

**NAT Section – Upcoming opinions  
April 2022**

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### 1. Sustainable food systems, Agriculture & Fisheries

#### **NAT/845 - Revision of the EU geographical indications (GIs) systems**

Geographical indications (GIs) identify EU foods and drinks having characteristics linked to the place of origin and protect them against fraud (GIs are protected as intellectual property rights).

[The EC initiative](#), under the REFIT programme, will consider simplification and administrative burden. The specific objectives include making the GI instrument more attractive to producer groups across the EU and enabling consumers to make informed choices on GIs by giving clear information on GIs through the logo and labelling information.

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 13-14/07/2022

#### **NAT/849 - Action plan to conserve fisheries resources and protect marine ecosystems**

This [action plan](#) is one of the deliverables announced in the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, with the overall aim to conserve fisheries resources and protect marine ecosystems. Where necessary, measures will be introduced to limit the use of fishing gear most harmful to biodiversity, including on the seabed. It will also look at how to reconcile the use of bottom-contacting fishing gear with biodiversity goals. This must be done in a fair and just way for all.

In particular, the action plan will point out where action is needed to address the by-catch of sensitive species and adverse impacts on sensitive habitats through technical measures such as area closures, gear changes and mitigation measures for sensitive species.

The overall objective of this initiative is to concretely exploit the synergies between the fisheries and environmental policies. It will contribute to one of the main objectives of the European Green Deal, in making fisheries more sustainable, protecting marine ecosystems and their biodiversity.

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 21-22/09/2022

#### **NAT/850 - [Management, conservation and control measures applicable in the Convention of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas \(ICCAT\)](#) – Cat. B**

Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) 2017/2107 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2017 laying down management, conservation and control measures applicable in the Convention of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)

Rapporteur-general: Mr Javier Garat Pérez

Awaiting the European Commission's proposal

No foreseen adoption date at the EESC yet

### **NAT/856 - Towards a sustainable plant protein and plant oil strategy for the EU – OIO**

The EU has a major deficit in proteins, producing around 5 million tons of protein crops per year<sup>1</sup> but importing most of what the EU agricultural sector needs, in particular feed material such as soybeans. The EU is also a net importer of oilseeds and palm oil, while producing around 30 million tonnes of oilseeds per year (mainly rapeseed, followed by sunflower seed and soya beans)<sup>2</sup>.

The dependence on import for plant proteins and plant oils combined with the shift towards sustainable and nutritional crops consumption that meets European consumers demand needs to be well understood and analysed in order to foster opportunities for further diversification of the EU agriculture and to limit the negative environmental and social impacts of these imports, e.g. on deforestation (imports into the EU of crop and livestock products -palm oil, soy, meat, cocoa, maize, timber, rubber- account for 10% of the global deforestation<sup>3</sup>).

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 21-22/09/2022

### **NAT/857 - Towards a sustainable food labelling framework to empower consumers to make sustainable food choices – OIO**

The Farm to Fork (F2F) Strategy is at the heart of the European Green Deal (EGD) aiming to make food systems fair, healthy and environmentally friendly. The draft F2F action plan foresees - amongst others - actions to promote sustainable food consumption and facilitating the shift towards healthy, sustainable diets.

Against this background, the objective of this Own initiative opinion is to explore possible options for a sustainable food-labelling framework and to come forward with conclusions and recommendations to support the EC in the development of such a policy framework already at an early stage.

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 26-27/10/2022

### **NAT/858 - Sustainable food in the EU during the crisis on the basis of the new CAP: the contribution of conventional and organic farming to ensuring sustainable food sufficiency in EU Member States – OIO**

Although the EU as a whole is the world's biggest food exporter, the pandemic has shown a large variance between Member States in their levels of food sufficiency, with some of them facing dire shortages of even basic staples.

In the context of the Farm to Fork Strategy and the new CAP, the aim of the opinion is to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of both conventional and organic farming in order to identify the policy levers that are most effective and most likely to attain food sufficiency in EU Member States, while ensuring the transition to more sustainable food systems.

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 26-27/10/2022

### **NAT/862 - Revision of the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive (SUD)**

EU rules on the sustainable use of pesticides aim to protect human health and the environment from the possible risks and impacts of pesticides.

