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From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: Damage in agriculture, forestry and aquaculture caused by the floods in
2023
- Information from the Slovenian delegation

Delegations will find in the Annex a document on the above subject to be presented by the Slovenian delegation under "Any other business" at the "Agriculture and Fisheries" Council on 18 September 2023.

AOB: Damage in agriculture, forestry and aquaculture caused by the floods in 2023

Slovenia was affected by a major natural disaster of unprecedented scale between 4 and 6 August 2023. A vast rain and storm system hit three quarters of the country's territory. The strongest rain occurred in one night (over 200 mm of rain fell within 12 hours) and hit central, western and northern Slovenia. During the day and the following night, the rain moved to southeast and east of the country. All major Slovenian rivers and their tributaries rose significantly (the flow of the Savinja River at the Solčava 1 monitoring station increased 70-fold in 8 hours – from 2 m³/s to 143 m³/s) and started to flood, with torrential flows adding to the severe floods. According to experts, heavy summer and autumn waters came together in one day. On average, between 100 and 300 mm of rain per square metre fell within three days. This is a distinct deviation from the long-term monthly average for the month of July in the affected area (100–150 mm per month).

Effective preventive and intervention measures were not enough to prevent the impacts of these heavy floods, which are unprecedented in the Republic of Slovenia. Road infrastructure was damaged in over half of the country, communication links were disrupted, and numerous public and private facilities were destroyed or damaged. Thousands of people had to leave their homes. Human lives were lost despite the efforts of all services. According to first estimates, the damage will amount approximately to €5 billion, including over €0.5 billion of damage to infrastructure and facilities.

All the storms, hail and heavy rainfall in Slovenia affected and destroyed many forests and agricultural lands, as well as agricultural holdings, machinery and equipment. Water and energy supply was seriously disrupted for several days, transport routes were cut off and physical infrastructure, which is vital for logistics, was damaged. All this made everyday activities in agriculture, forestry and aquaculture extremely difficult.

There is a significant loss of agricultural production. The entire affected area encounters difficulties since almost 3 000 agricultural holdings were damaged. Agricultural lands also suffered damage due to the flooding, debris and erosion, and due to numerous landslides triggered in the area.

Farming conditions in these areas are unfavourable and the situation is even worse because of the small size of the farms. Many agricultural holdings lost all their facilities, machinery, houses and lands. The stocks of intermediate goods, feed, seeds, and fertilisers were damaged, and there was damage to milk delivery and other crops. The damage also includes fallen stock and damage to apiaries. The damage assessment (the current assessment amounts to €135 million) should not only take into account the catastrophic damage that occurred between 4 and 6 August, but also the fact that a considerable part of the country was badly hit by floods in May this year and, in particular, by hail storms destroying agricultural produce in July, in particular grains, maize and permanent crops.

The food industry also suffered substantial damage with several crucial processing facilities being flooded. This is extremely important, since the disruption of business channels could have a decisive impact on employment and social situation in rural areas. The situation of young farmers whose numbers are very low in Slovenia (only 16% of agricultural holders are younger than 44 years, while the average age of holders of agricultural holdings is 62 years) is particularly worrying.

The fishery and aquaculture sectors suffered irreparable damage, in particular freshwater aquaculture facilities. Floods, landslides and mudflows washed away and permanently damaged numerous fish farms and fish processing facilities (the ponds filled with mud, silt and gravel, streams and rivers changed their courses, water and energy supply was cut off, transport routes were damaged and disrupted, and broodstocks were destroyed and washed away). Streams and rivers changed their courses and riverbeds. The work established over the course of several years was destroyed. After the economic crisis, the difficult period of COVID-19 and the soaring prices of fish feed and energy products due to the war in Ukraine, fish farmers suffered additional damage in the natural disaster. The damage to aquaculture and fish is over €6 million.

Some areas of the country had previously been affected by hailstorms and strong wind causing serious damage to forests (over 2 300 hectares of forest were destroyed, including over 600 000 m³ of fallen or damaged trees). The windfall left a large amount of timber assortments and wood residues in the forest, blocking numerous streambeds and riverbeds together with mud, silt and gravel. This contributed to the spilling of water and damage to infrastructure, houses, agricultural lands, fish farm ponds, companies and other immovable property. The damage to forest infrastructure only is approximately €48.4 million.

