

Statement by Commissioner Phil Hogan, Paris 25 February 2016

Today, I had the opportunity to have a wide-ranging discussion with Prime Minister Valls and Minister Le Foll on the critical situation facing EU agricultural markets and especially the impact in France. We acknowledged the serious difficulties being experienced by French and European farmers across a number of sectors and agreed on the need to take all appropriate steps to alleviate the current situation, characterized by an increased imbalance between supply and demand and the duration of this imbalance.

In anticipation of the Council of Agricultural Ministers on 14 March, we discussed a number of proposals made by France which the European Commission is evaluating. The Commission is determined to find solutions commensurate to the seriousness of the current difficulties, and will respond formally at the Council.

Both the French Government and the European Commission have a shared commitment to ensure that European farmers are supported as far as possible. The March Council provides an opportunity for a necessary EU-level debate at which all of the options available can be fully discussed in order that appropriate and efficient decisions can be taken.

We also discussed forthcoming bilateral trade agreements, such as TTIP and Mercosur, which we acknowledged are of great importance for European agriculture, and must remain comprehensive and balanced for both Parties. In particular, we agreed that any final outcome on TTIP must reflect our key offensive interests, such as a better protection for Geographical Indications and a reduction of non-tariff barriers. We also agreed that, while sensitivities on

both sides have to be respected, the European Union will ensure that sensitive sectors for European agriculture are protected.

We acknowledged the difficulties being experienced by the continuing Russian embargo on pigmeat, and reiterated the Commission's willingness to discuss with Russia a rapid resumption of exports from Europe. I reiterated the Commission's commitment to find an urgent solution for the long list of sanitary and phytosanitary barriers to trade with third countries.

I will remain in contact with Minister Le Foll ahead of the March Council and we will meet again during the Salon de l'Agriculture.

Ends.