

COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES
GENERAL SECRETARIAT

PRESS RELEASE

4907/82 (Presse 17)

754th meeting of the Council

- Agriculture -

Brussels, 15 and 16 February 1982

President: Mr Paul de KEERSMAEKER,
State Secretary for European Affairs and
Agriculture of the Kingdom of Belgium

The Governments of the Member States and the Commission of the European Communities were represented as follows:

Belgium:

Mr Paul de KEERSMAEKER
State Secretary for
European Affairs and Agriculture

Denmark:

Mr Bjoern WESTH
Minister for Agriculture

Germany:

Mr Josef ERTL
Federal Minister for Food,
Agriculture and Forestry

Mr Hans-Jürgen ROHR
State Secretary,
Federal Ministry of Food,
Agriculture and Forestry

Greece:

Mr Costas SIMITIS
Minister for Agriculture

France:

Mrs Edith CRESSON
Minister for Agriculture

Mr André CELLARD
State Secretary,
Ministry of Agriculture

Ireland:

Mr Alan DUKES
Minister for Agriculture

Italy:

Mr Guiseppe BARTOLOMEI
Minister for Agriculture

Luxembourg:

Mr Camille NEY
Minister for Agriculture,
Viticulture, Lakes, Rivers and
Forests

Netherlands:

Mr Jan de KONING
Minister for Agriculture and
Fisheries

United Kingdom:

Mr Peter WALKER
Minister for Agriculture,
Fisheries and Food

The Earl FERRERS
Minister of State,
Ministry of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Food

For the Commission:

Mr Poul DALSGER
Member

FIXING OF PRICES OF CERTAIN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS AND RELATED MEASURES

The Council held an initial exchange of views on the Commission proposals on agricultural prices for 1982/1983. Delegations were able to give their initial reactions from both the political and technical points of view.

The Council will discuss this question further at its meeting on 15, 16 and 17 March 1982 on the understanding that, in the meantime, the Special Committee on Agriculture will give detailed examination to the various problems.

ADJUSTMENT OF THE "ACQUIS COMMUNAUTAIRE" FOR MEDITERRANEAN PRODUCTS

The Council continued its discussion of the adjustment of the "acquis communautaire" for Mediterranean products, in particular wine, fruit, vegetables and citrus fruits, and olive oil.

Several delegations stressed the need to reach an early conclusion, in view not only of the importance of safeguarding the equilibrium of Community production but also of the accession of Portugal and Spain. In this connection, the Commission indicated its intention of submitting shortly supplementary proposals on citrus fruits and olive oil. The United Kingdom delegation said that it would be putting forward suggestions on the latter product.

In concluding its discussions, the Council instructed the Special Committee on Agriculture to examine this dossier in detail and to report back to the next Council meeting.

INTEREST SUBSIDY

As agreed at its last meeting, the Council resumed its examination of the two proposals:

- on the level of the interest rate subsidy provided for by Directive 72/159/EEC;
- amending Decision 76/402/EEC on the level of the interest rate subsidy provided for by Directive 72/159/EEC on the modernization of farms to be applied in Italy.

The Council invited the Commission to submit new suggestions on this matter at the earliest opportunity and agreed to return to this item at its next meeting.

NATIONAL AIDS CONTEMPLATED BY FRANCE

Mr DALSAGER said that the Commission was awaiting further information from the French authorities before adopting a final position on the compatibility of those aids with the Treaty.

PRICE OF NATURAL GAS FOR HOUSHOUSES IN THE NETHERLANDS

The Council heard a statement by Mr DALSAGER, Commissioner, on the price of natural gas for hothouses in the Netherlands. Mr DALSAGER recalled the position adopted by the Commission on this matter on 15 December 1981. The Council noted that the Commission would have to start fresh discussions without further delay. Some delegations stressed the importance they attached to finding a speedy solution to this problem. It was agreed to resume discussions at the next meeting in the hope that a practical solution would be found to this problem in the meantime.

