

**Joint Statement of EU-27 Ministers for Agriculture regarding the response needed at European level, under the Common Agricultural Policy, to the COVID-19 crisis**

The Ministers for Agriculture of Ireland, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden, supported by Croatia:

Acknowledge the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on all European Citizens;

Stress that our shared immediate priority in this public health emergency is the protection of human life and health;

Emphasise the vital role of farmers and the wider agri-food sector in maintaining food security and food supply in Europe during this crisis, as well as the essential framework provided by the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in this regard, and the necessity of a strong CAP in the future;

Call on all Member States to work together in a spirit of European solidarity;

Note with concern the emerging market impacts of the COVID-19 crisis in the agri-food sector, which are already significant in the case of some sub-sectors;

Consider that the medium- and long-term impacts could potentially be severe and long-lasting for European farmers, for the food industry, and for the rural economy;

Welcome the solidarity demonstrated in the European response to date, including through the new temporary State Aid framework, the Guidelines for border management and for the free movement of workers, and the two stages of the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative, which includes some flexibilities around CAP scheme implementation;

Consider that, nevertheless, there remains a need for urgent additional appropriate and responsible measures to be activated under the CAP at this time.

As Ministers for Agriculture we therefore call on the Commission to facilitate:

- The implementation of measures under the Common Market Organisation (CMO) Regulation of the CAP, including in particular aid for private storage, to support those sectors where significant market disturbances and price impacts have been assessed, as well as exceptional aid for farmers in the most affected sectors under Articles 219 and 221 of the CMO Regulation;
- Ongoing review and monitoring of all sectors over the coming period, with a readiness to introduce further CMO measures as necessary;
- The immediate extension of further flexibilities to Member States under both pillars of the CAP, including in relation to earlier payment dates, higher rates of advance payment than those already announced, activation of specific measures within rural development programmes, and the implementation of on-the-spot controls and administrative checks, without lowering the effectiveness of the control system;
- A continued strong and coordinated European response that demonstrates to all our citizens the vital role that European farmers and the wider agri-food sector have to play in the response to COVID-19, as well as the strength of the CAP in supporting food security, environmental protection and vibrant rural areas at this critical time, and into the future.
- The readiness of European farms to cope with the COVID-19 crisis as well as other present and future challenges, including climate change and biodiversity loss.

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