The rules encourage reducing pesticides through:

- integrated pest management
- alternatives to chemical pesticides.

The [EC initiative](#) reviews to what extent these objectives have been met and options for further reducing pesticide use to help meet the goals of the Farm to Fork Strategy and the European Green Deal.

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 15-16/06/2022

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1 [European Commission | Agri-food data portal | Agricultural markets | Oilseeds and protein crops \(europa.eu\)](#)

2 [Agricultural-outlook-2020-report\\_en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

3 Publications Office of the European Union: [Study on the Future of EU livestock: how to contribute to a sustainable agricultural sector?](#)

### **NAT/867 - Oceans observation — sharing responsibilities – Cat. B**

Ocean observation is essential for the knowledge base of the Green Deal. Data are collected by different authorities for different purposes.

The [EC initiative](#) aims to achieve a common EU approach for measuring once and using the data for many purposes.

It proposes:

- joint planning of observation activities
- a framework for collaboration on a national and EU scale.

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 13-14/07/2022

## **2. Sustainable rural and urban areas**

### **NAT/859 - Energy and digital transition in rural areas – Own initiative opinion (OIO)**

Rural areas can make a major contribution to reducing reliance on fossil fuels by linking the introduction of renewable energy systems to rural development programmes, with strong capacity-building and empowerment of local people.

A Digital Rural Act is indispensable to deliver on the promises of Europe's "Digital Decade" besides the Digital Markets Act and the Digital Services Act. The idea behind the DRA is to map the existing landscape of policy support, identifying the opportunities and needs of rural areas to use digitalisation in order to set priorities and ensure that this digital strategy creates the conditions to genuinely benefit rural communities.

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 21-22/09/2022

## **3. Climate Action**

### **NAT/847 - Recast of the F-gas regulation – Cat. B**

At present, F-gases (fluorinated greenhouse gases) are covered by two international agreements: The 1987 Montreal Protocol for ozone depleting substances (ODS), which also includes new gases and applications within its scope, and the Kyoto Protocol, which includes F-gas emissions that do not have an impact on the ozone layer but are nevertheless potent GHG.

The current F-gas Regulation 517/2014 intends to reduce the EU's F-gas emissions by two-thirds by 2030 compared with 2014 levels. In line with the Climate Law, the Commission must now explore a 50 – 55% reduction target for total GHG emissions. Therefore, a [review of the F-gas regulation](#) is necessary.

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 13-14/07/2022

### **NAT/848 - Revision of the ozone depleting substances regulation – Cat. B**

As part of the European Commission's 2021 work programme (Annex II, REFIT initiatives), the Commission announced its intention to launch a [revision of EU rules regarding ozone layer protection](#). The evaluation of the Ozone Regulation concluded that there is scope for simplification, clarity and better coherence. The Regulation could also be updated with the latest technological developments. The Ozone Regulation and the F-Gas Regulation are closely related as hydrofluorocarbons (HFC) are one of the solutions to replace ozone-depleting substances (ODS), and, at the same time, powerful GHGs generated by human activity.

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 13-14/07/2022

## **4. Environment and Biodiversity**

### **NAT/841 - Protecting biodiversity: nature restoration targets under EU biodiversity strategy**

The [EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030](#) sets the target of protecting 30% of EU land and sea by 2030. One third of this, areas of very high biodiversity and climate value, should be under strict protection.

To help Member States achieve these targets and develop a coherent, transnational network, the Commission developed [criteria and guidance](#) for the identification and designation of additional protected areas.

Rapporteur: Arnold PUECH d'ALISSAC; Expert: Claire LAFARGUE

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 14-15/12/2022

### **NAT/863 - [Revision of the Industrial Emissions Directive \(IED\)](#) and of the [Regulation on the European Pollutant Release and Transfer Register \(E-PRTR\)](#)**

**Directive 2010/75/EU on industrial emissions (the IED)** is the main EU instrument regulating pollutant emissions from industrial installations in order to achieve a high level of protection of the environment. Various primary industrial sectors are in the scope of the IED. Permits must be issued for these installations by national authorities with conditions based on the use of Best Available Techniques (BAT). Some areas have been identified where the IED might better support other EU legislation. The potential to do this and the options to achieve it including enhanced coherence with the E-PRTR Regulation (EC) 166/2006 will be explored.

