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# ***EuroFlash***

***A monthly update on EU news from the  
Cheshire Brussels Office***



**International Unit**

# ***Agriculture and Rural Development***

## **Agricultural policy briefs**

The European Commission's Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development is launching a new publication entitled 'Agricultural policy perspective briefs'. The briefs will discuss policy aspects of the Common Agricultural Policy from an analytical angle, linking this to the discussions on the future of the CAP. The first brief to be published covers the development of the CAP over the last two decades, and considers the current position of the policy following recent reforms and how this will influence future policy changes.

[http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/analysis/perspec/app-briefs/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/analysis/perspec/app-briefs/index_en.htm)

## **French Seek Ambitious Farm Policy**

On the 10<sup>th</sup> December a group of 22 European Union countries called for an "ambitious" new farm policy in the bloc to face global food and climate challenges, but deferred divisive budgetary issues for future talks. It made the call in a joint statement after a meeting of the G22 to discuss the renewal of the EU farm policy, or Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which is due to be renewed in 2013. French farm minister, who chaired the meeting, said the group was against the kind of drastic cut in the EU's farm budget floated in a recent paper from the EU's executive arm, but that the 22 countries had not discussed budget questions during the meeting. Five EU members were not in attendance including the UK, a traditional opponent of France in farm negotiations; although French officials said a British representative would join the group of 22 later for lunch in an "observer" role. The Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and Malta also declined to attend the Paris meeting.

The European Commission is considering a radical overhaul of the budget currently worth €125 billion annually (approximately 40% of the 27 country budget) that would move spending away from agriculture towards innovation, climate and energy.

## **CAP simplification not ambitious enough**

On the 16 December the EU's agriculture ministers reacted positively to the intentions of Agriculture Commissioner, Mariann Fischer Boel, on simplification of the Common Agricultural Policy. Several delegations, including the UK, indicated disappointment over the executive's lack of ambition and its failure to take all 39 proposals submitted last April by Denmark, and supported by 12 other delegations, into account. Fischer Boel considered that most of the proposals came within the remit of management committees or expert groups, but were not the responsibility of ministers.

Luxembourg and Germany pointed out the need to streamline the monitoring of farms: member states should not be spending more on carrying out such controls than what can be gained from them for the public funds. Germany also insisted that the simplification exercise should not be limited to the first pillar of the CAP (direct aid), since it also concerns the second pillar (rural development).

Some agriculture ministers took the opportunity in the debate on the future of rural development policy to reiterate their commitment to a policy for it to remain part of the CAP and not to be attached to regional policy.

The 27 experts also approved a third set of proposals for financing the additional rural development measures decided under the CAP 'health check' and the European economic recovery plan. This decision, which concerns five national and 32 regional programmes, leads to the release of €2.976 billion, bringing to €4.6 billion, when added to those taken in October and November.

### **Post 2013 revamp for veterinary funds**

On the 15<sup>th</sup> December the Health Commissioner indicated that at the start of 2011, the European Commission hopes to be in a position to present a legislative proposal for an animal health law that defines core principles and ties between health, animal welfare and other aspects, such as criteria for sustainable agricultural production. Such a law would provide a basis from which to develop other more concrete measures in the veterinary field.

The aim is to enable the EU to evolve from a situation where it finances farmers' losses in cases of outbreaks of epizootic diseases, to a situation where it would concentrate on prevention measures.

### **EU agricultural income per worker down in 2009**

According to a Eurostat report published on the 18<sup>th</sup> December 2009 EU real agricultural income per worker decreased by 12.2% in 2009, following a fall of 2.5% in 2008. This decline results from a reduction in real agricultural income (-14.2%), together with a fall in agricultural labour input (-2.2%). The decrease in real agricultural income is mainly the result of a sharp fall in the value of agricultural output at producer prices, which is estimated to have decreased by 10.9% in the EU27, mainly due to a decrease in the value of both crop production (-13.2%) and animal production (-9.7%) in real terms.

[http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_PUBLIC/5-18122009-AP/EN/5-18122009-AP-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/5-18122009-AP/EN/5-18122009-AP-EN.PDF)

## ***New European Faces and Groupings***

Following the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty the two most significant appointments of President of the European Council and that of High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy have been made.

### **Herman Van Rompuy - President of the European Council**

Herman Van Rompuy was born in Etterbeek (Brussels) on October 31, 1947. He has a Bachelor in Philosophy from the Catholic University of Leuven in 1968 and in 1971 he secured a Master's degree in Applied Economics, also from Leuven.

