



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council Conclusions on the Commission Communication "A Simplified CAP - a success for all"

*2944th AGRICULTURE and FISHERIES Council meeting
Brussels, 25 May 2009*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. RECALLING that simplifying the CAP is essential to making the European agricultural economy more competitive, preserving and creating jobs, in the context of the renewed Lisbon strategy, and to contributing to a sound development of the rural areas.
2. RECALLING that CAP simplification creates business conditions in which farmers and other economic operators are less burdened by administrative and compliance costs, better equipped to adapt to market signals as well as to cope with the challenges of the current economic crisis; and thus helps European agriculture better respond to general societal expectations.
3. RECALLING the Council (Competitiveness) conclusions on Better Regulation of 25-26 September 2008, as well as the Council (Ecofin) conclusions on the Reduction of administrative burden of 10 March 2009.
4. RECALLING the Conclusions of the European Council of 19-20 March 2009 calling for work to be speeded up and for concrete measures to be taken urgently *inter alia* on further reducing the administrative burden.
5. WELCOMES the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council "A simplified CAP for Europe - a success for all".

P R E S S

6. WELCOMES the achievements on simplification of the CAP since 2005 and the work undertaken by the Commission in the context of the CAP Simplification Action Plan, and UNDERLINES that CAP simplification is an ongoing priority requiring continuous attention.
7. DECLARES its ambition to bring about further practical benefits for farmers and national administrations in particular on direct payments, while maintaining the role of the CAP for European agriculture; and CONSIDERS that efforts need to be stepped up by all involved parties.
8. RECALLS that EU farmers are faced with rules resulting from a broad legal environment. In this context:
 - CONFIRMS that efforts to simplify and to reduce unnecessary administrative burden on the farmer are comprehensive objectives that need to be pursued in all policy areas relevant to the agricultural sector;
 - REITERATES that the Commission should take work forward in a coordinated way; and
 - CONFIRMS that work at national and/or regional level should be in step with progress at EU level.
9. ACKNOWLEDGES the benefits of technical simplification within a constant policy framework. In this context:
 - NOTES the progress made by the Commission on cleaning up the agricultural rules, CONSIDERS that this work should be pursued systematically, and AWAITS the Commission proposal for the repeal of obsolete Council acts;
 - CONFIRMS that the exercise on establishing a Single common organisation for agricultural markets marked an important accomplishment; NOTES that the Regulation has been substantially amended further to the recent reforms; WELCOMES the completion of this process with the integration of the rules on the reformed wine sector; NOTES the need to keep the Regulation easy to read and to apply, and therefore URGES the Commission to make the consolidated version available in all languages at the earliest opportunity and thereafter to come forward with a proposal to codify the Regulation;
 - CONSIDERS that the opportunity of carrying out a similar consolidation exercise in other areas of legislation applicable to the agricultural sector would require careful analysis; and
 - ENCOURAGES the Commission in its efforts to carry out further simplification and reduction of administrative burden at the level of Commission implementing provisions and together with the Member States to keep the costs of implementation proportionate.

10. CONFIRMS that in drawing up new agricultural legislation there is a need for well structured and rigorous analysis on *inter alia* the potential impact in terms of administrative burden and for quantification of costs and benefits of proposed policy options, in line with the Commission revised Impact Assessment Guidelines, and UNDERLINES its intention to pay particular attention to these aspects in its examination of Commission proposals.
11. Remains COMMITTED to reaching the target of a 25% reduction in administrative burdens arising from EU legislation by 2012 at the latest; SHARES THE VIEW of the Commission that work is on track; NOTES the expected reduction in the administrative burden on farmers which the Commission estimates could equal EUR 1 400 million by 2012; and INVITES the Commission to pursue its efforts so that farmers can reap the full benefits of the CAP.
12. REAFFIRMS its Health Check commitment, given together with the Commission, to continue work with the objective of obtaining further simplification for farmers, as well as national administrations, regarding the application of the requirements on cross compliance; REAFFIRMS that cross compliance constitutes a major component of the reformed CAP; RECALLS that the overall administrative burden should not be increased and, where possible, should be reduced, and TAKES NOTE of the Commission's intention to consider a single legal act on cross compliance as one possible step in the context of the above.
13. UNDERLINES the importance of sharing best practices and in this context CONSIDERS:
 - that the Commission Simplification Experts Group should be given a more proactive role in regularly identifying and considering simplification related issues and the reduction of undue administrative burden, involving the full participation of Member States and their relevant experts;
 - that the Heads of Paying Agencies have valuable experience in the implementation of the CAP on the ground, and that the outcome of their discussions on simplification related issues should be considered on a regular basis by the Simplification Experts Group and where appropriate in Council.
14. ENCOURAGES the Commission in its efforts to ensure that EU legislation is based on good legislative practice. In this context:
 - CONSIDERS that the use of Common starting dates in order to facilitate a more structured approach in dealing with policy change at both legislative and administrative levels could be analysed further, provided that the necessary flexibility is maintained;
 - CONSIDERS that as regards performing a more regular review of Council and Commission legislation, the appropriate method should preserve legal certainty and that therefore the opportunity of including a review clause in new legislation should be considered, bearing in mind the overall objective of reducing undue administrative burden;

- CONSIDERS that on language use and accessibility of legal texts, and in the context of the 2003 Interinstitutional Agreement on better lawmaking, the accessibility of legal texts presupposes that legislation is of good quality namely that it is simple, clear, consistent and easily understandable and ENCOURAGES the Commission to pursue its efforts in drafting legal acts, including proposals for Council legislation, in this regard.

In this context of good legislative practice, UNDERLINES the need for practical and clear guidance on changes to CAP legislation explaining what the implications are for farmers and administrations in non legal terms, while respecting the concept of shared management.

15. EMPHASISES the important role of information technology in reducing the administrative burden for farmers and of the need to keep pace with IT developments. In this context takes note of the Commission's intention to simplify and harmonise the legal framework for communication and conservation of information and documents in the context of the shared management of the CAP and ENCOURAGES the Commission in its efforts to bring the Information System for Agricultural Market Management and Monitoring (ISAMM) into full operation as soon as possible.
16. Further TAKES NOTE of:
 - the Commission's intention to set up a training programme for officials from the Commission Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development, and CONFIRMS that this should be designed to further deepen understanding of the challenges European agriculture faces and, in addition to a farm stay, should also involve contact with the local and national administrations; and
 - the Commission's intentions to further address the issue of simplification and reduction of the administrative burden in the context of the agricultural quality policy and AWAITS the Commission's Communication in this regard.
17. Finally, INVITES the Commission to give its full and immediate consideration to the suggestions of Member States made in Council¹ with a view to Council next returning to this issue under the future Swedish Presidency in November 2009."

¹ See in particular document 9103/09.