**Regulation EC 166/2006** created the European Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (E-PRTR). Since 2007, the E-PRTR holds data reported by some 30 000 industrial facilities covering 65 economic activities. Facility operators provide data on their annual mass releases to air, water and land, as well as off-site transfers of waste and pollutants in wastewater. The data cover 91 pollutants including greenhouse gases, heavy metals and pesticides. E-PRTR activities closely mirror those regulated under the Industrial Emissions Directive (IED). As the Protocol dates from 2003, there are ongoing UNECE discussions on how the Protocol might be updated to better reflect current knowledge and needs. The main objective of the E-PRTR Regulation is to empower EU citizens with environmental data that allows them to make informed participation in environmental decision-making on the EU's largest (agro-)industrial activities. Industrial operators are required to report annually their pollutant releases (and transfers). These data are first collated by Member State competent authorities and then submitted to the European Environment Agency (EEA) for checking and populating a consolidated, EU-wide, searchable database.

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 13-14/07/2022

## **5. Sustainable Development**

### **NAT/851 - Sustainable products initiative, including Eco-design Directive**

[This EC initiative](#), which will revise the Ecodesign Directive and propose additional legislative measures as appropriate, aims to make products placed on the EU market more sustainable.

Consumers, the environment and the climate will benefit from products that are more durable, reusable, repairable, recyclable, and energy-efficient. The initiative will also address the presence of harmful chemicals in products such as:

- electronics & ICT equipment
- textiles
- furniture
- steel, cement & chemicals.

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 13-14/07/2022

### **NAT/855 - [Evaluation of the EU school scheme](#) – IR**

As of 1 August 2017, the EU combined the EU school fruit, vegetables and milk scheme under a single legal framework: The School scheme. This scheme has two main objectives: increasing the consumption of agricultural products through offering healthy snacks to children at schools together with educational activities to reconnect children with agriculture and healthy food habits, and contributing to the public health objective.

The European Commission launched an evaluation of this scheme with the aim to assess its effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added value, in line with the Better Regulation guidelines. This information report will contribute to the European Commission's evaluation, focusing on five countries whose selection has been made together with the Commission in order to maximise complementarity and added value to the EC evaluation. The expected impact of the overall evaluation is that it will strengthen the coherence of the scheme with other EU policies and aim at improving the efficiency/performance of the scheme.

Through the evaluation, the European Commission will review the EU School Scheme and enhance its contribution to sustainable food consumption and strengthen educational messages on the importance of healthy nutrition, sustainable food production and the reduction of food waste.

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 14-15/12/2022

#### **NAT/860 - Encouraging the engagement of young people towards achieving sustainable development** – Information report (IR)

In line with the forward-looking dynamic of each of the SDGs, the Committee already started to look at meaningful youth engagement with the own-initiative opinion NAT/788 Towards structured youth engagement on climate and sustainability in the EU decision-making process and many proposals have already been initiated and implemented.

This EESC Information Report would go a step further and propose means to raise awareness among young people towards sustainable development issues and mainstream the engagement of young people in favour of achieving the SDGs.

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 14-15/12/2022

#### **NAT/864 - Social dialogue within the green transition – Exploratory opinion on the request of the Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU**

In the Czech Republic (CZ), both social and economic partners are among the most vocal critics of the green transition. They are asking the government to "veto" or at least postpone European efforts in this respect. Is this limited to CZ or is it a broader phenomenon? How do different Member States involve the partners within their national climate ambitions? What is the role the EESC plays in explaining the realities of the twin transformation?

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 13-14/07/2022

## **6. Circular Economy**

#### **NAT/854 - Revision of Directive 94/62/EC on Packaging and Packaging Waste**

In a 'circular economy', waste is reduced and goods are re-used and recycled as much as possible. This means that packaging waste should also be reduced, and packaging should be made easier to recycle. The Commission will review the requirements on packaging and packaging waste in the EU. This will include assessing how to:

- improve packaging design to promote reuse and recycling
- increase recycled content in packaging
- tackle excessive packaging
- reduce packaging waste.

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: after Q3 2022

 **Do you have a question?**

 **Contact us at [nat-events@eesc.europa.eu](mailto:nat-events@eesc.europa.eu)**