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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 28-29 September 2026: Increasing impact of drought on Slovenian and European agriculture – need for coordinated EU response - Information from Slovenia

Due to increasingly pronounced climate change, more frequent extreme weather events and greater weather variability, risk management is becoming one of the key challenges for the sustainable development of agriculture. As agricultural production is directly dependent on weather and environmental conditions, the agricultural sector is among the most vulnerable economic sectors.

This year, Slovenia, like many other Member States, is facing an exceptionally severe and prolonged drought, which has seriously affected agricultural production across the country. According to the Slovenian Environment Agency, below-average precipitation combined with pronounced and prolonged heatwaves has resulted in a critical water-balance deficit, reaching up to 90 mm in some regions of Slovenia. The rapidly developing summer drought has caused severe drought stress in crops, with impacts extending beyond yield losses and increasing pressure on entire supply chains and the stability of food supply. This year's drought is therefore not an isolated national issue, but a common European challenge requiring systemic solutions at EU level.

Given the severity of the situation, Slovenia has already launched the official assessment of damage to agricultural crops. Initial estimates by the relevant expert services indicate very severe losses. Cereal yields are estimated to have fallen by 30% to 50%. For maize, estimated losses are particularly severe, ranging from 80% to 90%. In grassland areas, losses range from 40% to 50% in lowland areas and from 50% to 100% in mountainous areas. Livestock farms are under significant financial pressure due to shortages of feed and water and are already having to use winter feed stocks or reduce livestock numbers prematurely. Oil pumpkins, soya and sunflowers have also been severely affected, with losses exceeding 40%, as have potato and vegetable production.

The Slovenian agricultural risk-management system is based on the co-financing of insurance premiums for agricultural production. However, the nature and scale of this year's drought demonstrate that private insurance and national budgetary resources alone are no longer sufficient to cover the full burden. European support is therefore essential in such exceptional and large-scale crisis situations.

The recent letter from Commissioner for Agriculture and Food Christophe Hansen demonstrates awareness of the seriousness of the consequences of this year's severe drought and heatwaves for agricultural production. The range of instruments and measures available under the CAP to support affected farmers provides an important basis for responding to the consequences of such crises. At the same time, it would be useful to assess whether the existing CAP instruments provide sufficiently rapid and effective support and whether they adequately address the impacts on agricultural production, feed availability and animal welfare.

Slovenia proposes that the European Commission include heat stress as a distinct natural disaster within agricultural legislation and crisis-management mechanisms. The current legislative framework recognises primarily addresses drought, while in practice these are two distinct phenomena with different agronomic impacts: drought refers to a lack of plant-available water in the soil below a critical level, whereas heat stress refers to prolonged periods of extremely high air temperatures that cause direct physiological damage to crops, irrespective of current soil moisture levels. A clearer distinction between these two phenomena in EU legislation would enable a fairer assessment of damage and facilitate access to state funds and aid from the EU crisis reserve.

Slovenia also proposes updating the methodology used to calculate income losses. The current methodology requires official data on crop prices for the year in which the disaster occurs, which are only available the following year. As a result, farmers may receive support with a significant delay, when their liquidity is already seriously affected. Slovenia therefore proposes updating this methodology, for example by using predefined models, which would allow support to be calculated and paid already in the year in which the disaster occurs. We would like to stress that we are not advocating the introduction of advance payments. Given the current exceptionally high volatility of market prices, it would be difficult to estimate the appropriate level of support in advance with sufficient accuracy, creating a risk that farmers would subsequently have to repay part of the funds.

Slovenia has also taken note with great interest of the information that the European Commission intends to establish a new dedicated fund to address the consequences of drought, from which irrigation systems and other investments in drought resilience could be financed. Slovenia welcomes this initiative and considers it an important step towards a more systemic European response to water scarcity in agriculture. At the same time, we wish to underline that the added value of such a fund will depend above all on how its resources are targeted. In Slovenia's view, the fund should not be confined to compensating damage after the event, but should primarily support investments that structurally reduce the vulnerability of agriculture to drought: the construction and modernisation of irrigation systems, water accumulation and retention facilities, water supply for livestock farming, water-saving and precision irrigation technologies, and soil-management practices that improve the water-retention capacity of agricultural land.

Slovenia further considers it essential that the new fund provide genuinely additional resources and not come at the expense of the CAP budget or the agricultural reserve, and that access to it be simple, rapid and adapted to the administrative capacity of all Member States, including the smaller ones. We therefore invite the European Commission to present to the Member States, as soon as possible, the design of the fund, its financial envelope, the eligible types of investment and the indicative timetable for its establishment. Slovenia would welcome the views of other Member States on this initiative.

Looking ahead, the key objective is to reduce the vulnerability of agriculture, improve risk-management systems and maintain the productivity of farms through innovative approaches, modern technologies and sustainable practices. Europe needs a strong and adequately funded Common Agricultural Policy that can stabilise farm incomes, mitigate the consequences of crises, safeguard EU food security, and at the same time strengthen adaptation to climate change and the long-term resilience of farms.
