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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations

Subject:	Outcome of a trilateral Ministerial meeting on animal welfare (Vught, the Netherlands, 14 December 2014) - Information from the Danish, German and Netherlands delegations
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Delegations will find in Annex an information note from the Danish, German and Netherlands delegations, to be presented under "Any other business" at the Council ("Agriculture and Fisheries") at its session on 15-16 December 2014.

For decades animal welfare has been and is one of the corner stones of animal husbandry policies in the EU. Accordingly, Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union states that animals are sentient beings and therefore the Union and the Member States are committed to pay full regard to animal welfare requirements while developing and implementing the Union's policies on amongst others the areas agriculture, fisheries, transport and internal market.

Legislation in numerous areas, the latest being the implementation of new rules on the housing of pigs and laying hens, not only create a level playing field throughout the Union but also enables the Union and its Member States to maintain their global leading position in the area of animal welfare. EU-action on animal welfare has the possibility to promote growth, competitiveness, investments and innovation, all factors to strengthen the competitive position of the agricultural sector of the EU and its Member States.

Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands hold the view that the European Union and its Member States should work to maintain this leading position, also after the expiration of the Animal Welfare Strategy in 2015. In order to do so there is a need to address the following three areas in the field of animal welfare policy and regulation:

- *Better regulation*: to develop proposals for a simpler and modern legislation in the area of animal welfare, better encompassing scientific developments, technological innovations and socio-economic conditions and which will be clearer and better enforceable.
- *Better welfare*: at the same time improve the current level of animal welfare in several areas.
- *Promotion of awareness and knowledge*: there is a need to raise awareness, at both European and global level and in different arenas, for the well-being of animals. Moreover, research, development and innovation will enable the Union and its Member States to keep a leading position in this area, and will help to maintain a competitive advantage on world markets.

During the AGRIFISH Council of 15 and 16 December 2014 Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands will report on the outcome of a Ministerial event on this subject held on 14 December 2014 in the Netherlands, where a Joint Declaration on Animal Welfare will be adopted covering the areas mentioned above in more detail. The Joint Declaration will also be a declaration of cooperation between Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands in the field of animal welfare. Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands would like to seek the views of the Member States and the Commission on these issues and would like to invite all Member States to join this initiative and to take part in the future cooperation to improve animal welfare in the EU.
