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FRAME AGRICULTURE  
FM PARIS  
TO DESKBY 041430Z FCO  
TELNO 1117  
OF 041403Z NOVEMBER 86  
INFO DESKBY 041430Z UKREP BRUSSELS

MY TELNO 1115: LAMB EXPORTS TO FRANCE

## SUMMARY

1. FRESH ASSURANCES THAT THE SPECIAL CONTROLS HAVE BEEN LIFTED, ALTHOUGH THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND REMAINS CONFUSED. FRENCH DEMAND TO THE COMMISSION THAT THE SHEEPMEAT REGIME BE REVISED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

## DETAIL

2. GAUTIER-SAUVAGNAC (GUILLAUME CABINET) HAS NOW TOLD US THAT CLEAR INSTRUCTIONS WERE GIVEN ON THE EVENING OF 30 OCTOBER THAT ALL SPECIAL CONTROLS SHOULD BE STOPPED. THIS SHOULD HAVE COME FULLY INTO FORCE ON 31 OCTOBER. HE CLAIMED TO BE SURPRISED THAT THE CONTROLS APPEARED TO HAVE RESUMED ON 3 NOVEMBER AND THAT THE SITUATION WAS STILL NOT ENTIRELY BACK TO NORMAL THIS MORNING (THE IMPORTERS HAVE TOLD US THAT THINGS HAVE IMPROVED AT RUNGIS AGAIN, WITHOUT BEING YET FULLY AS USUAL, WHILE SOME SPECIAL CHECKING SEEMED TO BE CONTINUING AT THE PORTS). HE UNDERTOOK TO RECONFIRM THE INSTRUCTIONS ALREADY GIVEN.

3. AS FAR AS THE REPLY TO MR GUMMER WAS CONCERNED, GAUTIER-SAUVAGNAC SAID THAT GUILLAUME FOUND HIMSELF IN A DIFFICULT POSITION. IF HE ADMITTED IN HIS REPLY THAT THE FRENCH MEASURES HAD BEEN UNJUSTIFIED AND HAD THEREFORE BEEN LIFTED, HE RISKED AN OUTCRY FROM FRENCH LAMB PRODUCERS WHICH MIGHT EXACERBATE THE SITUATION FURTHER. THE FRENCH PREFERENCE WAS SIMPLY TO LIFT THE MEASURES, WHILE MAKING NO ANNOUNCEMENT AND PUTTING NOTHING IN WRITING. BUT GAUTIER-SAUVAGNAC ACCEPTED THAT THIS WAS HARDLY POSSIBLE IN VIEW OF THE POLITICAL SENSITIVITY OF THE ISSUE IN BRITAIN. HE WAS THEREFORE TRYING TO PRODUCE A REPLY WHICH WAS SUFFICIENTLY PRECISE TO BE HELPFUL TO US, WHILE NOT INCRIMINATING GUILLAUME TOO MUCH IN THE EYES OF FRENCH FARMING OPINION. HE HOPED TO HAVE SOMETHING TO OFFER US ON 5 NOVEMBER.

4. GAUTIER-SAUVAGNAC ADDED THAT GUILLAUME HAD NOW SENT A STRONGLY-WORDED TELEX TO ANDRIESSEN SAYING THAT THE FRENCH FOUND THEMSELVES IN A QUITE IMPOSSIBLE POSITION. IMPORTS OF BRITISH LAMB HAD INCREASED 45 PERCENT IN AUGUST THIS YEAR COMPARED WITH LAST YEAR, ESSENTIALLY BECAUSE OF THE FALL IN THE VALUE OF THE POUND. THIS WAS MADE POSSIBLE BECAUSE OF THE FAULTS IN THE SHEEPMEAT REGIME, WHEREAS FRENCH AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS WERE UNABLE TO BENEFIT

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FROM FALLS IN THE FRANC BECAUSE OF MCAS. THIS WAS WHAT ANGERED FRENCH SHEEP PRODUCERS SO MUCH. THE SHEEPMEAT REGIME HAD TO BE CHANGED URGENTLY.

### COMMENT

5. THE FRENCH ARE CLEARLY IN AN EMBARRASSING SITUATION VIS-A-VIS THEIR OWN FARMERS, EVEN IF IT IS PARTLY OF THEIR OWN MAKING. FEELINGS AMONGST SHEEP PRODUCERS ARE CONTINUING TO RUN HIGH. RAILWAY LINES HAVE BEEN BLOCKED IN SEVERAL PLACES BY DEMONSTRATORS OVER THE LAST FEW DAYS, WHILE THE SHEEP SECTION OF THE FNSEA, THE MAIN FARMERS' UNION, HELD A PRESS CONFERENCE THIS MORNING TO SPELL OUT THEIR GRIEVANCES AND MAKE CLEAR THEIR FULL SUPPORT FOR SPECIAL CUSTOMS CHECKS ON BRITISH LAMB CONSIGNMENTS. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, IT MAY BE IN OUR INTEREST TO AVOID TOO PRECISE PUBLIC REFERENCES TO THE GOVERNMENT'S VOLTE-FACE OVER THE CUSTOMS CHECKS, AT LEAST WHILE WE AWAIT THE REPLY TO MR GUMMER'S LETTER. THERE IS OF COURSE NO DIFFICULTY IN SAYING THAT WE HAVE BEEN IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT, THAT THE SITUATION NOW APPEARS TO BE RETURNING TO NORMAL AND THAT WE ARE CONTINUING TO MONITOR THIS CLOSELY.

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