COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION

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NOTE
from : Belgian delegation
to : Council
Subject : Outcome of the reflection day “The Pig Meat Sector towards 2020”
(Brussels, 3 December 2010)

Delegations will find attached a note submitted by the Belgian delegation to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the Council (Agriculture and Fisheries) on 13 December 2010.
On December 3rd a reflection day was organised on the premises of the Flemish Parliament called “The Pig Meat Sector towards 2020”. The pig farmers have for some time been confronted with a combination of rising costs, mainly resulting from high feed prices, which represent a considerable share of the total costs, and the low meat prices. This has created an exceptional high level of pressure on the farmers’ revenue.

The purpose of this reflection day was to make a listing, together with all the stakeholders, of the measures which have already been taken by government and sector in order to be able to face these difficulties and to examine which measures are recommended to offer the European pig farmers a sustainable long term perspective.

During the reflection day contributions were made by scientists (OECD and LEI-Wageningen) and reflections were received from the European umbrella organisations representing the various links in the pig sector chain (COPA-COGECA, UECBV, CLITRAVI and FEFAC). Representatives from 23 Member States clarified the situation and the measures already implemented in their own country. Next the European Commission expressed her points of view on the situation in the pig sector and the prospects/expectations in the short term.

During the various interventions from the Member States it became obvious how severely the crisis has hit Europe. Especially among the newer Member States the consequences are dramatic. A number of delegations therefore suggested that the current market instruments are inadequate to support the pig sector and insisted on a long term strategy, within the framework of the recent communication on November 18th from the Commission “The CAP towards 2020”. A follow-up group with experts from the member-states was mentioned as one of the instruments to realise this long term strategy. Further on, the need for a viable income and the high European requirements in respect of food safety, environment, animal welfare, etc. were pointed out. Also the problem of protein deficiency was repeatedly mentioned, as well as the potential added value of producer organisations and of additional investments in promotion campaigns both within and outside our European borders. Many delegations also focussed attention on the need for a better functioning food chain.
This reflection day has made a significant contribution to the current discussion on the future of the CAP, the proposals of which are expected towards the middle of next year. This reflection day not only brought to light the opportunities and dangers facing the pig meat sector which the future CAP can respond to, but has also clearly shown that a large majority of the Member States wish to play an active role in order to make the European pig sector a dynamic, sustainable and future orientated sector. The creation of a permanent follow-up group could be a first step in this direction.