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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Council

Subject: Joint declaration of the Ministers of Agriculture on the Commission
Communication on The Future of Food and Farming
-Information from the Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Polish delegation

Delegations will find in the Annex the Joint declaration of the Ministers of Agriculture of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland on the Commission Communication on "The Future of Food and Farming" which was signed on 13 March 2018 in Riga. This document will be dealt with under "Any other business" at the "Agriculture and Fisheries" Council on 19 March 2018.

JOINT DECLARATION OF THE MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE OF

Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland

on the Commission Communication on The Future of Food and Farming

Riga, 13 March, 2018

We, the Ministers of Agriculture of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland discussed and agreed our common position on the Commission Communication on The Future of Food and Farming.

In this regard we

- (1) WELCOME the Commission Communication on The Future of Food and Farming published on 29th November 2017, but UNDERLINE that there is a need to deepen cooperation of European Commission with Member States to take better account of their experience and the positions;
- (2) EMPHASIZE that the CAP should remain a common, modern and well-funded EU policy which supports sustainable development of agriculture and is crucial for providing safe, high quality and diverse food, jobs and growth in rural areas. The CAP shall contribute further to levelling of the agriculture and rural areas developmental gaps – an improvement of social and economic cohesion should be reflected in its financial and programming dimension as well as proposed instruments;
- (3) STRESS therefore that the new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) should provide appropriate financial resources for fulfilling the Treaty objectives and new challenges of CAP;
- (4) SUPPORT the Commission's willingness to reach further simplification and modernisation of the CAP. BELIEVE that solutions of this policy should be simple, comprehensible and transparent for both its beneficiaries and other EU citizens, and should limit administrative costs to the highest possible extent;
- (5) ANTICIPATE that a new delivery model proposed by the Commission should bring real simplification and reduction of administrative burden for both farmers and national/regional administrations. Nevertheless, CONSIDERS this as an administrative challenge, therefore, it would be appropriate to grant technical assistance under EAGF necessary for designing and implementation of the CAP strategic plan and for introducing more advanced management systems;
- (6) CALL for fairness and equality between Member States and URGE to complete the process of full convergence of direct payments between Member States. UNDERLINE that all EU farmers have to meet the same standards and requirements and face the same challenges;

- (7) EMPHASIZE that the Single Area Payment Scheme (SAPS) proved to be efficient and simple scheme and it is accepted by farmers, therefore it should be kept as an option for the future as well and made available to all Member States;
- (8) STRESS that voluntary coupled support - in accordance with current WTO rules - provides an important contribution to maintaining diversity of EU farming sector, economic activity in rural areas and bolster rural employment. POINT OUT that these payments should be maintained and used in wider scope to address specific objectives related to environment, climate or quality and marketing of agricultural products;
- (9) AGREE to bolster environmental care and climate action and to contribute to the environmental and climate objectives of the EU. However, ambitions and results to be achieved should be proportional with the funding available and equal contribution in all Member states should be required only following the full convergence of direct payments. CALL for a need to develop a balanced approach - providing Member States with sufficient flexibility, creating an attractive incentive system for farmers, reducing administrative burden;
- (10) UNDERLINE that the Treaty objectives, particularly with regard to stabilizing agricultural markets, must be implemented effectively so as to prevent and help to overcome crisis situations in agriculture. This requires a more active use of the instruments established under common organization of agricultural markets, as well as the introduction of new and more effective mechanisms for crisis prevention and risk management and improvement of current safety net measures. In this context EMPHASIZE also the role of farmers in managing their risks;
- (11) AGREE on the need for more balanced food supply chain. Helping farmers to benefit more from the market requires strengthening their position in the food chain i.a. by boosting of their cooperation in producer organisations, associations and other organizations. Also access to the market data has to be improved for farmers in order to take sustainable market-based decisions;
- (12) EMPHASIZE that CAP support for rural development provides opportunities for Member States to enhance competitiveness, promotes effective and sustainable economies and enhances development of rural areas. It is vital to tackle depopulation, unemployment, poverty and to promote social inclusion. Conditions and criteria of the EU funding for rural development must ensure support for rural areas that are lagging behind the average levels. STRESS that the CAP second pillar should be strengthened financially;
- (13) BELIEVE that reducing the still existing developmental disparities between the Member States, as well as cities and rural areas, requires a significant and complementary involvement of many EU policies. For this reason, ASSESS positively the “rural proofing” mechanism proposed by the Commission to verify the impact of various policies on rural areas and their development;
- (14) CONSIDER it necessary to maintain in the second pillar of the CAP targeted and mainly active instruments to counteract and mitigate the negative effects of climate change,

protect biodiversity related to farming and to prevent the occurrence of natural disasters and abandonment of farmland;

- (15) SUPPORT Commission's opinion on an increasing role of research, innovations and new technologies in the value chain and on a need to strengthen knowledge transfer and advisory services. CAP solutions addressing these issues should better reflect the needs of different agricultural structures and enterprises in agri-food sector, e.g. young farmers and small and medium farms, whose opportunities to participate in technological progress are much smaller in comparison to bigger entities;
- (16) UNDERLINE the need to ensure smooth, efficient, and transparent transition to the post 2020 rules, both for farmers and national administrations, without prejudicing the outcome of political discussion on the future of CAP;
- (17) CALL UPON the Commission, the European Parliament and the Member States to take this declaration into consideration when designing the new Common Agriculture Policy.



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