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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 26-27 October 2026: Joint Declaration of the Ministers of Agriculture of the Visegrad Group and Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Slovenia on strengthening the fight against unfair trading practices in the agricultural and food supply chain <i>- Information from Slovakia, on behalf of Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia</i>



JOINT DECLARATION
OF THE MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE OF THE VISEGRAD GROUP
AND BULGARIA, CROATIA, ROMANIA AND SLOVENIA

on strengthening the fight against unfair trading practices in the agricultural and
food supply chain

Bratislava, Slovakia, 6 October 2026

(1) We, the Ministers of Agriculture of the Visegrad Group and Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Slovenia, have gathered in Bratislava on 6 October 2026 to discuss cooperation in the fight against unfair trading practices in the agricultural and food supply chain.

(2) We recognise that Directive (EU) 2019/633 of the European Parliament and of the Council established a common minimum level of protection against unfair trading practices in business-to-business relationships in the agricultural and food supply chain and has made an important contribution to strengthening the position of farmers and other suppliers.

(3) However, experience with its implementation has identified areas in which the effectiveness, consistency and enforcement of the existing framework could be further improved.

(4) In this context, we consider the forthcoming revision of this directive to be an important opportunity to respond to the evolution of business relationships and supply chain structures, address remaining enforcement gaps and further strengthen the position of farmers and suppliers throughout the Union.

Against this background, we, the Ministers of Agriculture of the Visegrad Group and Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Slovenia,

(5) **UNDERLINE** that effective protection against unfair trading practices is an essential element of a fair, competitive and resilient agricultural and food supply chain and contributes to ensuring a stronger position of farmers and suppliers in the distribution of value across the chain;

(6) **ACKNOWLEDGE** that experience with the implementation of Directive (EU) 2019/633 has identified areas where the effectiveness and consistency of the existing framework can be further improved;

(7) **RECALL** that significant imbalances in bargaining power continue to exist between actors at different stages of the agricultural and food supply chain and that such imbalances may result in practices that undermine the economic position and viability of agricultural producers and other suppliers. **NOTE** that the agricultural and food supply chain is continuously evolving and that new forms of commercial pressure and unfair trading practices have emerged since the adoption of Directive (EU) 2019/633 which are not sufficiently addressed by the current list of prohibited practices;

(8) **CALL FOR** the list of prohibited unfair trading practices to be amended, including the moving of certain practices on the ‘grey list’ to the ‘black list’, in order to address practices which have emerged or become more prevalent in recent years, such as the unjustified termination of commercial relationships, abusive or disproportionate logistical and contractual penalties, the unjustified delisting of products, retroactive rebates, unilaterally imposed marketing or promotional contributions and other charges imposed on farmers and suppliers without fair and transparent justification;

(9) **CALL FOR** measures addressing disproportionate data-related requirements imposed on farmers and suppliers, including requests for sustainability, environmental, social, governance or due diligence information exceeding what is necessary, proportionate and legally justified. We **EMPHASISE** the need to prevent excessive accumulation of commercial and supply-chain data by stronger market actors, which may lead to information asymmetries and distort bargaining positions within the agri-food chain. We therefore **CALL FOR** a fair and balanced framework for data sharing, ensuring that farmers and food producers have access to relevant data generated throughout the supply chain and can benefit from its use under transparent and non-discriminatory conditions. This framework must promote the “once-only” principle through the interconnection of EU and national databases to minimise duplicate reporting;

(10) **CALL FOR** more uniform enforcement of the rules across Member States, with a view to reducing differences in the level and effectiveness of protection, while preserving, the possibility for Member States to maintain or introduce, stricter national rules providing a higher level of protection for farmers and suppliers, and ensuring that farmers and suppliers benefit from effective protection against unfair trading practices throughout the Union;

(11) **EMPHASISE** that the current turnover-based scope of the Directive may leave certain suppliers exposed to unfair trading practices and may create opportunities for circumvention of the rules through the structure and organisation of business relationships. We therefore **CALL FOR** the individual relative turnover thresholds to be removed during the forthcoming revision of the legislation, without limiting the scope of protection for suppliers by any upper limit on their annual turnover.

The aim is to ensure that protection against unfair trading practices applies to suppliers of all sizes and to prevent circumvention of the rules, particularly in connection with the activities of international buying alliances;

(12) **ACKNOWLEDGE** that the fear of commercial retaliation remains one of the principal obstacles preventing farmers and suppliers from reporting unfair trading practices and exercising their rights, and that effective legal protection therefore requires enforcement mechanisms which suppliers can use without jeopardising their commercial relationships;

(13) **UNDERLINE** the need to strengthen confidentiality safeguards for complainants, ensuring that the identity and commercially sensitive information of farmers and suppliers can be effectively protected;

(14) **CALL ON** the European Commission to examine, on the basis of a comprehensive impact assessment, the possibility of introducing an EU-level ban on the sale of agricultural and food products at prices “below-costs” of primary producers or processors, based on objective, transparent and Member State-level harmonised cost indicators;

(15) **CALL ON** the European Commission, in preparing its revision of Directive (EU) 2019/633, to take into account the practical experience of Member States and enforcement authorities, the evolution of business models and supply chain structures and the need to address remaining enforcement gaps, in particular by ensuring an adequate scope of protection, improving harmonisation among Member States, addressing newly emerging unfair trading practices and strengthening effective and coordinated enforcement across the Union;

(16) At the same time, we **POINT OUT** the need to foster closer cooperation and information exchange among Member States to strengthen the fight against cross-border unfair trading practices (Regulation (EU) 2026/697 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2026);

(17) **AGREE** to continue close cooperation among the Visegrad Group, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Slovenia in the preparation and negotiation of the revision of Directive (EU) 2019/633, with the objective of contributing to a stronger position of farmers and suppliers and to a fairer distribution of value within the agricultural and food supply chain;

(18) **EXPRESS** our readiness to engage constructively with the European Commission, the European Parliament and other Member States to ensure that the revision of the Directive delivers tangible improvements in the effective prevention, detection and sanctioning of unfair trading practices.



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