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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Council

Subject: Outcome of the International Ministerial Conference "Strengthening the generation and transfer of knowledge for the progress of agriculture and rural areas", 23 August 2019, Ptuj, Slovenia
- Information from the Slovenian delegation

Delegations will find in Annex information received from the Slovenian delegation on the above-mentioned conference to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the "Agriculture and Fisheries" Council on 14-15 October 2019.

In the margins of the 57th International Fair of Agriculture and Food AGRA, a ministerial conference “Strengthening the generation and transfer of knowledge for the progress of agriculture and rural areas” organised by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food of the Republic of Slovenia, took place on 23 August 2019 in Ptuj, Slovenia.

The conference was attended by Ministers, State Secretaries, Directors-General and other senior representatives of the ministries from 10 EU Member States, as well as other candidate countries and potential candidates (Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czechia, Cyprus, France, Hungary, Kosovo, Latvia, Montenegro, The Netherlands, North Macedonia, Poland, Serbia, Slovenia, and Turkey). Scientific and research institutions like ACTA from France, Novosadsko Seme from Serbia and the Forestry and Agricultural Institutes of Slovenia also participated in the conference. Examples of good agricultural practices of successful Slovenian farms in transferring knowledge and innovations in agriculture and forestry (hereinafter: AKIS) were presented.

Discussions at the conference focused on two key areas: i) reducing the differences in the functioning of the AKIS in European countries and ii) strengthening of the AKIS in European countries after 2021. The main objective was to better integrate R&D tasks at local, national and European level, involving Member States and Associated Countries, taking into account coordination with other development policies co-financed by different funds.

Participants signed a joint declaration (see Annex) that provides guidance and some concrete proposals for strengthening knowledge transfer and innovation systems in agriculture with the aim to improve the technological development of agricultural holdings, the introduction of new technologies and the reduction of the environmental footprint along the entire food chain. All this in order to increase productivity while assuring long-term food security and food self-sufficiency, environmental protection, adaptation to climate change, strengthening of the socio-economic structure in rural areas and improving age and educational structure of people living in the rural areas.

JOINT DECLARATION

International Ministerial Conference

“Strengthening the generation and transfer of knowledge for the progress of agriculture and rural areas”

Ptuj, 23 August 2019

We, the Ministers responsible for agriculture and/or their representatives from Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, *Czechia*, Cyprus, France, Hungary, Kosovo, Latvia, Montenegro, The Netherlands, North Macedonia, Poland, Serbia, Slovenia, and Turkey, on the initiative of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food of the Republic of Slovenia met at the International Ministerial Conference, entitled “Strengthening the generation and transfer of knowledge for the progress of agriculture and rural areas”, on 23 August 2019 in Ptuj, Slovenia, to discuss the situation, activities and measures in this field.

In this regard we:

(1) EMPHASISE the importance of knowledge, innovation and digitization in agriculture and rural areas as crucial means of aid for farmers in ensuring income stability, long-term food security, protecting the environment, managing climate change and strengthening the rural socio-economic structures. In order to motivate young farmers to thrive and look for opportunities in the rural areas, it is therefore necessary to stabilise agricultural incomes and create attractive business activities by ensuring adequate information technology infrastructure, education and new production technologies.

(2) STRESS that promoting innovative projects and implementing those results in practice are major goals of an effective Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS), such that follows the sectors of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and their modernization.

(3) STRESS that creating knowledge and innovation in agriculture and rural areas through EIP-AGRI interactive innovation projects is becoming a primary policy tool and networking initiative for accelerating innovation. The agricultural European Innovation Partnership (EIP-AGRI) benefits from two EU policies that work in synergy: Horizon 2020, i.e. future Horizon Europe and the CAP.

(4) REAFFIRM the importance of coordinating and implementing different policies, such as cohesion, social, maritime, economic, environmental and agricultural policies, at regional, national and EU levels.

With the aim to support the development of AKIS we:

(5) REAFFIRM our commitment to strengthen and harmonise the functioning, objectives and performance of AKIS in various countries and regions across Europe. For this purpose step forward in this context is, the proposal of the new CAP 2021–2027 in the EU, which stipulates the horizontal cross-cutting objective of modernising the agricultural sector by fostering and sharing knowledge, innovation and digitalization in agriculture and rural areas, as well as by encouraging their uptake.

(6) SHOULD FOSTER the cooperation of various stakeholders, like farmers, foresters, advisors, researchers, entrepreneurs and consumers, at the regional, national and European level while searching for concrete solutions within the scope of the CAP and the EIP operational groups, while generating the bottom-up development of innovation and knowledge transfer.

(7) HAVE PLEDGED to increase our research, development and demonstration investments and cooperation in sustainable technology and knowledge, in particular for small and medium-sized agricultural holdings.

(8) ARE COMMITTED to establishing an environment conducive to the faster development of innovations and the better evaluation of existing knowledge, available to all parties concerned. In this regard we STRESS the importance of strengthening the cooperation between European countries, research institutions, advisory services and farmers in order to improve the life of our citizens and promote investments in agricultural knowledge and innovations abroad.

Adopted in Ptuj, Slovenia, on 23 August 2019.