



Council of the
European Union

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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Council

Subject: Joint Declaration of the Ministers of Agriculture of the Visegrad Group and Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Slovenia on the contribution of their CAP strategic plans to a fairer and greener European agriculture
- Information from the Hungarian delegation, on behalf of the Bulgarian, Croatian, Hungarian, Polish, Romanian, Slovak and Slovenian delegations

Delegations will find in the Annex a joint Declaration of the Ministers of Agriculture of the Visegrad Group and Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Slovenia on the contribution of their CAP strategic plans to a fairer and greener European agriculture to be presented by the Hungarian delegation under "Any other business" items at the "Agriculture and Fisheries" Council on 21 March 2022.

**HUNGARIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE VISEGRAD GROUP
JULY 2021 – JUNE 2022**

**JOINT DECLARATION OF THE MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE OF
THE VISEGRAD GROUP*
AND BULGARIA, CROATIA, ROMANIA and SLOVENIA
on the contribution of their CAP strategic plans to a fairer and greener European
agriculture**

Visegrád, 4 March 2022

We, the Ministers of Agriculture of the Visegrad Group and Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Slovenia met in Visegrad on the 4th of March 2022 upon the invitation of Hungary currently holding the V4 Presidency. We agreed on our common position and discussed how our region will contribute to a fairer and greener European agriculture through our CAP strategic plans.

As regards the adoption of the strategic plans, we

- (1) WELCOME the formal adoption of the three CAP basic acts, achieving a balance between the Treaty-based objectives of the CAP and the challenges in relation to the environment- and climate-related objectives of the European Union.
- (2) THANK the European Commission for the structured dialogue of the past months, which led to the submission of the CAP draft strategic plans and CALL for the continuation of the technical level discussions even before the observation letters will be sent to the Member States.
- (3) EMPHASIZE the need for a timely adoption of the CAP strategic plans in order to provide Member States with sufficient time for preparing the national legislation and adapting their implementation system to the new conditions. Therefore, CALL UPON the Commission to respect the timeframe open for the approval and use the so called “stop-the-clock” mechanism in a fair, reasonable and responsible way bearing in mind the need for reducing the administrative burden on beneficiaries and public administration as well.

** The Czech Republic does not sign the document officially due to their upcoming Presidency of the Council of the European Union*

HUNGARIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE VISEGRAD GROUP
JULY 2021 – JUNE 2022

- (4) UNDERLINE that farmers will have to make decisions on their sowing structure in early autumn at the latest, to be able to comply with the requirements of the new instruments of the CAP, therefore the strategic plans should be adopted by the end of July 2022 at the latest.
- (5) HIGHLIGHT that at least the definitions of eligible hectare, agricultural activity, the detailed rules of conditionality, the conditions for eco-schemes and the rules for agro-ecological non-productive investments are absolutely necessary for the farmers during the summer months of 2022 at the latest, in order for them to be able to prepare their agricultural activity for the new CAP.

As regards better targeting of direct payments, we

- (6) AGREE that the CAP strategic plans should ensure a fairer distribution and more efficient targeting of income support towards smaller and medium-sized enterprises.
- (7) HIGHLIGHT that in our strategic plans we commit to spend on average 14,23% of our 1st Pillar envelopes for fairer distribution of direct payments through broad set of measures: redistributive income support, capping and degressivity of direct payments, internal convergence, or through eco-schemes addressed for small farms. POINT OUT that this is 4,23 percentage points more than the 10%, required by Article 98 of the CAP Strategic Plan Regulation, and represents an increase of almost 10% compared to the current period.
- (8) EMPHASIZE that in the assessment and approval procedure, Member States' choice should be respected in terms of which elements they find appropriate to achieve the common objective of a fairer distribution of direct payments, and should not be judged on the basis of former implementation patterns.
- (9) UNDERLINE that – in line with the subsidiarity principle - defining the amount per hectare or different amounts for different ranges of hectares, as well as the maximum number of hectares per farmer for which the redistributive income support shall be paid, is under the sole competence of the Member States.

**HUNGARIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE VISEGRAD GROUP
JULY 2021 – JUNE 2022**

- (10) ADD that complementary income support for young farmers and coupled income support are also important cornerstones of an adequately targeted direct support system.

