

PRESS RELEASE

7279/93 (Presse 103)

1672nd Council meeting

AGRICULTURE

Luxembourg, 14 June 1993

President: Mr Bjørn WESTH,

Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries of the
Kingdom of Denmark

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

Belgium:

Mr André BOURGEOIS Minister for Agriculture

Denmark:

Mr Bjørn WESTH Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries
Mr Nils BERNSTEIN State Secretary for Agriculture

Germany:

Mr Jochen BORCHERT Federal Minister for Food, Agriculture and Forestry
Mr Franz-Josef FEITER State Secretary, Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forestry

Greece:

Mr Christos KOSKINAS Minister for Agriculture

Spain:

Mr Pedro SOLBES MIRA Minister for Agriculture

France:

Mr Jean PUECH Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries

Ireland:

Mr Joe WALSH Minister for Agriculture, Food and Forestry

Italy:

Mr Alfredo DIANA Minister for Agriculture

Luxembourg:

Ms Marie-Josée JACOBS Minister for Agriculture, Viticulture and Rural Development

Netherlands:

Mr Piet BUKMAN Minister for Agriculture, Nature Conservation and Fisheries

Portugal:

Mr Arlindo CUNHA Minister for Agriculture

United Kingdom:

Mrs Gillian SHEPHARD Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

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Commission:

Mr René STEICHEN Member

MILK AND NON-MILK FATS

The Council examined the Commission proposal the purpose of which is to lay down general Community rules concerning in particular the definition and placing on the market of yellow fats for use as spreads intended for the final consumer. It covers milk and non-milk fats and fats consisting of vegetable and animal products.

In view of the fact that there is such a wide variety of products on the market, this proposal affects the interests of both consumers (guarantee of the product purchased) and producers (certainties concerning production and elimination of distortions of competition).

Noting that the proposal still gave rise to problems, mainly of a technical nature, the Council instructed the Special Committee on Agriculture to continue examining the technical aspects of the dossier.

GREEK ISLANDS IN THE AEGEAN SEA

Pending the Opinion of the European Parliament, the Council held an exchange of views on a proposal introducing specific measures for the smaller Aegean Islands concerning certain agricultural products. It also had before it a final Commission report on those islands.

The proposal is in line with the undertakings given at the Rhodes European Council in December 1988 and includes a series of measures to facilitate supplies to the islands, to support their local products and to improve their agricultural structures. This particular Community effort is justified by a difficult geographical situation and a less-developed structure in comparison with other Community regions.

The Council held a policy debate which resulted in a favourable attitude on this dossier. It instructed the SCA to continue the examination of certain points still outstanding so that the Council could reach a decision once it had received the Opinion of the European Parliament.

URUGUAY ROUND - AGRICULTURAL ASPECTS

The Council took note of the progress of the negotiations on the basis of an introductory statement by the Commission.

The Council recognized the need for a positive and speedy conclusion to the negotiations, on the understanding that such a conclusion must be balanced overall.

During the discussion several delegations provided information with the aim of achieving such a result.

COMMUNITY PLANT VARIETY RIGHTS

The Council examined the Commission proposal to harmonize national plant variety rights schemes by introducing a Community scheme consisting of a special form of industrial property rights for the development of new plant varieties.

This proposal is an integral part of the measures in the 1985 Commission white paper on completion of the internal market in the agricultural sphere.

At this meeting the Council discussed one key question in particular: the "farm saved seed concept". The problem concerns derogations from the protection rules authorizing farmers to use seeds they have harvested themselves to grow protected varieties ("farmer's privilege").

There are still differences of opinion between delegations on the principle of "farmer's privilege", as well as on the scope of this concept and the payment of remuneration to the breeder.

At the close of its discussions, the Council worked out a number of policy guidelines which should enable the Permanent Representatives Committee actively to continue discussing this matter.

MINCED MEAT AND MEAT PREPARATIONS (HEALTH RULES)

The Council again discussed the Commission proposal on extending to the entire national production of the Member States the health rules on production of and trade in minced meat and meat preparations as laid down in Directive 88/657/EEC.

It concentrated on the following major problems still outstanding:

- the demarcation between the scope for minced meat and the scope for meat preparations,
- the extent of the national derogations to be provided for minced meat intended for the domestic market,
- the type of frozen meat which may be used for meat preparations.

The Council noted that the Presidency's compromise suggestions were an acceptable basis for several delegations.

The Permanent Representatives Committee was instructed to discuss further the technical aspects of the dossier and to report back for the next Council meeting.

PROTECTION OF ANIMALS AT THE TIME OF SLAUGHTER OR KILLING

The Council examined a Commission proposal to lay down harmonized rules to ensure humanitarian treatment of animals at the time of slaughter or killing. It discussed in particular

the fundamental question of whether rules on this subject were appropriate, bearing in mind the principle of subsidiarity and the risk of duplicating the rules of the Strasbourg European Convention.

