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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	AOB item for the meeting of the “Agriculture and Fisheries” Council on 13 July 2026: Joint Declaration of the Ministers of Agriculture of the Visegrad Group and Croatia and Romania on the cooperation in the field of bioeconomy and tackling weather extremes <i>- Information from Hungary, on behalf of Croatia, Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia</i>

JOINT DECLARATION
OF THE MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE OF THE VISEGRAD GROUP
AND CROATIA AND ROMANIA

on the cooperation in the field of bioeconomy and tackling weather extremes

Balatonfüred, Hungary, 30 June 2026

We, the Ministers of Agriculture of the Visegrad Group and Croatia and Romania at the high-level meeting held in Balatonfüred, Hungary on the 30th of June 2026 upon the invitation of Hungary currently holding the V4 Presidency, agreed on our common position on cooperation in the field of bioeconomy and tackling weather extremes.

- (1) HAVING REGARD TO the Joint Declaration of 21 September 2017 on the Central Eastern European Initiative for Knowledge-based Agriculture, Aquaculture and Forestry in the Bioeconomy "BIOEAST", the Communication from the Commission "A Strategic Framework for a Competitive and Sustainable EU Bioeconomy" of 27 November 2025 and the Council Conclusions on the beforementioned Communication of 17 March 2026.
- (2) RECALLING the Joint Declaration of the Ministers of Agriculture and Research of the BIOEAST Initiative's Member States signed in July 2024, which reaffirmed the commitment to foster collaboration, establish a joint research and innovation partnership, and address key challenges in the deployment of the bioeconomy in Central and Eastern Europe.
- (3) TAKING NOTE OF the Council Conclusions of 29 November 2024 on a potential Europe-wide R&I initiative advancing sustainable natural resource management, food systems security and the deployment of the bioeconomy, which formally acknowledges the progress and crucial role of the BIOEAST Initiative in supporting the European green transition.

We, the Ministers of Agriculture of the Visegrad Group and Croatia and Romania

- (4) REAFFIRM the sustainable bioeconomy as one of the strategic areas for V4+4 cooperation and in this context RECALL that the resilience, competitiveness, resource efficiency and long-term sustainability of all sectors of primary production in which biological resources are used and produced (agriculture, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture) and all economic and industrial sectors in which biological resources and processes are used for the production of food, feed, products derived from biological raw materials, energy and services are essential.
- (5) UNDERLINE that the V4+4 countries share similar biomass resources, processing capacities and innovation potential, creating a strong basis for coordinated action to

develop integrated bioeconomic systems that optimize the value creation from domestic biological resources while ensuring sustainability and enhancing resource efficiency. Through strengthened cross-border value chains, cascading biomass use, circular resource management and cross-sector innovation, the region can enhance competitiveness, resilience and strategic autonomy while reducing dependence on imported fossil-based resources and other critical external inputs. In this context, sustainable bioenergy remains an important component of the energy mix, contributing to energy security and decarbonisation while being balanced with and not compromising the efficient allocation and use of biomass of appropriate quality to high-value products, chemical and industrial applications.

- (6) RECOGNIZE the importance of science-based, transparent and proportionate sustainability standards and traceability systems in supporting fair competition, consumer confidence and investments in sustainable European production, in line with the existing EU policy framework and agreed Council Conclusions.
- (7) AGREE that future European bioeconomy and renewable energy policies should be based on measurable sustainability outcomes, scientific evidence and, where appropriate, transparent verification and certification systems, ensuring that regulatory definitions, classifications and incentives reflect actual environmental performance and societal benefits. We agree to strengthen cooperation among the V4+4 countries in promoting evidence-based policymaking, performance-based sustainability criteria and fair market conditions within the European Union.
- (8) RECOGNIZE that bioeconomy policy should reflect the full value generated from agricultural, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture feedstocks, including food and feed ingredients, proteins, renewable molecules, biofuels, wood-based materials and other bio-based products, rather than focusing exclusively on individual outputs, while applying the “food-first” principle.
- (9) SUPPORT policies that encourage domestic processing, innovation and investment across bio-based value chains, creating higher value-added opportunities for farmers, forest holders, fishermen, coastal- and rural regions. RECOGNIZE the strategic importance of sustainable protein production and innovation for reducing import dependencies, strengthening food and feed security and supporting the competitiveness of European agriculture, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture and the food processing industry, while encouraging greater recognition of the contribution of integrated bio-based processing industries to sustainable value chains.

- (10) ACKNOWLEDGE the strategic necessity of V4+4 research and innovation cooperation in the field of drought management, recognizing the value of launching joint projects exploring opportunities for cooperation within existing national and European research and innovation frameworks. To achieve this, AGREE TO explore a relevant research and innovation agenda and the possible financial and management framework, including a common funding pool and a central project management office.
- (11) EXPLORE the possibilities of designating the BIOEAST Initiative - building on its 11 years of experience, its established network, its deep integration within agricultural ministries, and its existing focus on the water-soil nexus - to establish and operate a V4+ international working group involving experts from meteorology, water management, soil science, crop production, and forestry to develop the joint drought management research and innovation agenda.
- (12) BELIEVE that a stronger and more integrated bioeconomy can contribute to a more competitive, resilient and less import-dependent Europe while creating new opportunities for farmers, forest holders, fishermen, processors coastal and rural communities across our region.

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