As regards the green ambition of the Strategic Plans, we

- (11) AGREE that agriculture and the CAP should also contribute to the environment- and climate-related objectives of the European Union, but UNDERLINE that this should neither endanger the fulfillment of the Treaty-based objectives of the CAP, nor jeopardize farmers' income, food security and the competitiveness of the sector.
- (12) ARE CONVINCED that the new green architecture of the CAP, including the enhanced conditionality, the newly introduced eco-schemes and the environmental and climate related measures of the second pillar will significantly improve the CAP's contribution to the global fight against climate change.
- (13) STATE that in our strategic plans we pledged to spend on average 45,52% of the EAFRD contribution to environmental and climate-related specific objectives such as organic farming practices and methods; environmental, climate-related and other management commitments; natural or other area-specific constraints; area-specific disadvantages resulting from certain mandatory requirements; animal welfare. UNDERLINE that this is more than 10 percentage points above the required minimum of 35%.

As regards the contribution to reach the Green Deal targets, we

- (14) AGREE that the CAP should also contribute to the legally non-binding 2030 targets defined in the Farm to Fork strategy and RECALL Article 118 para (4) of the CAP Strategic Plan Regulation¹ stating that the approval of the strategic plans shall exclusively be based on acts which are legally binding for Member States. TAKE

¹ Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 December 2021 establishing rules on support for strategic plans to be drawn up by Member States under the common agricultural policy (CAP Strategic Plans) and financed by the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1305/2013 and (EU) No 1307/2013

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JULY 2021 – JUNE 2022

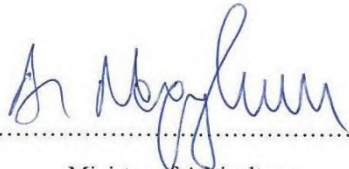
NOTE that the Commission should assess the consistency and contribution of the CAP strategic plans to the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies according to Recital 122.

- (15) **HIGHLIGHT** that the EU level reduction of the overall use of pesticides, as well as the target for areas cultivated under organic farming are important goals to be achieved by 2030. **STRESS** that the related assessment must take into account the economic, geographical and climatic specificities and different starting points of each individual Member States.
- (16) **UNDERLINE** that the 50% pesticide reduction targets apply to the EU as a whole, and the legally non-binding contribution of individual Member States to achieve this target should take into account the intensity of pesticide use in that country and the need for plant protection in order to maintain the level of agricultural production guaranteeing food security.
- (17) **EMPHASIZE** that the average for years 2015-2017 should be considered as the reference period when counting the EU level 50% overall pesticides use reduction target as it was stated in the Commission’s recommendations to the Member States as regards their strategic plans for the CAP, without prejudice to Member States’ positions on the future proposal for the sustainable use of pesticides.
- (18) **DRAW ATTENTION** to the fact that we already managed to reach a considerable reduction of the overall use and risk of chemical and more hazardous pesticides and **HIGHLIGHT** that the average intensity of pesticide use is 1,35 kg/ha in our Member States, which is less than the 2,10 kg/ha EU average. **URGE** the Commission to take this into account when assessing the CAP strategic plans. Furthermore, **CALL ON** the Commission to acknowledge these efforts when preparing the upcoming legislative proposal on sustainable use of pesticides.
- (19) As regards the increase of agricultural land under organic farming, **HIGHLIGHT** that the assessment of the contribution to the 25% Union target should take into account the

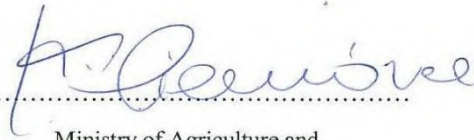
**HUNGARIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE VISEGRAD GROUP
JULY 2021 – JUNE 2022**

different farm and land use structure of different Member States, their national specificities and their actual share of land dedicated to organic farming.

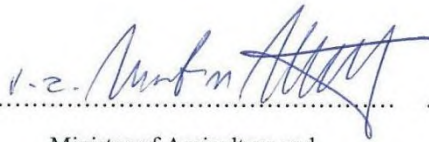
- (20) UNDERLINE that the uptake of organic farming was historically low in most of our Member States and EMPHASIZE our commitment to further increase the share of land cultivated under organic farming practices and methods.
- (21) CALL UPON the Commission to take this declaration into consideration when finalizing its upcoming observations to the Member States.



Ministry of Agriculture
Hungary



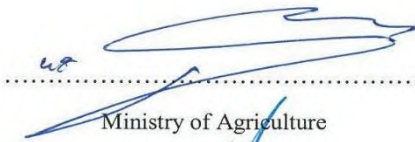
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Rural Development
Poland



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