



Brussels, 18 January 2008

Background note¹
AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES COUNCIL
Brussels, 21 January 2008

The Council will be chaired by Mr Iztok JARC, Slovenian Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Food.

*The Council will meet at 11 a.m. on Monday 21 January 2008. The Presidency will present its work programme in the field of Agriculture and Fisheries. Then the Council will try to reach **political agreement** on the simplification of **cross compliance** provisions.*

*The meeting will continue in the afternoon, with information from the Commission on the fisheries partnership agreement with **Mauritania**. At the end of the session, the Council will hold a **policy debate** on the “Health Check” of the Common Agricultural Policy*

The Presidency will hold press conferences at the end of the session [+/- 17.30].

Public events may be followed by video streaming at:
<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/videostreaming>

¹ This note has been drawn up under the sole responsibility of the Press Office.

Presidency Work Programme

Mr Iztok JARC will briefly give an overview of the work programme of the Slovenian Presidency in the field of Agriculture and Fisheries (16786/07)².

AGRICULTURE

Cross compliance

The Council will try to reach a political agreement on the Commission proposal to simplify the current rules for cross-compliance (12585/07)³, which were introduced for the first time during the CAP reform of 2003.

The main improvements proposed in the Presidency compromise package are:

- the abolition of the 10-month rule;
- the possibility of not reducing direct payments for *de minimis* and minor infringement cases;
- the setting of the *de minimis* threshold at EUR 100 (instead of EUR 50);
- the postponement of the date of identification of parcels for new MS;
- a phasing-in for the new Member States applying the Single Area Payment Scheme (SAPS).

The outstanding issues on which Ministers will provide their position are the phasing-in timetable and the possibility of partial payments.

The European Parliament's opinion was adopted on 11 December 2007.

Health Check

The Council will hold a *policy debate* on the communication on the "health check" of the CAP since its 2003 reform (15351/07).

The discussion will be framed by the following Presidency's questionnaire which entails the first exchange of views of delegations on that issue⁴, namely the **improvement of the single payment scheme**, the challenging of **environmental** concerns and the way to construct a convincing argument, stressing the vital role that the CAP plays in **societal expectations**.

1. Does the Council agree that the Commission's Communication correctly analyses both the principal evolutions since the reforms agreed in 2003/4 and the main challenges to the CAP in the years ahead?
2. In general terms, is the level of ambition and the scope of the adjustments broadly outlined in the Communication an adequate response to these challenges?
3. Does the Council believe that the Communication identifies avenues for action that would at the same time better align the CAP with general societal expectations while preserving the

² For further information see the Slovenian Presidency website:
http://www.eu2008.si/en/Policy_Areas/Agriculture_and_Fisheries/index.html

³ See Council conclusions of 11-12 June 2007 (Press release 10169/07)

⁴ See Council Press release of 26 November 2007 (15333/07)

European model of agriculture?

The Presidency intends to draw Council conclusions in March in order to allow the Commission to come back with legislative proposals in May for their detailed discussion in the second half of 2008.

The European Parliament has been consulted.

FISHERIES

Fisheries Partnership Agreement with Mauritania

The Council should be informed by Commissioner Joe Borg about the ongoing discussions with Mauritania on the existing Protocol setting out the fishing opportunities and financial contribution provided for in the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Community and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.

OTHER BUSINESS

(a) WTO-DDA negotiation - Information from the Commission

The Commission will inform delegations on the state of play of the negotiation in the agriculture field.

(b) Free distribution of fruit and vegetables in 2008 – Request from the Belgian delegation

The Belgian delegation will present a request concerning the possible solutions to continue free distribution of fruit and vegetable to schools and charitable institutions during year 2008, pending the entry into application of the school fruit scheme on 1st January 2009.