COMMUNITY MEASURES FOR THE ERADICATION OF BRUCELLOSIS, TUBERCULOSIS AND LEUCOSIS IN CATTLE

The Council examined the financial implications of the proposal for a Council Directive amending Directive 77/391/EEC which deals with the uninterrupted continuation of the programmes for the eradication of brucellosis, tuberculosis and leucosis in cattle for a further two-year period (3 years in the case of Greece).

As it was unable to reach agreement at this stage, the Council instructed the Permanent Representatives Committee to re-examine this dossier and agreed to return to it at its next meeting.

MISCELLANEOUS STATEMENTS

Mr DALSAGER reported to the Council on the outcome of his visit to the United States within the context of the high-level EEC-USA talks on 8 and 9 February 1982.

MISCELLANEOUS DECISIONS

Other agricultural decisions

The Council adopted in the official languages of the Communities the Regulations:

- on producer groups and associations thereof in the cotton sector;
- on the organization of a survey on the structure of agricultural holdings for 1983.

Fisheries

The Council adopted in the official languages of the Communities the Regulations:

- allocating catch quotas between Member States for vessels fishing in Canadian waters (1982);
- concerning the management and control of certain catch quotas for 1982 for vessels flying the flag of a Member State and fishing in the Regulatory Area defined in the NAFO Convention;
- laying down for the period from 15 February to 30 April 1982 certain interim measures for the conservation and management of fishery resources applicable to vessels flying the flag of Spain;
- laying down certain interim measures for the conservation and management of fishery resources applicable to vessels registered in the Faroe Islands.

Customs union

The Council adopted in the official languages of the Communities the Regulation temporarily suspending the autonomous Common Customs Tariff duties on certain coal-fish falling within heading ex 03.02 A I f) and certain fillets of coal-fish falling within heading ex 03.02 A II d).

EFTA

The Council approved the Community's position on the draft for a decision of the EEC-EFTA Joint Committees further supplementing and amending lists A and B annexed to Protocol No 3 concerning the definition of the concept of "originating products" and methods of administrative co-operation.

Relations with Israel

The Council adopted in the official languages of the Communities the Regulation concerning the application of Decision 1/81 of the EEC-Israel Co-operation Council replacing the Unit of Account by the ECU in the Protocol concerning the definition of the concept of originating products and methods of administrative co-operation to the Agreement between the European Economic Community and the State of Israel.

Export credits

The Council adopted a brief for the Commission allowing it to start negotiations without further delay with the Participants in the Arrangement on guidelines for officially supported export credits with a view to classifying the USSR in category I of purchasing countries. The Greek delegation expressed a negative opinion.

European Regional Development Fund

The Council took note of the 6th Annual Report (1980) on the activities of the ERDF.

Approximation of laws

The Council adopted in the official languages of the Communities the Directive on the approximation of the laws of the Member States concerning electrical equipment for use in potentially explosive atmospheres in mines susceptible to fire-damp.

Directive on information to be published on a regular basis

The purpose of this Directive, which is a follow-up to the Directives on "conditions for admission to official stock exchange listing" and "conditions for distribution of the listing particulars to be published for such admission", adopted in March 1979 and March 1980 respectively, is to make it compulsory for companies whose shares are admitted to official stock exchange listing in a Member State to publish, within 4 months of the end of the relevant six-month period, a report relating to their activities and profits and losses during the first six months of each financial year.

This report must consist of figures (indicating at least the net turnover and the profit or loss before or after tax deduction) and an explanatory statement including any significant information enabling investors to assess the trend of the company's activities and profits or losses.

However, the Member States may allow the competent authorities to authorize companies, exceptionally and on a case-by-case basis, to supply estimated figures for profits and loss, provided that the shares of each such company are listed officially in only one Member State.

Member States are free to submit companies to more stringent or supplementary requirements insofar as these are of general application.

The Directive also contains further provisions concerning publication of particulars, companies whose head office is established outside the Community and cooperation between authorities.

The competent authorities will also use their best endeavours to accept as a single text the text of the half-yearly report which meets the requirements of the Member State in which the company's shares were admitted to official listing for the first time. Member States will confer together to bring about convergence of the more stringent requirements which their authorities may still impose so as to make further adjustments to the Directive in the light of progress, with the aim of achieving mutual recognition of the half-yearly report which meets the requirements of the State in which the company was admitted to official listing for the first time.