Forest roads not only facilitate forest management but also access to settlements and farms, while playing an important role in ensuring the generally beneficial forest functions. As regards forestry, it is currently most important to open forest roads towards settlements and individual farms. Priority will later on be given to areas with live animals and forests where there is a significant risk of bark beetle spread.

Agriculture, forestry and fishery sectors are crucial areas in the State's functioning system, in particular in terms of ensuring food security, maintaining the social situation and the population of the country, and preserving the cultural landscape and the nation's traditional culture. It is therefore necessary to act as quickly as possible to remedy the situation and take recovery measures. The current assessment of the situation on the ground in the aftermath of the catastrophic floods (a more detailed damage assessment is still under preparation) clearly shows that substantial help will be needed to restore forestry and fisheries sectors back to their original state.

Slovenia therefore calls for Commission's cooperation and maximum flexibility in adapting the measures under the common agricultural policy and the common fisheries policy, and the measures in forestry. Furthermore, Slovenia requested the allocation of additional funds from the agriculture reserve.

Since we expect that such events will become increasingly common in the future due to climate change, we propose an in-depth discussion on appropriate EU instruments in case of such events.

Razno: Škoda v kmetijstvu, gozdarstvu in akvakulturi zaradi poplav v letu 2023

Slovenijo je med 4. in 6. avgustom 2023 prizadela huda naravna nesreča izrednih obsežnosti. Močan padavinski in viharji sistem je zajel tri četrtine ozemlja države. Najmočnejše padavine so v eni noči (v 12 urah je padlo več kot 200 mm dežja) zajele osrednjo, zahodno in severno Slovenijo ter se tekom dneva in ponoči preselile na jugovzhod in vzhod države. Posledično so močno narasle (pretok reke Savinje na merilni postaji Solčava 1 se je v osmih urah povečal za 70-krat (z 2 m³/s na 143 m³/s)) in poplavljalje vse večje slovenske reke in njihovi pritoki, hkrati pa so k izjemnim poplavam prispevale še hudourniške vode. Po besedah strokovnjakov so se v enem dnevu združile visoke poletne in jesenske vode. V treh dneh v povprečju je padlo med 100 in 300 mm dežja na kvadratni meter, kar predstavlja izrazito odstopanje od dolgoletnega mesečnega povprečja za julij na prizadetem območju (100–150 mm v mesecu dni).

Kljub učinkovitemu preventivnemu in intervencijskem ukrepanju ni bilo možno preprečiti posledic izrednih poplav, kakršnih Republika Slovenija ne pomni. V več kot polovici države je bila poškodovana prometna infrastruktura, prekinjene so bile komunikacijske povezave, uničeni ali poškodovani so številni javni in zasebni objekti. Več tisoč ljudi je moralo zapustiti svoje domove. Kljub prizadevanjem vseh služb so ugasnila tudi človeška življenja. Po prvih ocenah bo škoda znašala okoli 5 milijard evrov, od tega na infrastrukturi in objektih več kot pol milijarde evrov.

Zaradi viharjev, toče in ogromne količine padavin je bilo v Sloveniji prizadetih in uničenih veliko gozdnih in kmetijskih površin, pa tudi gospodarskih poslopij, mehanizacije in opreme. Poleg tega so večdnevna motena oskrba z vodo in energijo, prekinjene transportne poti oziroma poškodovana fizična infrastruktura, ki je izrednega pomena za logistiko, močno otežili izvajanje vsakodnevnih aktivnosti v kmetijstvu, gozdarstvu in akvakulturi.

Beležimo znatno izgubo kmetijske proizvodnje. S težavami se sooča celotno prizadeto območje, na katerem je poškodovanih skoraj 3.000 kmetijskih gospodarstev. Poškodovana so tudi kmetijska zemljišča zaradi poplavljenosti, nanosov in erozije materiala, kot tudi zaradi velikega števila plazov na tem območju. To so območja z neugodnimi dejavniki za kmetovanje in manjšimi kmetijami, kar še otežuje njihov položaj. Mnoga kmetijska gospodarstva so izgubila vse objekte, stroje, hiše in zemljišč. Beležimo tudi škodo na zalogah repromateriala, krme, semen, gnojil, pri oddaji mleka in pri drugih pridelkih. Škoda obsega tudi poginule živali ter uničene čebelnjake. Poleg katastrofalne škode, ki se je zgodila med 4. in 6. avgustom, moramo pri oceni škode (trenutno 135 milijonov evrov) upoštevati, da je bil velik del države letos močno prizadet že v majskih poplavih in še posebej v nevihtah s točo, ki so uničevale kmetijske pridelke v juliju, kjer so bila prizadeta žita, koruza in trajni nasadi.

