



Council of the  
European Union

156418/EU XXV. GP  
Eingelangt am 03/10/17

Brussels, 3 October 2017  
(OR. en)

12669/17

AGRI 504  
AGRIFIN 98  
AGRIORG 91

#### NOTE

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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Council

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Subject:	JOINT DECLARATION OF THE MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE OF THE VISEGRAD GROUP (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia) AND Latvia and Lithuania from the BALTIC STATES on the prospects for the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) after 2020 - Requested by the Hungarian and Lithuanian delegations - Supported by Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Latvia, Poland, Romania and Slovakia
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Delegations will find in the Annex the JOINT DECLARATION OF THE MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE OF THE VISEGRAD GROUP (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia) AND Latvia and Lithuania from the BALTIC STATES on the prospects for the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) after 2020, which was signed in the margins of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council in Brussels on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July 2017.

The document was received from the Hungarian and Lithuanian delegations with the support of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Latvia, Poland and Slovakia to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the "Agriculture and Fisheries" Council on 9 October 2017.

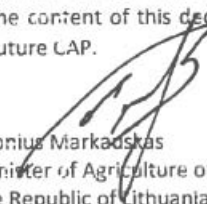
**JOINT DECLARATION OF THE MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE OF THE VISEGRAD GROUP (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia) AND Latvia and Lithuania from the BALTIC STATES  
on the prospects of the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) after 2020**

***Brussels, 18 July 2017***

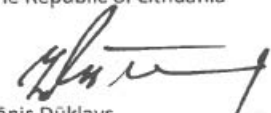
The Ministers of Agriculture of the Visegrad Group and Latvia and Lithuania from the Baltic States:

- (1) SUPPORT the need for a strong post 2020 CAP retaining the two pillar structure with adequate budget in order to achieve the goals defined in the Treaty. Modernisation and streamlining of the CAP should not lead to an overhaul of its structure, changes to the current objectives, or adding new ones. Any new CAP objectives and challenges can only be financed with adequate financial resources.
- (2) EMPHASIZE that it is of common interest that the new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) should provide appropriate financial resources for fulfilling the increasingly ambitious CAP objectives. UNDERLINE that farmers' income level is still lagging behind compared to others sectors.
- (3) UNDERLINE that those Member States who joined the EU in 2004 or afterwards, after a long phasing in period, have recently reached or will reach the 100 % level of direct payments agreed during accession negotiations, therefore the share of direct payments within Heading 2 should be kept. EMPHASISE that the introduction of a possible national co-financing in Pillar I is unacceptable.
- (4) SUGGEST that the possibility of the transfer between the two pillars of the CAP should be preserved after 2020.
- (5) UNDERLINE that EU farmers should remain key beneficiaries of CAP funds.
- (6) RECOGNISE that further simplification of the CAP legislation is essential to the benefit of farmers and national authorities.
- (7) EMPHASIZE that the Single Area Payment Scheme (SAPS) proved to be efficient and it should be maintained and made available in the future as well.
- (8) CONSIDER that the flexibility of the present system of direct payments provides Member States with the possibility to determine, within set limits, their own model adjusted to specific challenges and needs; therefore instead of a radical reform a fine tuning exercise is enough to meet the challenges ahead.
- (9) HIGHLIGHT that voluntary coupled support payments provide an essential contribution to maintaining the economic activities in rural areas and rural employment. Therefore these payments should be sustained even with wider scope and sufficient financial resources.


- (10) RECOGNISE the importance of rural development, contributing to the long-term sustainability and growth of the agricultural sector as well as vitality and viability of rural areas. UNDERLINE that effectiveness and efficiency of Pillar II rely i.a. on strong relations and synergies with Pillar I, which is enabled by common policy design and programming at the EU and national level within the CAP.
- (11) UNDERLINE that predominance of non-refundable funds in rural development programmes should be retained, and financial instruments should only complement grant-based support. Member States should be able to continue prioritising between investment and other support measures.
- (12) RECOMMEND the strengthening of the safety net, enhancing the prevention and fast tackling of market crises. The degree of organisation in certain sectors should be increased to improve the sectors' resilience in respect of price volatility and revenue fluctuations.
- (13) URGE to improve the effectiveness of the current crisis management instruments from which all market actors could benefit.
- (14) In addition to the above points shared by all delegations, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia POINT OUT that differences in direct payments per hectare persist yet among Member States. Therefore CALL to complete the process of their full convergence.
- (15) CALL UPON the Council, the European Commission and the European Parliament to take the content of this declaration into consideration when designing the framework of the future CAP.




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the Republic of Lithuania



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