

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Dutch Priorities for their Chair of the EU Council

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Report Highlights:

During the first half of 2016, the Netherlands will chair the Council of the European Union. This report outlines the Dutch priorities during this period. For the Agriculture and Fisheries Council, the main priority is to create effective regulations and an equal playing field for agricultural production and trade, but in consideration of the climate, environment and sustainability.

General Information:

Introduction

From January – June 2016, the Netherlands will chair the Council of the European Union (EU Council). In the total of ten EU Council configurations, the national ministers meet to adopt laws and coordinate policies. On December 7, 2015, the Dutch Parliament discussed the Chair edition of the Dutch State of the Union. In this document the main challenges of the European Union (EU) and the Dutch priorities during their chair period are outlined.

Below is a summary of the agricultural and trade related priorities in four Councils: the Foreign Affairs Council, the Agriculture and Fisheries Council, the Environment Council, and the Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council.

Foreign Affairs Council

-The European Commission (EC) proposal *Follow-up to the Trade and Investment Strategy*, published in October 2015, provides a strong basis for the Dutch trade priorities. This strategy underlines the importance of transparency and joint values in international trade policies.

-The Netherlands will support an efficient continuation of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations, but in consideration of the public debate.

Agriculture and Fisheries Council

-For the Dutch agricultural sector an equal playing field and effective regulations are of great importance. This includes Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), as well as veterinary and phyto-sanitary regulations. The Netherlands will strive for a simplification of these regulations on the short term. In particular important for the Dutch is the “greening” the CAP. The Netherlands reportedly also plans to conclude the proposed revision of the organic farming regulation. During May 29-31, an informal Council meeting is scheduled to assess whether changes to the CAP are needed.

-Special attention will be given to the sectors which face a crisis, such as the dairy and swine sector.

-Another priority of the Dutch Government is to support food security through climate smart agriculture and minimizing agricultural and food waste.

-A top priority of the Dutch Government is the reduction of Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR) by a stronger cooperation between the Ministers for Health and Ministers for Agriculture. The policy objective is to formulate concrete plans for restrictive and responsible veterinary use of antibiotics in all EU Member States. For this purpose a Ministerial Conference will be held on February 10.

-Another important topic is the imbalance between patent and farmers’ rights which hinders the access to genetic sources. The Dutch Presidency would probably also discuss the GM food and feed opt-out

proposal. It is not very likely that the issue of animal cloning will be put on the agenda.

-In preparation of the chair, the Dutch Government hosted the [Conference Global Value Chains](#) in Amsterdam on December 7, 2015. The Dutch Government supports the development and introduction of multi-stakeholder sustainability programs for agro-commodities. The main goal of these programs is to reduce poverty and stop deforestation in the developing countries. The focus of this conference was how the EU and Member State policies can support these goals.

Environment Council

-The Dutch Government has the opinion that the global challenges related to the climate, environment and sustainability must be integrated in a *Model for Sustainable Growth*. This model must be the basis for the formulation of a circular economy and a sustainable use of inputs. For this reason, the Netherlands supports the announced EC proposal *Next steps for a Sustainable European Future* and the realization of the *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*. The *Circular Economy Package*, anticipated to be published by the EC this month, will reportedly be an important document for the policy discussions.

Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council

-The Netherlands will support the establishment of an *EU Energy Union* as earlier defined in the *Energy Union Package* in 2014. This policy is based on strengthen the energy supply and internal energy market, reducing the dependency on energy, and support innovation to produce renewable energy and counter climate change.