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Maltese Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries & Animal Rights, Roderick Galdes chairs the Informal Meeting of Agriculture Ministers

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Agriculture Ministers from across the EU met today, together with representatives from major EU agriculture stakeholders, during the Maltese Informal Council of Agriculture Ministers to discuss the inter-relationships between water as a scarce resource, climate change and their impact on agriculture. The roundtable session was addressed by both the EU Commissioner for Agriculture Mr. Phil Hogan, as well as the Maltese Commissioner responsible for the Environment, Mr. Karmenu Vella.

During the discussions it clearly emerged that vulnerability to scarce water resources and the onset of climate change adaptation are a main challenge to agriculture in the EU. It also emerged that increased resilience in the agricultural sector is key to sustainability and to increasing agricultural sector competitiveness, apart from the aspect of social contribution and sensitivity to the environment.

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The European Commission took the opportunity to discuss at high-level the joint efforts identified in the recently launched Commission Staff Working Document on Water and Agriculture, which among other things underlines the need to leverage on existing and new financial possibilities for investment, for knowledge sharing and for adaptation of the farming sector in this field. The debate also highlighted the need to work and discuss further in future on two key priorities identified by the Commission and particularly that:

- (i) the CAP needs to allow farmer to transition to agro-ecological principles in a cost-effective way, and that;
- (ii) the CAP and Water Framework Directive need to continue to be aligned better in terms of objectives and delivery mechanisms, possibly with greater focus on results and performance.

Mr. Sikierski on behalf of the European Parliament also addressed the meeting, framing this debate in the broader discussion on climate

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change and the need to use more new technologies.

From the roundtable it emerged that the greater use of permanent observatories and the establishment of a Centre of Excellence for Intelligent Water & Agriculture to foster a broader understanding of the multiple interactions between agriculture and water competing uses was well received and supported by various delegations. Ministers in their interventions referred to differences in temperatures and precipitation, the availability for farmers of water resources and different soil management practices which present different challenges in the different regions, calling for more risk management measures “to shore up farmer resilience”. The role of the financial sector is key, they underlined, as is the need to leverage existing and new instruments and financing sources both within and outside the CAP. The various remarks and ideas on how to also leverage necessary investments and risk management opportunities, and how to adopt tailor-made approaches to do this, are also key takeaways from today's debate.

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