He is married to Geertrui Windels and father of four (Peter, born in 1980; Laura, 1981; Elke, 1983; and Thomas, 1986). He started his professional career at the National Bank of Belgium in 1972 at which time he was Vice President of the Flemish Christian democrat Youth section from 1973 to 1975. From 1978 he was a member of the National Bureau of the CVP, worked in ministerial cabinets and became chairman of the Flemish Christian democrat CVP in 1988 (until 1993). He was Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Budget from September 1993 to July 1999 and following his party's defeat in the 1999 Belgian general election; he became a member of the Chamber of Deputies. In 2004 he was designated Minister of State, from July 2007 to December 2008 he was Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies, and was asked by King Albert II to take over the job as Prime Minister of the country.

On 1<sup>st</sup> January 2010 he formally becomes the first President of the European Council.

### **Baroness Ashton - High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy**

Catherine Ashton was born in Upholland in Lancashire, from where she takes her title, Baroness Ashton of Upholland. She is married to former journalist and pollster Peter Kellner, and has two children and three stepchildren.

She worked in the public, private and voluntary sector and from 1983-89 she was Director of Business in the Community, and established the Employers' Forum on Disability, Opportunity Now, and the Windsor Fellowship. She chaired the Health Authority in Hertfordshire from 1998 to 2001, and became a Vice President of the National Council for One Parent Families. In 1999 Catherine Ashton became a life peer.

She took on a ministerial position (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State) in the Department for Education and Skills in 2001, and subsequently in the Department for Constitutional Affairs and Ministry of Justice; became a Privy Councillor in May 2006, and was appointed Leader of the House of Lords and Lord President of the Queen's Privy Council in Gordon Brown's first Cabinet in June 2007. As well as Leader of the Lords, she took responsibility for equalities issues. She took the Lisbon Treaty through the UK's upper chamber.

In 2005 Catherine Ashton was voted House Magazine Minister of the Year and Channel 4 Peer of the Year. In 2006, she was voted Stonewall Politician of the Year. She has been European Commissioner for Trade since October 2008.

Catherine Ashton has been appointed as High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

### **28 European Parliament Thematic Intergroups Agreed**

On the 8<sup>th</sup> December at the meeting of secretaries-general (these groups bring together MEPs from different political groups who wish to work together on a clearly defined subject) agreed that 28 Intergroups will be set up in the European Parliament;

- SMEs
- Ways of Saint James/Camino de Santiago
- Family, the right of the child and bioethics
- Sky and space
- Youth issues
- Urban
- Mountainous, island and sparsely populated regions and very remote regions
- Social economy
- Sustainable hunting, biodiversity, countryside activities and forests
- Extreme poverty and human rights, Fourth World European Committee
- Disability
- Tibet
- Climate change and biodiversity and sustainable development
- Water
- Baltic Europe
- Media
- Ageing and intergenerational solidarity

- Seas and coastal affairs
- Welfare and conservation of animals
- Trade union coordination group
- New media, free software, open information
- Society
- Traditional national minorities, constitutional regions and regional languages
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights
- Public services
- Western Sahara
- Anti-racism and diversity (Roma included)
- Wine, fruits and vegetables, tradition and quality food

## ***Spanish Presidency***

From 1 January to 30 June 2010, Spain will hold the six-month rotating presidency of the European Union. Spain said it will act in close coordination with the two following EU presidency holders Belgium (July-December 2010) and Hungary (January-June 2011) and they have chosen a common logo to symbolise their partnership.

The Spanish Presidency will be the first to operate under the rules of the Lisbon Treaty and as such the relationship with the new posts created; the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the permanent president of the European Council, could set a precedent for the future institutional balance of the European architecture. At a meeting on the 18<sup>th</sup> December Mr Miguel Angel Moratinos, Spanish foreign minister, said Spain will only play a supporting role to the EU's new leaders. He indicated that, with the Lisbon Treaty now in force, Spain will take a step back on the EU scene and will provide full support to Europe's new leaders and institutions.

An additional 80 people have been employed by the Spanish Permanent Representation to the EU in Brussels to help organise the presidency and in Madrid, a special committee of 40 people has been assembled. Spain estimates that cost of holding the presidency will be in the order of €55 million.

The presidency will focus on four main areas:

- The economy, with the recovery from the economic crisis and job creation on top of the agenda;
- Implementing the Lisbon Treaty;
- Citizenship, paying particular attention to gender equality, and;
- Foreign affairs, helping the EU to become a genuine global player.

The Spanish prime minister also seeks to push for the adoption of a "Systemic risk Council", a new body designed to alert the Union on possible crises similar to the financial crisis. They will also press for the adoption of three directives concerning the exchange of tax information which is aimed at stepping up the fight against tax fraud in all the EU countries.