The Commission is to report within five years on the use which the authorities make of the power allowed them to impose requirements stricter than those in the Directive. Where necessary, it will be able to propose measures directed towards compulsory recognition by the other Member States of the half-yearly report which meets the requirements of the State of first listing.

Research

The Council authorized the Commission to negotiate an agreement with the COST States on the implementation of a concerted action research project on "Physical properties of foodstuffs".

ECSC

The Council gave assents, pursuant to Article 54, second paragraph, of the ECSC Treaty, to:

- the co-financing of the extension of an industrial back-pressure power plant and its conversion from oil/gas firing to coal firing at Deutsche Solvay-Werke GmbH, Solingen-Ohligs;
- the partial financing of an investment programme to be carried out by the Oaky Creek Joint Venture for the annual production of 2.25 million tonnes of coking coal.

The Council also gave assents, pursuant to Article 56(2)(a) of the ECSC Treaty, concerning:

- Bank für Gemeinwirtschaft AG (FRG) (conversion loan)
- Finlombarda SPA (Milan, Italy) (conversion loan)
- Villeroy & Boch, Keramische Werke KG (FRG) (conversion loan)
- Bayerische Hypotheken-und Wechselbank AG, Germany.

Appointments

On a proposal from the United Kingdom Government, the Council appointed Mr P.J. CASEY, Confederation of British Industry, a member, and Mr D.C. STANLEY, Confederation of British Industry, an alternate member of the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training to replace Mr M.O. BURY, member, who has resigned, and Mr P.J. CASEY, alternate member, who has resigned, for the remainder of the resigning members' term of office, which runs until 16 September 1983.

On a proposal from the United Kingdom Government, the Council appointed Mr A. BATES, Senior Assistant, Education and Training Division, Corporate Affairs Directorate, Confederation of British Industry, a member, and Mr Norman PARKIN, Director (Special Duties), Industrial Relations Department, National Coal Board, an alternate member of the Committee of the European Social Fund to replace Mr David STANLEY, member who has resigned, and Mr John SCATES, alternate member who has resigned, for the remainder of the resigning members' term of office, which runs until 9 November 1982.

On a proposal from the United Kingdom Government, the Council also appointed Mr A.L. SAPPER, General Secretary, Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians, a member, and Mrs P. TURNER OBE, National Industrial Officer, General and Municipal Workers Union, an alternate member of the Advisory Committee on Freedom of Movement of Workers, to replace Mr J. MacGOUGAN, member who has resigned, and Mr A.L. SAPPER, alternate member who has resigned, for the remainder of the resigning members' term of office, which runs until 16 March 1982.

Bruxelles, le 12 fevrier 1982
Note BIO(82)65 aux Bureaux Nationaux
c.c. aux membres du groupe du Porte-Parole

PREPARATION CONSEIL AGRICOLE 15 ET 16.2.1982 (M. Vasey)

En premier lieu, le Conseil aura un echange de vue sur les propositions de la Commission relatives aux Prix agricoles 1982/83 et mesures connexes (voir P-9 de janvier 1982).

Il examinera par la suite les questions suivantes :

1. L'amenagement de l'acquis communautaire pour les produits mediterraneens (voir P-64 d'octobre 1981)
 - = vin
 - = Fruits et legumes et agrumes
 - = Huile d'olive
2. Niveaux de bonification du taux d'interet prevu par la directive 72/159/CEE concernant la modernisation des exploitations agricoles (voir BIO(81)504 du 17.12.1981;
3. Aides nationales envisagees par la France
4. Prix du gaz naturel dans le secteur des serres chaufees aux Pays Bas.

Amities,

M. SANTARELLI - COMEUR 12H45 // //

Brussels, 16 February 1982
Note BIO(82)65 (suite 2) aux Bureaux Nationaux
e.c. aux membres du groupe du Porte-Parole

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AGRICULTURE COUNCIL 15-16 FEBRUARY 1982 (M. Vasey)

The Council completed its first discussion of the Commission's price proposals Monday evening. The discussion was constructive with no great surprises as to the position of the various delegations.

