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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
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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 the need for an effective European response to natural and market disturbances affecting agriculture *- Information from Slovakia, on behalf of Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia*

STRONGER EUROPE V4
SLOVAK PRESIDENCY of the Visegrad Group

JOINT DECLARATION

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

on the need for an effective European response to natural and market disturbances affecting agriculture

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 at a time when farmers across the European Union are facing an increasingly serious, and in many respects historic, combination of natural disasters and market pressures.

(2) Developments in recent months, particularly during the summer period, have significantly aggravated the situation in many Member States. Adverse climatic events are causing substantial losses to agricultural production, while growing market imbalances and persistently high production costs, particularly due to elevated and volatile prices of fertilisers and energy, are further weakening farmers' incomes and the economic viability of agricultural holdings.

(3) In this context and building also on the concerns expressed in the Joint Declaration of the Visegrad Group and Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania on the effective management of agricultural crisis situations within the CAP framework and in the wider context, adopted in Balatonfüred on 30 June 2026, we consider that further and more decisive action is now necessary.

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

(4) **HIGHLIGHT** that the continuing drought, accompanied by extreme temperatures and severe water scarcity, has caused significant and widespread damage in several Member States. Together with floods, frosts, hailstorms and other adverse climatic events, it has reduced crop yields, affected grassland and permanent crops, severely reduced the availability and quality of feed, exacerbated exposure to veterinary and phytosanitary threats and substantially increased production costs in both crop and livestock sectors;

(5) **WARN** that the consequences of these events will extend well beyond the current production season. The substantial decline in agricultural production and the resulting shortages of feed, reduced farm liquidity and the loss of production potential may seriously undermine preparations for the next production cycle and permanently weaken the resilience and economic viability of affected farms;

(6) **DRAW ATTENTION**, at the same time, to the continuing deterioration of market conditions in a number of agricultural sectors, particularly in the livestock sector, where declining producer returns and persistently high production costs are threatening the sustainability of primary production;

(7) **CONSIDER** that the scale, frequency and cumulative nature of the current natural and market disturbances require an effective and adequate European response. While acknowledging the Commission's ongoing monitoring and assessment of developments in the agricultural sector, we **STRESS** that the current situation calls for concrete, timely and coordinated action at European Union level;

(8) **STRESS** that agricultural crises cannot always be addressed adequately through national responses alone, which may also lead to uneven levels of support across the Union;

(9) In light of the significant deterioration of the situation in recent months, particularly as a result of drought of historic proportions, we **CALL UPON** the Commission to provide a coordinated response at Union level through a sufficiently funded, predictable and rapidly deployable European crisis mechanism, combining immediate financial support with measures aimed at strengthening the long-term resilience of the agriculture sector. **SUPPORT** deepening cooperation with the EIB and other financial institutions in order to introduce common instruments to strengthen the resilience of the agricultural sector to climate change, including mutual funds or a public-private European reinsurance system to cover losses caused by extreme weather and climate events. Given the scale and geographical extent of the damage, the resources available under the agricultural reserve are unlikely to be sufficient. We therefore **CALL FOR** the mobilisation of additional resources from the Union budget to ensure adequate and timely support to affected farmers, regions and sectors;

(10) **ACKNOWLEDGE** that the current CAP and State aid framework already provide a range of support measures and flexibilities that may be used in response to natural disasters and market disturbances. We **STRESS**, however, that their effectiveness remains limited by too rigid rules, state of CAP funds uptake and financial commitments, too complex eligibility conditions and procedures that prevent their rapid deployment in practice. Member States should therefore retain sufficient flexibility to select the measures best suited to the crisis concerned. This should be supported by simplified and accelerated procedures for temporary State aid and, in the case of CAP measures, by the possibility, in duly justified urgent situations, of introducing support measures following notification to the Commission, with the relevant amendments to CAP Strategic Plans completed subsequently;

(11) **CALL FOR** a further increase in the ceilings applicable to de minimis aid in the agricultural sector, both at the level of a single undertaking and at national level, with a view to ensuring that they remain appropriate and effective, and reflect developments in market conditions, including inflation, with future adjustments where duly justified. Adequate flexibility under this instrument would enable Member States to provide rapid and targeted assistance to farmers affected by natural disasters or serious market disturbances, without imposing disproportionate administrative requirements or lengthy approval procedures;