## ***Energy and Transport***

### **Extra funds for carbon storage, offshore wind**

On the 9<sup>th</sup> December the European Commission approved a series of offshore wind and carbon capture and storage (CCS) projects that will receive over €1.5 billion from the EU's economic recovery fund. Six CCS demonstration projects were deemed mature enough to qualify for the €1 billion designated to support the fledgling technology and they included Hatfield in the UK. These projects were selected out of a total of 12 proposals, with a further four put on a reserve list should one of the selected projects fall through. But the EU executive stressed that this would be extremely unlikely.

On offshore wind energy, nine projects out of the 29 proposed will share a total of €565 million.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/1896&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

### **North Seas Countries' Offshore Grid Initiative**

In the margins of the Energy Council, the Ministers from UK, Germany, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Denmark, Sweden and Ireland signed a Political Declaration in Brussels today, launching an initiative to cooperate on the development of offshore wind infrastructure in the North Sea and Irish Seas. The Declaration highlights the role offshore wind energy can play in meeting the EU's 20-20-20 targets and the benefits an integrated offshore grid can bring in terms of security of supply and market integration. The complexity of the initiative calls for improved multilateral collaboration and recognises that this requires a common vision supported by Ministers.

The intention is to prepare at working level a strategic work plan in early 2010 with the aim of coordinating offshore infrastructure development. This would be enshrined in a Memorandum of Understanding to be signed later in 2010. The nine will also identify national offshore renewable ambitions as well as present and future shortcomings in grid infrastructure development.

[http://tvnewsroom.consilium.europa.eu/story/index/story\\_id/15286/media\\_id/31428](http://tvnewsroom.consilium.europa.eu/story/index/story_id/15286/media_id/31428)

## ***Economy***

### **Bio Pharma SMES Hardest Hit**

On the 1<sup>st</sup> December a report sponsored by the EU was published which indicate that Europe's biopharmaceutical sector is under severe pressure due to the reluctance of investors to gamble on high-risk drug development projects. Research-intensive companies have been hardest hit, with venture capitalists avoiding investment in biopharma firms that can spend up to 15 years working for a breakthrough that might spawn new medicines.

Consequently biotech and pharmaceutical R&D in Europe is suffering from a lack of investment, and has called for a dedicated EU-wide fund.

The survey says there are three major funding gaps in R&D.

- First funding gap: obtaining funding for platform development and pre-clinical development (early stage)
- Second funding gap: obtaining funding for clinical trials phases I and II (middle stage)
- Third funding gap: obtaining funding for clinical trials phase III, manufacturing and marketing (late stage)

The report warns that if this funding shortage is allowed to continue, it could jeopardise Europe's status as one of the world's leading locations for biopharmaceutical R&D, and could hit jobs and the region's economic success.

[http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/document.cfm?action=display&doc\\_id=5546&userservice\\_id=1&request.id=0](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/document.cfm?action=display&doc_id=5546&userservice_id=1&request.id=0)

## ***Environment - Copenhagen***

About 120 world leaders and 193 countries met in Copenhagen to agree a new global climate deal, the basis for a full climate treaty next year (a new pact would replace the Kyoto Protocol, whose present round ends in 2012). The objective of the meeting was to negotiate an agreement on curbing greenhouse gas emissions, in order to prevent dangerous climate change. The key challenges faced by the conference were;

- Developing nations want rich nations to cut emissions by at least 25% by 2020 - rich nations are reluctant to go so far
- The US insists China curbs its emissions, and allows international verification
- Poor nations want climate aid to come largely from public finances, while the West favours schemes like carbon trading

The resulting 'Copenhagen Agreement' is a political declaration to which two decisions are attached, one under the Climate Convention and the other under the Kyoto Protocol. It is these texts which, according to the rules of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), make the agreement binding. The agreement has the effect that the United States, which negotiated and accepted it, is now committed to a binding process.

The agreement was put together by the United States, China, Brazil, India and South Africa; subsequently accepted some countries and rejected by others. The accord was merely "recognised" by the 193 nations at the Copenhagen summit, rather than approved, which would have required unanimous support.

The text recognises the need to limit global temperatures rising to no more than 2°C (3.6F) above pre-industrial levels but the language in the text shows that 2°C is not a formal target, just that the group "recognises the scientific view that" the temperature increase should be held below this figure.

The agreement promises to deliver \$30bn (£18.5bn) of aid for developing nations over the next three years and outlines a goal of providing \$100bn a year by 2020 to help poor countries cope with the impacts of climate change.

The agreement also pledges that rich countries will come under "rigorous, robust and transparent" scrutiny under the UNFCCC.