Škoda je nastala tudi v prehranski industriji, saj je bilo poplavljenih nekaj ključnih predelovalnih obratov. To dejstvo je še posebej pomembno, ker bo prekinitev poslovnih poti lahko odločilno vplivala na zaposlovanje in socialne razmere na podeželju. Posebej so izpostavljeni mladi kmetje, ki jih je v Sloveniji malo (16 % nosilcev je mlajših od 44 let, povprečna starost nosilcev kmetijskih gospodarstev je 62 let).

V sektorju ribištva in akvakulture se beleži nepopravljiva škoda zlasti na objektih sladkovodne akvakulture, saj so prav poplave, zemeljski plazovi in blatni tok povzročili, da so bile številne ribogojnice in predelovalni obrati v ribogojnicah odneseni in trajno poškodovani (napolnjeni bazeni z blatom, muljem in prodom, prestavljene struge rek in potokov, prekinjena oskrba z vodo in energijo, poškodovane in pretrgane transportne poti, uničene in odplavljene plemenske jate rib). Poleg tega so reke in potoki prestavili svoje struge in sedaj tečejo na drugih lokacijah. S tem je bilo uničeno večletno delo. Ribogojcem je bila tako po gospodarski krizi, težkem obdobju zaradi pojava bolezni Covid-19 in višjih cen hrane za ribe in energentov zaradi vojne v Ukrajini povzročena še dodatna škoda zaradi naravne nesreče. Škoda v akvakulturi in na ribah znaša preko 6 milijonov evrov.

Določena območja v državi predhodno prizadela tudi neurja s točo in močnim vetrom, ki so povzročila veliko škodo v gozdovih (preko 2.300 ha uničenih gozdnih površin z več kot 600.000 m³ poškodovanega oziroma podrtega drevja). Posledica vetroloma je bila tudi velika količina gozdnih lesnih sortimentov in sečnih ostankov v gozdu, ki so poleg blata, mulja in proda marsikje zaprli struge potokov in rek, kar je dodatno povzročilo razlivanje vode ter povzročalo škodo na infrastrukturi, hišah, kmetijskih površinah, bazenih ribogojnic, podjetjih ter drugih nepremičninah. Samo na gozdni infrastrukturi znaša škoda okoli 48,4 milijonov evrov.

Gozdne ceste poleg gospodarjenja z gozdom omogočajo dostop do posameznih naselij in kmetij ter imajo pomembno vlogo v zagotavljanju splošnokoristnih funkcij gozda. Trenutno je z vidika gozdarstva prioriteta odpiranje gozdnih cest do naselij in posameznih kmetij, v nadaljevanju pa bo imelo prednost odpiranje območij, na katerih se nahajajo žive živali ter območja gozdov, kjer obstaja velika nevarnost za širjenje podlubnikov.

Ker so sektorji kmetijstva, gozdarstva ter ribištva in akvakultura v sistemu delovanja države ključna področja še zlasti z vidika zagotavljanja prehranske varnosti, socialnih razmer, poseljenosti ozemlja države ter vzdrževanja kulturne krajine in prvobitne kulture naroda, je potrebno čimprejšnje ukrepanje za sanacijo in odpravo posledic škode. Po sedanjem pregledu stanja na terenu po katastrofalnih poplavih (natančnejša ocena škode je še v izdelavi) je več kot jasno, da je potrebna znatno pomoč, da lahko skupaj vzpostavimo nazaj stanje v sektorju gozdarstva in ribištva.

Zato Slovenija poziva Komisijo k sodelovanju in maksimalni prožnosti pri prilagajanju ukrepanja v okviru skupne kmetijske politike, skupne ribiške politike in ukrepov na področju gozdarstva. Slovenija je tudi zaprosila Komisijo za dodelitev dodatnih sredstev iz kmetijske rezerve.

Glede na to, da je zaradi podnebnih sprememb v prihodnosti pričakovati še večjo pogostnost takih dogodkov, pa predlagamo poglobljeno razpravo o ustreznosti instrumentov EU v primeru takih dogodkov.