



**Brussels, 21 January 2025
(OR. en)**

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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 27 January 2025:
Joint letter of MED9 Ministers related to the need for preparedness and response to the increased risks of climate change in the Mediterranean region
- Information from Cyprus on behalf of Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain

Teresa Ribera

Executive Vice-President for a Clean, Just and Competitive Transition

Raffaele Fitto

Executive Vice-President for Cohesion and Reforms

Jessika Roswall

Commissioner for Environment, Water Resilience and a Competitive Circular Economy

Wopke Hoekstra

Commissioner for Climate, Net-Zero and Clean Growth

Christophe Hansen

Commissioner for agriculture and food

Hadja Lahbib

Commissioner for Preparedness and Crisis Management

Commissioner for Equality

Costas Kadis

Commissioner for Fisheries and Oceans

Dubravka Šuica

Commissioner for the Mediterranean

6 December, 2024

Dear Vice-President,

Dear Commissioners,

The Mediterranean region is particularly impacted by increased risks as a result of climate change, including natural disasters and extreme weather events. The increasing irregularity, frequency and severity of climatic events creates unprecedented phenomena that need sufficient preparedness and response mechanisms and enhanced investments in research and development to accommodate innovative and sustainable solutions risk prevention measures and adaptive infrastructure.



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The severity of rapid onset floods, prolonged droughts and arid/semi-arid climatic conditions and their shared causes threaten agricultural production, food security and farmers' income and has been a regularly observed phenomenon creating circumstances where desertification, soil degradation, biomass and biodiversity loss are becoming more and more apparent. This calls for increased cooperation and European solutions especially when the threat of crisis is beyond the capacity of individual Member States.

Efficient and timely water management can be a tool for improving sustainability and resilience of our food production systems, natural resources (soil, air), ecosystems. Such benefits can improve the viability and attractiveness of our rural areas and preserving the Mediterranean culture and heritage. Declining soil quality can be reversed creating soil ecosystems that are more efficient and with decreased soil penetration resistance and improved water absorption. In addition, permanent crops, increased green coverage and reforestation from wildfires can serve as a carbon sink, ecosystem shelter, feed and food provider, air filter and biomass store for multiple uses including energy production.

Acknowledging the threat of water scarcity to the primary sector in Mediterranean Member States the Ministers of Agriculture of Cyprus, France, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia, and Spain and representatives from Croatia and Greece signed a joint declaration in Cyprus on the 3rd of September 2024. Water management is of crucial importance for the years to come. The multiple benefits of water use for irrigation cannot be overstated.

We the MED9 ministers call for innovative and holistic solutions taking into account the imminent threat for our food systems and rural areas. Such solutions should include improved possibilities for financing risk management and infrastructure including solutions related to water storage, the use of non conventional sources of water, advanced irrigation systems, flood prevention and accumulation of rain water, drought impact adaptation and mitigation, water reuse, precipitation and production.

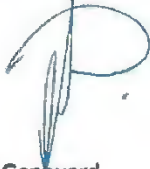
We invite the European Commission to take into account our concerns and the attached Joint Declaration of the Ministers of Agriculture of the MED9 in future initiatives including the Water Resilience Strategy.



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Josip Dabro
Croatian Deputy Prime Minister and
Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries



Annie Genevard
French Minister of Agriculture, Food
Sovereignty and Forestry



Francesco Lollobrigida
Italian Minister of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty
and Forestry



José Manuel Fernandes
Portuguese Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries



Luis Planas Puchades
Spanish Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries
and Food



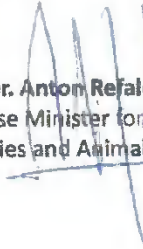
Dr Maria Panayiotou
Cypriot Minister of Agriculture, Rural
Development and Environment



Konstantinos Tsiaras
Greek Minister of Rural Development and Food



Hon Dr. Anton Refalo
Maltese Minister for Agriculture,
Fisheries and Animal Rights



Mateja Čalušič
Slovenian Minister of Agriculture,
Forestry and Food



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Joint Declaration of the Ministers of Agriculture of the MED9

Threat of Drought to the Primary Sector in Mediterranean Member States

We, the Ministers of Agriculture of Cyprus, France, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia, and Spain and representatives from Croatia and Greece, convened in Cyprus on the 3rd of September 2024, representing the countries of the MED9 initiative, reaffirm our commitment to addressing key challenges in the Mediterranean region related to the pressing issue of water scarcity;

Acknowledging the significance of the Strategic Agenda approved by the European Council on the 27th of June 2024 and the importance of strengthening water resilience across the Union to support sustainable agricultural practices;

Recognizing that the Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2024-2029 presented on the 18th of July 2024 by President Von der Leyen, highlight the need to strengthen Europe's water security and for a new European Water Resilience Strategy,

Considering studies and reports, highlighting the increasing risks from accelerated drought and climate change to, among others, agriculture production, food security, rural economic stability, the social fabric of rural areas and the biodiversity;

We pledge:

to implement sustainable water management practices in agriculture and adopt advanced irrigation techniques and water saving agricultural practices and technologies, including drought resistant crops and varieties;

to strengthen cooperation amongst the MED 9 countries, enhancing information sharing, engaging in joint research programs, exchanging experiences on best management practices and innovative technological solutions to mitigate the consequences of drought;

to strengthen partnerships with the Mediterranean countries in the EU's Southern Neighborhood, whose agricultural sector is also confronted with drought and water scarcity;



to support innovation and digitalization in agrifood production, with the aim of promoting the efficient use of water as a tool for adapting our agriculture to climate change;

We commit to support public awareness campaigns and promote the cultivation of a water saving culture to our farmers;

We call:

for an integrated approach to ensure synergy and coherence across all legislative processes, in order to secure water availability and address water scarcity, ensuring the necessary water storage, given the critical importance of water for the primary sector;

for flexibility and simplification in the financial framework of CAP for water management measures, including the financing eligibility of interventions in irrigation investments, and provide with water scarcity and drought impact adaptation and mitigation tools including under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP);

for promoting applied research in the EU to contribute to sustainable water management, advancing the use of available technologies and plant breeding techniques to obtain plant varieties better adapted to water scarcity;

We invite the European Commission to swiftly proceed with the European Water Resilience Strategy taking into account agricultural and local specificities, such as the long-term unavailability of water resources and future climate projections; as well as issues related to sustainability of the whole agri-food chain, security of food supply, farmers' income and consumers' expectations;

We advocate for the development of a comprehensive approach, in line with the Strategic Agenda approved by the European Council on 27 June 2024;

This Ministerial meeting demonstrates our determination to address water scarcity and secure a resilient and prosperous future for our farmers.

3rd of September 2024,

Cyprus

