of the Rafah Crossing Point, and to build up confidence between the parties.

Owing to the situation in Gaza, the mission is currently on stand-by, but the EU has expressed its readiness to resume its activities as soon as circumstances permit and in agreement with the parties.

INTERNAL MARKET**Chemicals – Rules on test methods - REACH regulation**

The Council decided not to oppose to the adoption of a Commission regulation laying down test methods pursuant to the REACH regulation (regulation 1907/2006 on the registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals) (8739/08).

The REACH regulation¹ provides that tests required to generate information on intrinsic properties of substances will be conducted in accordance with test methods laid down in a Commission regulation. It further provides that this regulation will be adopted in accordance with the regulatory procedure with scrutiny under the “comitology decision”.

In accordance with the regulatory procedure with scrutiny, the Council may oppose the adoption of the draft Commission regulation, justifying its opposition by indicating that:

- the measures proposed exceed the implementing powers provided for in the basic instrument, in this case article 13(3) of the REACH regulation, or
- the draft regulation is not compatible with the aim or the content of the basic instrument, or
- the draft regulation does not respect the principles of subsidiarity or proportionality.

¹ OJ L 136, 29.5.2007 p. 3.

The REACH provisions on registration will apply as from 1 June 2008.

TRADE POLICY

Anti-dumping - Flat-rolled products of silicon-electrical steel - Russia - United States

The Council adopted a regulation amending regulation 1371/2005 imposing a definitive anti-dumping duty on imports of grain oriented flat-rolled products of silicon-electrical steel originating in the United States of America and Russia and repealing the anti-dumping duties imposed by regulation 1371/2005 on imports of grain oriented flat-rolled products of silicon-electrical steel originating in Russia ([8913/08](#)).

HEALTH AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

Sustainable use of pesticides – Pesticides framework directive

The Council adopted a common position on a draft directive establishing a framework for Community action to achieve a sustainable use of pesticides ([6124/08](#)), thereby permitting progress to the next stage in the co-decision procedure with the European Parliament.

The draft directive seeks to protect human and animal health and the environment from adverse impact of use of pesticides in farming and the ecosystem. It aims at reducing the risks of pesticide use in a way that is consistent with the necessary crop protection.

It provides in particular for:

- the establishment of national action plans to reduce risks and impact of pesticide use on human health and the environment;
- information, awareness-raising and training for advisers and professional users of pesticides;
- concrete requirements for the sale of pesticides;
- a prohibition of aerial spraying with possible derogations;
- regular inspection of application equipment and requirements for the handling and storage of pesticides and their packaging and remnants;
- specific measures for the protection of the aquatic environment from pollution with pesticides and restriction of pesticide use in specific areas;
- establishment of compulsory standards on integrated pest management and development of risk indicators to measure progress on pesticide use.

The Council's common position incorporates a large number of the amendments adopted at first reading by the European Parliament. It has been accepted by the Commission.

More details can be found in the statement of the Council reasons ([6124/08 ADD I REV 1](#)).

Animal health requirements for non-commercial movements of pet animals

The Council adopted an amendment to regulation no 998/2003 on the animal health requirements applicable to the non-commercial movements of pet animals, extending until 30 June 2010 the transitional period for special entry requirements applicable in some member states with regard to rabies, echinococcosis and ticks ([3622/08](#)).

This extension has become necessary because of a delay in the submission of the scientific assessment needed as a basis for determining the regime to be applied after the transitional arrangements.