On prices the United Kingdom minister considered the proposed 9% price increase too high in view of the budget costs for products in surplus e.g. milk, beef, wine, tobacco. He welcomed the idea of reducing the gap between EEC and world cereals prices, but considered the Commission's proposals too high to reduce the gap. He rejected any devaluation of the green pound on the grounds that sterling is a floating currency and that Britain has an above average inflation rate.

The Benelux countries and Denmark stated that the 9% price increase provides a reasonable basis for agreement, though they wanted some additional improvements. Belgium and the Netherlands felt that the Commission was asking too much in term of lower prices for cereals, while Denmark argued that any additional price increases to be agreed during the negotiations should improve the prices hierarchy between cereals and animal products. The Netherlands thought a 50% reduction in MCA's the maximum i.e. - 2.5% for the guilder, while Belgium wanted as big a reduction as possible. The German delegation must also be placed in this group of countries. Mr. Ertl attacked the Commission's package as unbalanced, but this was because of the proposed reduction of the MCA's and the low price increase for bread-making wheat : he had nothing to say about the 9% price rise.

The French and Irish delegations both insisted on the need for a substantial improvement in the proposed level of price increases to ensure reasonable incomes for farmers. The French also insisted on further progress on reducing MCA's in general and on pigmeat in particular. The Irish delegation emphasized the need for special measures to deal with the problem of countries with high rates of inflation like Ireland. This was also the theme of the Italian minister, who said that the continued fall in real incomes as a result of inflation, would accentuate the unfavourable position of Italian agriculture, which already suffers from the "discriminatory" treatment of Mediterranean as opposed to continental products. Monetary adjustments were unacceptable as a solution because of their inflationary consequences, so if adequate price increases could not be obtained, then other measures to reduce costs (specific subsidies, cheaper credit) would have to be envisaged. The Greek minister saw no point in discussing the package unless it was accompanied by additional measures of interest to Greece (higher prices or extended market support or export subsidies for Mediterranean products or direct grants, etc..). He suggested aids should be calculated on the rate of inflation, an idea which did not appeal to Mr. Ertl.

As regards the Commission's proposals for production thresholds and producer participation, the United Kingdom approved the principle but regretted that no attempt had been made to reduce existing surpluses. The Benelux countries and Denmark could also accept the principle, but insisted on a higher threshold for milk (+ 1%). The French delegation rejected any threshold for cereals so long as no progress was made on controlling imports of cereals substitutes. As far as the milk sector is concerned, the Dutch, Danish and British rejected any discrimination against more efficient producers through the co-responsibility levy.


In his summing up Mr. Dalsager announced that the Commission will be tabling a report on the problems carried by high rates of inflation at the beginning of March, but he added that the CAP could not be expected to solve the problem of inflation, any more than it could be expected to remove at a stroke the structural backwardness of Greek agriculture

Glasshouse horticulture

Mr. Dalsager informed the Council that the Dutch government's reply to the Commission's decision of December was not entirely satisfactory, since it did not foresee the elimination of the special natural gas tariff by 1 October 1982 : the Commission will decide what action to take next week. The Dutch minister pleaded for more time to seek a political compromise rather than leaving it to the Court (DIS - The Dutch government will nevertheless appeal against the Commission's decision in order to safeguard its legal position - END DIS). The German, British and Danish delegations were united in feeling a final decision must be taken very rapidly, but while the last two were prepared to envisage a compromise that would allow the Dutch to postpone alignment of the horticultural and industrial tariffs till April 1983 provided the gap was limited to 10 %, the German delegation continued to insist that the Commission should take its responsibilities.