The Council worked out various guidelines and instructed the Permanent Representatives Committee to continue discussing the matter, including the technical aspects still outstanding.

FEES FOR HEALTH INSPECTIONS AND CONTROLS OF FRESH MEAT

The Council adopted by a qualified majority (the French delegation voted against) the Decision extending until 30 September 1993 the deadline laid down in Decision 88/408/EEC for applying flat-rate fees for poultry in connection with health inspections and controls of fresh meat. This additional period should allow detailed examination of the fees arrangements in their entirety, so that the future arrangements can be decided upon.

REVIEW OF THE REGULATIONS ON THE STRUCTURAL FUNDS

This item, which is being examined by the General Affairs Council, was placed on the agenda for this meeting at the specific request of the German delegation. That delegation wanted the Agriculture Council to hold an exchange of views on the reform of the structural funds and to take a position regarding the financing of agricultural structures. It considered that the common agricultural policy was directly affected by this reform.

The Commission stated that its proposal on Objective 5(a) would be submitted shortly and the Council decided to await that proposal.

OTHER AGRICULTURAL DECISIONS

Following the political agreement reached at its meeting on 24 to 27 May 1993 on the 1993/1994 package of prices and related measures (see press release 6704/93 Presse 82), the Council adopted the following Regulations giving legal form to that agreement:

Set-aside

- fixing the non-rotational set-aside rate referred to in Article 7 of Regulation No 1765/92;

Cereals and rice

- fixing the monthly price increases for cereals for the 1993/1994 marketing year;
- fixing the amount of the premium paid to producers of potato starch during the 1993/1994 marketing year;
- amending Regulation No 1418/76 on the common organization of the market in rice and repealing Regulations No 2744/75 and No 1009/86;
- fixing prices for rice for the 1993/1994 marketing year;
- fixing the monthly price increases for paddy rice and husked rice for the 1993/1994 marketing year;
- fixing the production aid for certain varieties of rice sown in the 1992/1993 marketing year;

Sugar

- amending Regulation No 1785/81 on the common organization of the markets in the sugar sector;
- fixing certain sugar prices and the standard quality of beet for the 1993/1994 marketing year;
- fixing the derived intervention prices for white sugar, the intervention price for raw sugar, the minimum prices for A and B beet, the threshold prices and the amount of compensation for storage costs of the 1993/1994 marketing year;

Oils and fats

- fixing the prices, aids and percentages of aid to be retained in the olive oil sector for the 1993/1994 marketing year;

- amending Regulation No 1765/92 establishing a support system for producers of certain arable crops;

Textiles

- adjusting, for the third time, the system of aid for cotton introduced by Protocol 4 annexed to the Act of Accession of Greece;
- amending Regulation No 2169/81 laying down the general rules for the system of aid for cotton;
- fixing the guide price for unginned cotton for the 1993/1994 marketing year;
- fixing the minimum price for unginned cotton for the 1993/1994 marketing year;
- amending Regulation No 1308/70 on the common organization of the market in flax and hemp and repealing Regulation No 3698/88 laying down special measures for hemp seed;
- fixing the aid for fibre flax and hemp and the amount withheld to finance measures to promote the use of flax fibre for the 1993/1994 marketing year;
- fixing the aid in respect of silkworms for the 1993/1994 rearing year;

Milk products

- amending Regulation No 3950/92 establishing an additional levy in the milk and milk products sector;
- amending Regulation No 2072/92 fixing the target price for milk and the intervention prices for butter, skimmed-milk powder and Grana Padano and Parmigiano Reggiano cheeses for two annual periods from 1 July 1993 to 30 June 1995;
- fixing the threshold prices for certain milk products for the 1993/1994 milk year;

Beef and veal

- fixing the guide price for adult bovine animals for the 1993/1994 marketing year;

Sheepmeat and goatmeat

- fixing the basic price and the seasonal adjustments to the basic price for sheepmeat for the 1994 marketing year;

Pigmeat

- fixing the basic price and defining the standard quality for pig carcasses for the period 1 July 1993 to 30 June 1994;

Wine

- amending Regulation No 822/87 on the common organization of the market in wine;
- amending Regulation No 2046/89 laying down general rules for distillation operations involving wine and the by-products of wine-making;
- amending Regulation No 2332/92 as regards sparkling wines produced in the Community and Regulation No 4252/88 on the preparation and marketing of liqueur wines produced in the Community;
- fixing the guide prices for wine for the 1993/1994 wine year;

Seeds

- fixing the amounts of aid for seeds for the 1994/1995 and 1995/1996 marketing year.