(12) **POINT OUT** the need to adapt the way drought and associated damages are monitored and recorded-specifically, to re-evaluate the representativeness of a simple five-year average as an indicator of normal yield, **CONSIDER** all options to develop special regime for regions prone to frequent and severe droughts;

(13) **REQUEST** that the eligibility conditions for crisis assistance better reflect the actual impact of adverse climatic events. In particular, the minimum loss threshold should be reduced to 20% of the average annual production concerned. Losses should be assessed at the level of the individual crop affected or, in livestock production, at the level of the relevant species, breed or category of animals, rather than necessarily at the level of the holding as a whole;

(14) **CALL FOR** insurance schemes, mutual funds and other risk-management instruments to be made simpler, more accessible and easier to activate. Participation in such instruments should not preclude access to exceptional public support where catastrophic losses exceed the protection they provide;

(15) **EMPHASISE** that immediate assistance must be accompanied by adequately financed preventive measures, particularly investments in water retention, efficient irrigation, soil protection, climate-resilient production, feed security and early-warning systems, including nature-based solutions and landscape measures aimed at improving water retention in the landscape. Given the substantial resources required for irrigation infrastructure, appropriate Union support should be ensured. Work should also continue on European risk-sharing and reinsurance arrangements capable of complementing national systems in the event of large-scale climatic disasters;

(16) At the same time, the persistence of serious market pressures requires an equally determined response at Union level. We **CALL UPON** the Commission to move from monitoring to appropriate action whenever market developments threaten producer incomes, the viability of agricultural holdings or the stability of sensitive sectors. Such monitoring and assessment should adequately reflect regional and sectoral developments, which may reveal serious impacts that are not fully captured by aggregated Union-level data. These should be linked to clear warning thresholds and timely follow-up measures;

(17) **RECALL**, in relation to the dairy sector, the joint letter addressed to Commissioner Hansen on 10 July 2026 by the Ministers of Agriculture of ten Member States, which underlined that continued market monitoring was no longer sufficient and called for a High-Level Forum on the Future of the Dairy Sector. We **RENEW** this call and invite the Commission to use the Forum to identify and implement appropriate measures before the loss of production capacity becomes irreversible;

(18) **EMPHASISE** that imports from third countries must be monitored with regard to their regional and sectoral effects. Where imports cause, or threaten to cause, serious market disturbance, safeguards should be activated rapidly and effectively, on the basis of clear, transparent and predictable criteria and procedures. Their functioning and activation must be fair, understandable and sufficiently foreseeable, so that farmers, Member States and market operators know in advance the conditions under which such measures may be triggered and the protection they can expect;

(19) **REAFFIRM** that enhancing the competitiveness and economic viability of domestic production, including striving for equivalent production standards, must remain fundamental principles of the Union's agricultural trade policy, in order to ensure fair competition and prevent European farmers from being placed at a competitive disadvantage. In this context, the Commission should systematically assess the economic, social, environmental and territorial impact of trade agreements and import flows on European agriculture;

(20) Following the current production season, **INVITE** the Commission to assess the practical use, accessibility and effectiveness of the available instruments, identify the main administrative and regulatory obstacles and present its findings to the Council;

(21) **EMPHASIZE** the role of the CAP as a proven and successful instrument for strengthening the resilience of European agriculture but at the same time, in order to ensure that the Union is better equipped to respond to both natural and market-related crises, **UNDERLINE** the need to further develop a comprehensive framework for risk management, accompanied by appropriate budget and flexibility in implementation rules; we **REAFFIRM** that the future CAP must include relevant measures for these crises including Unity Safety Net and remain a strong and genuinely common policy, supported by a strong, sufficiently ambitious and predictable budget;

(22) **CALL UPON** the European Commission and the Presidency of the Council to treat the significantly worsening situation in European agriculture as a matter of urgency and to present, at the earliest opportunity, concrete, adequately financed and effective response at Union level.

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