



Europäisches Parlament

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Mr. Janusz Wojciechowski
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COVID-19: request for urgent measures

Dear Commissioner,

The unprecedented situation facing European citizens has rightly focused political attention and will on protecting the health of our citizens, making every effort possible to support Member States in flattening the curve and minimising economic and social disruption. While current attention is rightly focused on these issues, it is also imperative that the EU also takes action and demonstrates leadership to ensure that farmers, the men and women, working to ensure European food security, have swift support and tools to deal with the short and long term impacts of this emergency.

The past few days have been marked by desperate pleas from across a vast number of agricultural sectors for the European Commission to take immediate and swift action, to put into action the tools in the CAP that exist for crisis situations and to avoid the delays that often mark European crisis responses. Economically, socially and morally we cannot afford to react too late. In many Member States, national measures to support the agricultural and horticultural sector have already been introduced. However, given the integration of the European agricultural and food markets, coordinated and clear measures must also be taken at European level.

Concerns over the suspensions of markets, difficulty in accessing seasonal labour, closure of processors, availability of feed, medicines and fertiliser, the closure of the HoReCa sectors and downward pressure on market prices means that farmers are facing not only significant income losses but severe challenges on all fronts. Keeping food and other processing facilities operational, ensuring the continuation of commercial activities that protect farm incomes needs to be a priority of the Commission.

While the decision of March 17, 2020 allowing for an extension for support applications is a welcome move, it is a gesture at a time when large-scale action and responses are

needed. We strongly support the calls of the Parliament's Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development to simplify procedures and allow maximum flexibility for Member States to enable them to support and protect farmers and the security of the food supply chain. Furthermore, we call on the Commission to put together comprehensive strategies to support the most affected sectors, - to consider activating the full range of supports under the CMO, triggering all available exceptional measures and activating the flexibility provided by the EU legislation on promotion campaigns to deal with cases of force majeure. These strategies must be formulated in such a way so that the ultimate objective is to assist these sectors in getting back on track and in returning to normal as soon as possible.

In order to ensure the essential continuity of cross-border deliveries the prioritisation of "essential" products such as food related products at the borders (e.g. through green lanes) should be considered, communicated and acted upon without delay. We also need to mitigate the significant potential reduction in (seasonal) workers in the agro-food industry, for example by facilitating access for these workers in strict compliance with the sanitary regulations in the fight against COVID-19. Coordination at European level is essential to ensure a level playing field. As prices fall sharply, quickly and threaten to cause liquidity problems in the short term, measures must be taken to guarantee cash flows.

Unprecedented times require unprecedented measures. As European policy makers, we have the responsibility to ensure that the full support and crisis mechanisms of the Common Agricultural Policy are activated and made available, and we have a responsibility to ensure that assistance and flexibilities for our farmers are not tied up or hampered by red tape and unnecessary bureaucracy. Lastly, we have a responsibility and moral imperative to ensure that that solidarity is shown to our farmers and it is in this regard that we as Renew Europe's AGRI members call on the Commission to take immediate action.

Thank you for your efforts.

Sincerely yours,

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