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In the agricultural sphere the Council also adopted Regulations

- amending Regulation No 1883/78 laying down general rules for the financing of interventions by the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund, Guarantee Section. This Regulation relates, firstly, to the possibility of refunding to Member States the financial costs of intervention purchases on the basis of a uniform interest rate fixed at a level lower than its representative level and, secondly, to the grant of financial assistance to one Member State whose interest rates are very high;
- amending Regulations Nos 2771/75 on the common organization of the market in eggs, 2777/75 on the common organization of the market in poultrymeat, 827/68 on the common organization of the market in certain products listed in Annex II to the Treaty and 2658/87 on the tariff and statistical nomenclature and on the CCT. These amendments are intended primarily to ensure uniform application of the Community's external trade regulations.

- Decisions

- = amending Directive 80/217/EEC introducing Community measures for the control of classical swine fever. The purpose of this amendment is to extend the duration of the designation of the laboratory of the Hanover Veterinary School as liaison laboratory for classical swine fever between national laboratories.
- = on reference laboratories for the monitoring of marine biotoxins. The purpose of this Decision is to designate the Community reference laboratory responsible for ensuring the effectiveness of the system for monitoring marine biotoxins implemented in the Member States and national reference laboratories, and to define the tasks, powers and operating conditions of those laboratories.
- = fixing the maximum amount eligible for expenditure on the employment of trained agricultural advisers pursuant to Regulation No 270/79. The amount for Italy is raised to ECU 25 000 per year.

Luxelles, le 10 juin 1993

**NOTE BIO (93) 158 AUX BUREAUX NATIONAUX
CC. AUX MEMBRES DU SERVICE DU PORTE PAROLE**

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**Conseil Agriculture (Luxembourg le lundi 14 juin et éventuellement mardi 15 juin 1993)
(G. Kiely)**

Le Conseil des Communautés Européennes tiendra sa 1572ème session - Agriculture - lundi 14 juin et éventuellement mardi 15 juin 1993 au Centre Européen, Plateau du Kirchberg à Luxembourg, sous la présidence de Mr. B. Westh, Ministre de l'Agriculture et de la Pêche du Royaume de Danemark. L'ordre du jour comportera les points suivants:

Approbation de la liste des points "A"

Adoption des textes résultant de l'accord du 27 mai 1993 sur le paquet "Prix"

- céréales - féculés de pommes de terre - riz

En ce qui concerne la prime aux producteurs de fécule de pommes de terre, celle ci est maintenue pour une durée, de trois ans et liée au non-dépassement du plafond de 1,5 m de tonnes.

Proposition de règlement du Conseil établissant des normes de commercialisation pour certaines matières grasses laitières et non laitières, ainsi que pour les matières grasses composées de produits végétaux et animaux. (doc. COM(91) 462 et COM (93)60)

Ce règlement envisage d'établir des règles communautaires générales relatives à la définition, la catégorisation, la dénomination et à la mise sur le marché de matières grasses à tartiner, concurrentes sur le marché. Il s'agit d'une part de garantir la stabilité des marchés et une vie équitable à la population rurale et d'autre part de protéger le consommateur, en lui rendant possible un choix en connaissance de cause.

Mesures spécifiques concernant certains produits agricoles en faveur des îles grecques de la mer Egée (doc. COM(92)569)

La Commission a procédé à un examen global de la situation socio-économique des îles grecques de la Mer Egée et a identifié les différents problèmes qui affectent ces îles. A la lumière de ce constat, la Commission s'est fixée un programme de travail qui s'articule autour des volets suivants:

1. exploitation optimale des instruments existant
2. renforcement des actions structurelles
3. mesures spécifiques Agricoles

Concernant les mesures spécifiques agricoles la proposition de règlement vise à instaurer un ensemble de mesures spécifiques agricoles à caractère pluriannuel et multisectoriel en vue de compenser le handicap que constitue l'insularité des îles mineures de la Mer Egée.

A cette fin, il est prévu d'instaurer des mesures qui s'articulent selon trois axes:

- régime spécifique d'approvisionnement
- des mesures de soutien des produits locaux
- des mesures dérogatoires en matière structurelles.

Proposition de règlement du Conseil instituant un régime de protection communautaire des obtentions végétales. (doc. COM(90)347)

Cette proposition institue un régime de protection communautaire des obtentions végétales sous la forme d'un type spécial de droits de propriété industrielle pour le développement de nouvelles variétés végétales. Elle vise à accroître la productivité de l'agriculteur en favorisant la création constante de variétés végétales améliorées et prévoit que les obtenteurs de variétés végétales puissent acquérir, par une décision unique, une protection directe et uniforme dans toute la Communauté.

Proposition de règlement du Conseil sur la protection des animaux au moment de leur abattage ou de leur mise à mort (doc. COM(91) 136 et COM(92) 460)

Il s'agit d'établir de normes minimales communes pour la protection des animaux au moment de leur abattage et de leur mise à mort.