The implementation of the Copenhagen Accord will be reviewed by 2015. This will take place about a year-and-a-half after the next scientific assessment of the global climate by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

At a meeting in Brussels on 22 December the EU environment ministers indicated that they were disappointed and frustrated with the outcome, which did not meet the EU's expectations or ambitions. The Swedish Council President, Environment Minister Andreas Carlgren, and Spanish State Secretary for the Environment Theresa Ribera, who will chair the Council from January, will now consider the next steps. The European Commission is invited to carry out a detailed analysis and to submit it to the Council at the informal meeting set for 15-17 January 2010 in Seville.

## Social

### **Discrimination Report**

A survey carried out by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and published on 9 December found high levels of discriminatory treatment against ethnic minorities and Immigrant groups. The results show that these groups also experience "criminal victimisation, including racially motivated crime". The survey found employment and education to be the most problematic areas for some groups.

On average, nearly every fifth person from the Roma and Sub-Saharan African groups said they had been a victim of serious harassment at least once in the last 12 months. The highest incidence rate for serious harassment was found for Roma respondents in Greece. The list of groups that experience the highest level of discrimination also includes Sub-Saharan Africans in Ireland (54%), North-Africans in Italy (52%), Somalis in Finland (47%) and in Denmark (46%) and Brazilians in Portugal (44%).

Currently, a draft anti-discrimination directive is being negotiated in the Council, which aims to "complement" existing anti-discrimination legislation in the areas of social protection.

[http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/news&events/news&events\\_en.htm](http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/news&events/news&events_en.htm)

### **Foreign Nationals Report**

According to a report published by Eurostat on the 16<sup>th</sup> December (to coincide with International Migrants' Day on 18 December), among the EU's member states the highest percentage of foreign citizens in the population was found in Luxembourg (43% of the total population), followed by Latvia (18%), Estonia (17%), Cyprus (16%), Ireland (13%), Spain (12%) and Austria (10%). The percentage of foreign citizens was less than 1% in Romania, Poland, Bulgaria and Slovakia. In total, foreign citizens accounted for 6.2% of the total EU27 population.

On 1 January 2008, 30.8 million foreign citizens lived in the EU member states, of which 11.3 million were citizens of another EU member state.

[http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_PUBLIC/3-16122009-BP/EN/3-16122009-BP-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/3-16122009-BP/EN/3-16122009-BP-EN.PDF)

## ***Join the Manchester Debate***

### **'IS THE EU GOOD FOR BRITAIN?' MANCHESTER: 21 JANUARY 2010**

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office invites you to join the audience and participate in a discussion on whether the European Union is good or bad for Britain. They are looking for a diverse audience that includes businesses, education, and communities, as well as members of the public.

The event will be chaired by a well-known TV personality. A Foreign Office Minister will be joined on a panel by a cross-section of leading public opinion formers with a variety of views from the region and beyond.

The debate, which takes place in the early evening of a central Manchester location, will last an hour. Due to security arrangements, they will inform you on the exact timings and venue nearer the time. Applications are required by the 15<sup>th</sup> January but you can register online at [www.fco.gov.uk/europedebate](http://www.fco.gov.uk/europedebate) or by phone 0207 008 3347.

They will let you know whether you have a place in the audience by the 18<sup>th</sup> January.

## ***Partner Search***

- The infant and primary school Ramón Gaya situated in the district of Santomera, in the city of Murcia in Spain is working on a project addressed to the 2010 call for proposals of Lifelong Learning Programme, sub-programme Comenius. The project is aimed to acquire values and healthy habits through a music group: 'The Feel- Good- Band'. This group of students will travel around Europe in order to share their values, culture and healthy habits, learning from other countries too.
- The Psychopedagogical Guidance Team, a public team of advisers in the municipality of Molina de Segura, in Spain, is working on a project addressed to the 2010 call for proposals of Lifelong Learning Programme, sub-programme Grundtvig. It aims to develop new forms of guidance for parents and to contribute improving parental involvement in education of their children.
- The Pays des Six Vallées, a Local Action Group (LAG) located in the Poitou-Charentes Region, is currently looking for another LAG in Europe to set up a bilateral cooperation project on Arts in rural areas in the framework of the LEADER programme. The purpose of the cooperation would be to involve the local population in contemporary Art projects to increase environmental awareness.
- The Local Government Training Centre of Latvia is seeking partners for a Leonardo project which seeks to transfer and adapt online e-learning English language programmes that would be suitable for professional education and after words adapted to more general benefits.
- Jose Zerpa vocational training high school from Vecindario, Gran is looking for partners to carry out and develop the project:” The same sea, a different

view“within the 2010 Comenius call. The project aims at improving the common knowledge of four school communities that, although located in distant geographical areas, share a common element in their culture: the sea.

**Disclaimer**

Cheshire West and Chester and Cheshire East Councils have made every effort to ensure the accuracy of the contents of this publication. They cannot, however, be held responsible for any errors or omissions it may contain.

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