

# The Environment and Sustainability Committee

## Update on Committee Priorities and Key EU Legislative Dossiers: December 2015

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This paper provides an update on the key EU dossiers and policy areas of interest to the Environment and Sustainability Committee. It also provides a summary of the work completed by the Committee on European affairs since it last published an update in July 2015. In addition, the paper outlines the work the Committee intends to take on EU issues between now and the end of the Assembly.

This is the third in a series of update papers the Committee has published on its European Affairs work in 2015.

### 1. Existing Dossiers and Completed Work

The Committee has been tracking and engaging in discussion on a number of EU legislative and policy proposals over the last 12 months including work on driftnet fisheries, organic production, GMO cultivation, GMO food and feed, simplification and implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership and Packaging Waste (Plastic Bag) proposals.

Following its short inquiry on the organic regulations in 2014 the Committee has continued to engage with the European institutions and particularly the European Parliament to voice the concerns raised by Welsh stakeholders on the text of the original draft. The Committee has welcomed the positive changes proposed to the dossier by its colleagues in the European Parliament and looks forward to considering the outcomes of the trilogue negotiations. The Committee has undertaken a similar approach to its work on the proposals to ban driftnet fishing in the EU. The Committee raised its concerns about the proportionality of the proposals directly with the European Commission's Director General for Maritime Affairs and MEPs and will continue to keep a watching brief on developments with this dossier.

Some of the proposals considered by the Committee have now completed their passage through the legislative process namely the regulation on GMO cultivation and on Plastic bags. The Committee will keep the implementation of these regulations by Welsh Ministers under review until the end of this Assembly.

The Committee also intends to keep a watching brief over the on-going discussions on the regulation on GMO food and feed, the simplification of CAP and the TTIP negotiations.

## **2. New Proposals**

The European Commission's Work Programme for 2016 contains a number of proposals for new legislation and for reviews of existing legislation of interest to the Committee. These include:

- The Circular Economy Package;
- The Energy Union Package; and
- The Fitness Check of the Nature Directives and Mid-term review of the Biodiversity Strategy.

In addition to keeping a watching brief over these initiatives for the remainder of this Assembly the Committee will consider them as part of its legacy work, and in concluding its work on A Smarter Energy Future for Wales.

A table outlining the Committee's priorities and the action it intends to take can be found on the next page.

**Table 1: Key dossiers and proposals of interest**

Dossier	Current Stage	Key Dates and Actions
<p><b>Regulation on prohibition of driftnets</b></p>	<p>EP: Consideration by Fisheries Committee. The draft report, prepared by rapporteur Renata Brianco S&amp;D, was published on 30.1.2015. On 7.5.15 the Fisheries Committee was due to vote on the proposals, however due to calls to for the rejection of the proposal there have been delays at this stage.</p> <p>Council: There is no record of the Councils formal position at this time.</p>	<p>EP: Indicative plenary sitting date is expected to be 8.3.16, 1st reading/single reading .</p> <p><b>Proposed Action</b></p> <p>The Committee wrote to the European Commission, the European Parliament’s Fisheries Committee and MEPs representing Wales earlier this year outlining their findings from stakeholder sessions. It received responses to its letter from Commissioner Vella and correspondence from the Welsh MEPs. The Committee will continue to monitor progress on this dossier.</p>
<p><b>Organic production and labelling</b></p>	<p>EP: Report adopted by the Agriculture Committee on 13.10.15</p> <p>Council: The Council agreed its general approach on 16.6.15</p>	<p>EP &amp; Council: Trilogue negotiations between the institutions began on 12.11.15. The EP discussed progress on the negotiations on 1.12.15</p> <p><b>Proposed Action</b></p> <p>The Committee has written twice to MEP’s in the European Parliament’s Agriculture Committee, to Welsh MEPs and the European Commission about stakeholders’ concerns. Once during initial discussions in the EP and a second time in response to the publication of the</p>

		<p>EP Agriculture Committee's Draft Report. The Committee has also scrutinised the Welsh Government's Deputy Minister for Farming and Food about her views on the implications of the proposal for Wales.</p> <p>The Committee received responses to its letter from the Welsh MEPs and the European Commission. A number of the concerns raised by this Committee have been addressed in the EP Agriculture Committee's Final Report on the proposals. This Committee will continue to monitor the dossier and to scrutinise the Welsh Government on its implementation in Wales.</p>
<p><b>GMO Food and Feed</b></p>	<p>EP: Voted to reject the proposals on 28 October 2015.</p> <p>Council: The Council is yet to agree its position but discussions are expected to take place in the coming months.</p>	<p><b>Proposed Action</b></p> <p>The Committee wrote to the Welsh Government's Deputy Minister for Health on 9.6.15 to ask for further information on the Welsh Government's position. The Committee will keep a watching brief over this dossier for any further developments.</p>
<p><b>Circular Economy Package</b></p>	<p>Awaiting publication of proposals by the European Commission.</p>	<p><b>Proposed Action</b></p> <p>The Committee will keep a watching brief on developments and will give further consideration to any proposals once published. It is likely to ask for stakeholders views on the issue through its legacy work.</p>

<p><b>Energy Union Package:</b></p> <p><b>Electricity Market Design</b></p> <p><b>Fitness Check Renewable Energy Directive</b></p> <p><b>Fitness Check Energy Efficiency Directive</b></p>	<p>Awaiting publication of proposals by the European Commission.</p>	<p><b>Proposed Action</b></p> <p>The Committee will keep a watching brief on developments and may give further consideration to any proposals as part of its inquiry into A Smarter Energy Future for Wales.</p>
<p><b>Fitness Check Nature Directive and Mid-term review of Biodiversity Strategy</b></p>	<p>EP: Environment Committee adopting an own-initiative resolution on Mid-term review of Biodiversity.</p> <p>Council: No formal discussions in Council on the Fitness Check of the Nature Directive but joint-letter has been signed by some Member States and sent to European Commission.</p> <p>The Council is developing its conclusions on the outcomes of the Mid-term review of the Biodiversity Strategy.</p> <p>Detailed European Commission proposals expected early 2016.</p>	<p>EP: Environment Committee expected to adopt its own-initiative resolution on the mid-term review on 21-22 December.</p> <p>Council: The Council is expected to adopt its conclusions on the mid-term review in mid-December 2015.</p> <p><b>Proposed Action</b></p> <p>The Committee will give consideration to the proposals once published by the European Commission. It is likely to consider stakeholders views on the issue through its legacy work.</p>
<p><b>CAP simplification: On-going simplification of CAP and Review of EFA Rules</b></p>	<p>Both institutions have made their priorities and key points on simplification measures known to the European Commission.</p>	<p><b>Proposed Action</b></p> <p>The Committee will keep a watching brief on developments as further details on simplification are announced by the European Commission. The Committee will consider the issue through its scrutiny sessions with Welsh Ministers. In addition it is likely to consider stakeholders views on the issue through its legacy work.</p>

<b>Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> round of trade negotiations between the European Commission and US Government took place on 23-24 October 2015.	EP and Council involvement to follow conclusion of negotiations if deal agreed. <b>Proposed Action</b> The Committee will keep a watching brief on developments. It is likely to ask for stakeholders views on the issue through its legacy work.
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N.B. A number of the proposals identified as priorities in previous versions of this table by Committee have completed the legislative procedure. Their implementation by Welsh Ministers will be considered by the Committee as part of its normal business. These include the GMO Cultivation regulations and the Regulations on Packaging Waste (Plastic Bags).