Proposition de règlement du Conseil fixant les règles sanitaires applicables à la production et à la mise sur le marché de viandes hachées et de préparations de viandes (doc. COM(89) 671)

Cette réglementation vise à fixer:

- les prescriptions relatives à la préparation, à l'emballage, au stockage et au transport des viandes hachées et des préparations à base de viande.

Amitiés,



B. DETHOMAS

ssels, 14th June 1993

NOTE BIO (93) 158 SUITE-1 AUX BUREAUX NATIONAUX
CC. AUX MEMBRES DU SERVICE DU PORTE-PAROLE

Council of Agricultural Ministers 14.6.93 (G. Kiely):

1. The ministers had a discussion on a proposed Regulation laying down marketing standards for certain milk and non-milk fats. The purpose of this proposal is to establish Community rules for the definition and classification, designation and placing on the market of yellow fats for use as spreads and intended for supply to the final consumers. The proposal is intended to protect the interests of both consumers and producers ie. by means of guarantees regarding the product purchased and by eliminating distortions of competition. While there is a broad welcome for the proposal, two member states question its necessity. Many delegations suggest a more flexible definition of butter to take account of new manufacturing processes. Eg. It should not be necessary to label butter made from the non-traditional method as "recombined" butter. A number of delegations also want to maintain sales descriptions which are well known to consumers at national level. The proposal was sent back for further discussion to the CSA.
2. Proposal for specific measures for the smaller Aegean Islands concerning certain Agricultural products. The Commission has put forward a report and proposals in a follow up to undertakings given since the European Council in Rhodes, to increase assistance to the smaller Aegean Islands in relation to:
 - specific supply arrangements,
 - measures to support local products,
 - derogations applicable to structural measures.

The total Community cost of the measures would amount to 179 MECU over a 7 year period. Ministers comments on the proposals were largely positive although certain reservations were raised, such as the budgetary cost and the fact that other producers in similar conditions were not receiving similar levels of aid. The Presidency however concluded that the July Council should adopt the proposal as soon as Parliament has given an opinion.

Amities,
G. Kiely

Brussels, 14th June 1993

NOTE BIO (93) 158 SUITE 2 AUX BUREAUX NATIONAUX
CC. AUX MEMBRES DU SERVICE DU PORTE-PAROLE

COUNCIL OF AGRICULTURAL MINISTERS, 14.6.93
(G. Kiely)

LEVELS OF FEES TO BE CHARGED FOR HEALTH INSPECTIONS AND CONTROLS OF FRESH MEAT: A series of standard charges for these inspections are laid down and due for review. It was accepted to continue with the status quo until December 31st 1993 - after which the fees will be reviewed as also will be the rate to be used for conversion into national currency.

COUNCIL REGULATION ON COMMUNITY PLANT VARIETY RIGHTS: This proposal is one of the measures in the Commission's White Paper of 1985 on the completion of the internal market. It is designed to set up a system of Community plant variety rights as a special form of industrial property rights for the development of new varieties of plants. The issue before Council was the question of reconciling plant breeders rights with the farmers right to save and use his own seed.

Addressing the issue Mr. Steichen said that,

- The Commission defends the farmers' right to use their own seed.
- That it is important to remunerate breeders to ensure research into and development of new varieties.
- Farmers should make a contribution towards the development cost of new varieties ie. existing varieties would be excluded.
- The level of remuneration should be substantially lower than normal royalties.
- Small farmers should be excluded.
- A list of varieties should be established which would be eligible for remuneration.

While there is a consensus on the point that farmers should be able to save and use their own seed there is disagreement on whether or not there should be any payment even on new varieties. A few delegations also opposed the exclusion of small farmers from the payment obligation. The subject was sent back to Coreper for further discussion.

PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL REGULATION ON THE PROTECTION OF ANIMALS AT TIME OF SLAUGHTER: A proposal aimed at protecting animals at time of slaughter has been before Council since November 1991, ensuring humane condition for animals at time of slaughter. As the proposal is largely of a technical nature, Council was only requested to pronounce on two points ie.:

1. the advisability of rules in this area,
2. how ritual slaughter should be treated under the Regulation.

Some ministers questioned how this proposal related to the Council of Europe Convention and felt that Council should wait until the outcome of examination of problems arising from duplication between Community legislation and that covered by the Convention. The question of subsidiarity was also put forward. Others however felt that Council should forge ahead and take decisions in this area.

On ritual slaughter some delegations felt that it should be covered by a derogation from the Regulation while others believed that Member States should be allowed to maintain existing national legislation and controls.

Responding to the debate Mr. Steichen said that the Commission had exercised its' right of initiative in making the proposal and it is time for Council to take a decision. He also favoured to treat ritual slaughter as an issue of subsidiarity.

This question will have to be discussed further in Coreper.

Amitiés,
Gerry Kiely