COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION

Brussels, 18 March 2009

7730/09

AGRILEG 37

NOTE

from : Cypriot delegation
to : Council
Subject : Dramatic situation in the sheep and goat sector in Cyprus due to Scrapie

Delegations will find attached a note submitted by the Cypriot delegation, to be dealt with under “Any other business” at the Council (Agriculture and Fisheries) on 23 March 2009.
The last amendment of Regulation 999/2001 (reg. 103/2009) requires that, starting March 2009, a strict program of eradication of Scrapie has to be implemented. In the case of Cyprus, an initial assessment showed that more than 110 000 heads of livestock, equivalent to 25 % of our sheep and goat population, will have to be eliminated. More recent estimates of the Veterinary Services raise this number to 160 000 heads.

Cyprus will also have to apply very strict rules with respect to animal movements and the use of sheep and goat milk.

It must point out that the above are conservative estimates, and that the actual number of animals to be destructed will be even higher and that there will be serious additional consequences as a result of the complete disturbance of our meat and dairy products markets and other distortions.

The extent of the destruction of animals is such that it is hardly possible for producers to acquire replacement stock in the short term, considering also that the breeds used in Cyprus are of local origin and cannot be found elsewhere in the EU. Experts confirm that affected farms will need more than a year to restock their flocks. In the middle of the worst economic crisis of the last decades, our farmers will be suffering income losses of a considerable magnitude while the market of animal products and local cheese specialties made of sheep and goat milk will be completely dysfunctional.

Under these circumstances we believe that exceptional market support measures like those provided for under Article 44 of Council Regulation 1234/07 are urgently needed in order to reduce and eventually correct the consequences of the expected serious market disturbances of the Scrapie eradication program.
It should be noted that Article 44 of 1234/07 provides for an appropriate legal basis for a measure of this kind. The situation in Cyprus calls for urgent measures not only in terms of restrictions in movement and trade of infected animals and their products, be it meat or milk, but, far beyond that, it calls for the urgent elimination of a high proportion of the national flock.

It should be also be pointed out that given the limited financial envelope that Cyprus received in 2005 for Rural Development and the absence of any possibility to use the animal disease related provisions of the new Article 68 of Regulation 73/2009 for the purpose of dealing with the consequences of the Scrapie eradication program, we cannot see any other way out than to hope for a positive reaction from the Commission to our request under Regulation 1234/07 and the Solidarity of the fellow members of the Council.