A suivre

Amities

 N. van der Pas - COMEUR 11H45////

Bruxelles, le 16 fevrier 1982
Note BIO(82)65 (suite 3) aux Bureaux Nationaux
c.c. aux membres du groupe du Porte-Parole

CONSEIL AGRICOLE DES 15 ET 16 FEVRIER 1982 (M. Vasey)

Modification de l'Acquis Communautaire

Au debut de la discussion, la delegation francaise a pose le principe selon lequel l'adoption des reglements revises pour le vin et les fruits et legumes doit intervenir en meme temps que l'accord sur les prix agricoles pour 1982/83. La delegation italienne, en revanche, a fait valoir que les trois volets de la modification de l'acquis communautaire (vin, fruits et legumes et huile d'olive) constituent un tout indissociable et qu'ils ne pourront donc etre adoptes separemment. A l'issue de la discussion, apres avoir mis en cause la volonte de certaines delegations de realiser de veritables organisations de marche pour les productions mediterraneennes, la France a rappele avec force sa position selon laquelle il ne peut etre question de l'adhesion de l'Espagne aussi longtemps que les reglements vin et fruits et legumes n'auront pas ete profondement revus.

En ce qui concerne le vin, la delegation francaise a insiste sur la necessite d'une distillation preventive vraiment obligatoire qui penaliserait les hauts rendements. Elle a egalement reclame la prise en charge par le FEOGA des frais de distillation et de l'ecoulement de l'alcool produit ainsi que l'application effective des dispositions concernant les prix minima. La delegation italienne s'oppose a ce stade au principe de la distillation obligatoire, qui constitue selon elle un deuxieme element de coresponsabilite apres la limitation des vignobles. Elle ajoute en outre, que la distillation obligatoire a bas prix aurait des effets inacceptables, notamment pour les petits producteurs, et serait pratiquement inapplicable. Elle s'est enfin elevee contre toute mesure restrictive qui limiterait les importations de vins sur tel marche national. La Grece s'oppose egalement a la distillation obligatoire. Parmi les autres delegations, la britannique appuie la distillation preventive obligatoire, notamment des vins les plus excedentaires, alors que l'allemande s'interroge sur l'opportunit e d'une distillation obligatoire.

Mr. Dalsager a fait valoir que la distillation preventive obligatoire constitue le seul moyen realiste de retablir l'equilibre du marche, mais la Commission pourrait aller a l'encontre des preoccupations des delegations italienne et grecque sur le plan des prix et de l'exemption eventuelle des petits producteurs. Si le principe de la distillation preventive obligatoire est accepte, il n'exclut pas que la Commission puisse revoir la question de la prise en charge de l'alcool.

En ce qui concerne les fruits et legumes, M. Dalsager a fait valoir la necessite de renforcer l'organisation des marches et de rationaliser le regime de protection externe, si l'on veut eviter des depenses d'intervention tres importantes apres l'elargissement. A ce stade, seule la delegation francaise appuie les propositions de la Commission a la fois sur l'accroissement des aides au demarrage des groupements de producteurs et sur le renforcement des disciplines. Outre les reserves de certaines delegations sur les aspects financiers, les delegations italienne et grecque jugent les nouvelles conditions proposees moins favorables a leurs producteurs que les anciennes. Les propositions de la Commission concernant le calcul des prix d'entree et l'extension du systeme de prix de reference sont appuiees par les delegations francaise, italienne et grecque, mais la plupart des autres delegations y restent opposees.

En ce qui concerne les agrumes, les delegations italienne et grecque ont rappele la necessite de rendre plus efficaces et d'etendre les mesures de restructuration et de reconversion de la production des agrumes avant l'adhesion de l'Espagne, ainsi que l'importance des primes de penetration, qui avaient ete octroyees pour compenser les concessions tarifaires accordees aux pays tiers (la Commission veut les supprimer progressivement).

En ce qui concerne le secteur de l'huile d'olive, la Commission n'a pas encore soumis des propositions formelles au Conseil. M. Dalsager a annonce le depot prochain d'une proposition modifiant le reglement sur l'aide a la consommation de facon a fixer le rapport de prix entre l'huile d'olive et les huiles concurrentes a 2:1).

La discussion a revele l'existence de deux courants opposes au sein du Conseil. D'un cote, les delegations britannique, allemande, neerlandaise et danoise s'opposent fermement a l'idee d'une taxe sur les huiles vegetales en general pour financer l'ecoulement de l'huile d'olive dans la Communaute elargie. Ces memes delegations mettent en question l'efficacite du regime actuel des aides et sont interessees par une suggestion britannique de le remplacer par une aide directe aux producteurs d'olives pour lesquels il n'existe pas de culture alternative, cette aide ne devant pas etre liee a la production ou a la commercialisation de l'huile d'olive en tant que telle. La delegation belge est egalement interessee par cette idee, mais pourrait eventuellement accepter aussi l'idee d'une taxe.

