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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 May 2025: The Impact of Animal Diseases on the Agricultural Sector – The Need for a Rapid Response to Economic Losses <i>- Information from Slovakia, supported by Czechia and Hungary</i>

In recent times, the EU has faced a growing number of serious animal disease outbreaks, which have had a direct and significant impact on agriculture. These diseases – also recorded in Slovakia, Czechia and Hungary – are increasingly affecting Member States and causing major economic losses, particularly in livestock production. In many cases, they result in the complete cease of the production in the affected businesses. These situations lead to a substantial reduction in the number of farm animals – a trend we must avoid at all costs.

In such cases, where losses are often estimated in tens of millions of euros, a rapid and targeted response is essential to support farmers when they need it most. It is crucial that, in the event of major disease outbreaks with economic consequences, accelerated financial assistance is available to reduce uncertainty and ensure the continuity of economic activity.

Therefore, we consider it necessary to shorten the procedure for assessing support applications and to remove unnecessary administrative barriers. It is also essential to introduce clearly defined deadlines for the disbursement of aid to help farmers better plan and stabilize their operations. We also point out that some tools, including recently adopted Measure 23 from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), are difficult or even impossible to implement in practice, due to the specific conditions of individual Member States. In this context, it is crucial to establish an effective and easy-to-use compensation mechanism that can be accessed without unnecessary delay. Farmers would welcome a system that allows for the payment of partial advances.

Special attention must also be paid to the impact on the market, particularly the sale of products from affected areas. Trade restrictions often apply to an entire Member State, even when only certain regions are impacted. We therefore emphasize the need to enforce the principle of regionalisation, which will protect the integrity of the single market while limiting the consequences to the specifically affected areas. It is equally essential that the European Commission responds quickly and in a coordinated manner – both within the EU and externally – in cases of major outbreaks. The internal market must not be disrupted in a way that harms farmers in unaffected parts of a Member State. Targeted diplomatic efforts are needed to ensure that trade in safe commodities from zones without outbreaks can continue. This will prevent unnecessary economic losses and market disruption.

Farmers, in this regard, express their dissatisfaction, pointing to threats to their viability and liquidity during outbreaks, and are calling for better-designed systems that can help them overcome such periods.

Based on the above, Slovakia, Czechia and Hungary stress that the absence of rapid and effective instruments undermines farmers' confidence in the European support system and increases their vulnerability to unpredictable biological threats.