D'autre part, la delegation italienne appuyee par celle de la Grece, a fait valoir qu'elle ne pourrait pas accepter que les oleiculteurs soient ramenes a un cas d'assistance sociale. Pour ces delegations, il s'agit de proteger une production communautaire contre un accroissement des importations de produits concurrents en provenance de pays tiers, alors que certaines delegations semblent preconiser le contraire. Selon les italiens, pour garantir des revenus adequats aux oleiculteurs, il faudrait notamment fixer le rapport des prix entre l'huile d'olive et les huiles concurrentes a 1,6:1 et revoir le regime d'importation. La delegation francaise, de son cote, a invite la Commission a preciser ses idees a la fois sur la taxe et sur les perspectives de negociation au sein du GATT (DIS - M. Dalsager a indique a ce sujet que les premiers contacts officieux avec nos partenaires commerciaux ont ete negatifs - FIN DIS).

A suivre

Amities

N. van der Pas - COMEUR 17H15////

Bruxelles, le 16 fevrier 1982
Note BIO(82)65 (suite 4 et fin) aux Bureaux Nationaux
c.c. aux membres du groupe du Porte-Parole

CONSEIL AGRICOLE DES 15 ET 16 FEVRIER 1982 (M. Vasey)

Paquet prix

La Presidence a annonce qu'elle envisage la convocation du Conseil pour les 29,30 et 31 mars afin d'arreter les prix agricoles pour 1982/83 (le Parlement donnera son avis la semaine precedente). La session du Conseil prevue pour les 1 et 2 mars a ete annulee, celle des 15 et 16 etant maintenue.

Bonification des taux d'interet

Le Conseil est convenu d'examiner le probleme du niveau de bonification des taux d'interet dans les differents Etats membres dans le contexte d'un reexamen general de la directive 72/159 sur la modernisation des exploitations agricoles, qui vient a echeance en avril prochain. Aucun accord n'a pu etre realise sur l'extention temporaire de la derogation accordee a l'Italie et qui est venue a echeance le 31 decembre 1981.

Eradication de la brucellose et de la tuberculose des bovins

Le Conseil n'a pas pu se mettre d'accord sur l'extention du programme actuel pour une nouvelle periode de deux ans. Si une majorite des Etats membres insiste pour que l'action soit financee dans le cadre du FEOGA Orientation, les delegations grecque et italienne ne peuvent pas accepter une telle solution sans avoir des assurances quant au relevement eventuel du plafond de la section orientation.

Relations avec les Etats Unis

M. Dalsager a rendu compte au Conseil des resultats de son voyage aux Etats Unis. Il constate une deterioration des relations entre la Communaute et les Etats Unis dans le secteur agricole depuis la premiere rencontre ministerielle en decembre 1981. M. Block ne se considere nullement lie par des assurances donnees par l'Administration precedente concernant notamment le systeme communautaire de restitutions a l'exportation, dont il entend obtenir la suppression. Si les plaintes deposees au GATT sur les differents produits n'aboutissent pas, les Etats Unis demanderaient une renegotiation au GATT. L'Administration encourage les agriculteurs americains a penser qu'ils pourraient sortir de leurs difficultes actuelles en augmentant leurs exportations, si l'on pouvait eliminer la "concurrence deloyale" de la CEE. La delegation de la Commission a rappele qu'elle s'en tient a la stricte application des dispositions du GATT (voir BIO(82)57).

Aides nationales francaises

M. Dalsager a informe le Conseil qu'il vient d'adresser un telex au Gouvernement francais pour demander que des informations supplementaires sur les differentes aides envisagees lui soient rapidement communiquees. Jusqu'a present, la France a fourni des informations sur trois des aides envisagees.

FIN

Amities

N. van der Pas - COMEUR 18H00/////

