



Council of the
European Union

Brussels, 16 November 2022
(OR. en)

14786/22

AGRI 636
ENV 1157

NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Council
Subject:	Fertiliser Availability in the European Union, essential for food security - Proposed by Spain, supported by Bulgaria, Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia.

Delegations will find in the Annex the note on the above subject to be dealt with under “Any other business” at the meeting of the “Agriculture and Fisheries” Council on 21 November 2022.

Fertiliser Availability in the European Union, essential for food security

Fertiliser availability is essential to provide food for our citizens, at a time when they have to face a purchase power decrease in which the high cost of the shopping basket plays a very important role.

Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine has caused a sudden increase in the price of natural gas, leading to an unprecedented increase in the price of nitrogen fertilisers on the one hand, and the shutdown of a large part of the EU's production force on the other. This has led to a reduction in their availability, while at the same time reducing Europe's strategic autonomy for such a critical input as fertilisers.

Meanwhile, the normal development of autumn and winter sowing are jeopardized by the extremely worrying climate scenario, characterized by abnormally low levels of precipitation affecting a large number of countries.

In addition, the current disturbance in the fertiliser market seems to be long-lasting, which means that the same situation on fertiliser availability and prices arises again next year when farmers start to prepare for spring sowing campaign.

Many farmers are now facing the question of how much they can risk regarding their sowing decisions, given the great fertilisers and other energy inputs price increase.

For all these reasons, *Bulgaria, Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Spain*, ask the Commission to adopt specific measures to address the situation in the short, medium and long term, specifically through initiatives that address:

1. Maintaining the European strategic autonomy in fertilisers production and supply, avoiding new dependencies on fertiliser imports from third countries, developing measures that have an impact on the price of natural gas for the production of nitrogen compounds as well as energy price for production of phosphate and potassium fertilisers, fostering the use of renewable energy and the development of the innovation capacity / innovative solutions in the production process, speeding up the sector's transition to a more sustainable and resilient one.

2. Improve transparency in the market for fertilisers and the raw materials used for their production by the establishment of an observatory group with experts from public institutes and private stakeholders that report on regular basis updates on the production and stocks of fertilisers in the EU, while the European Commission together with the Member States work on the systematization of official data reporting, as well as within AMIS to which EU support must be strengthened.
3. Improve fertilisation by farmers by incentivising its sustainable and efficient use, in particular through access to technical advice and nutrient management tools allowing for enhanced farming practices that must be recognized, and through reducing crop needs.
4. The search for alternative nutrients and energy sources, promoting the recovery of bio-waste and animal by-products, taking advantage of all related measures within the EU legislation in this area (e.g. Nitrates Directive 91/676/CEE, Animal By-product Regulation (EC) 1069/2009 and Fertilising Products Regulation (EU) 2019/1009) that integrates the sector into the circular economy, without renouncing the principles of efficiency and safety.
5. Promote the use of bio stimulants to optimize the use of fertilisers through better use of nutrients by crops. The new Community legislative framework should serve as a basis for this boost and for making production processes cheaper as they are implemented.
6. Foster the use of new technologies and precision farming that allows adjusting fertiliser doses to crop needs. Precision farming, together with advice, will make it possible to transform towards a responsible plant nutrition, thus saving costs, ensuring yields and minimizing environmental impact.
7. Promote leguminous crops at Union level in order to increase biodiversity and nitrogen fixation, contributing to a decrease of the EU nitrogen dependence, specifically, through the interventions envisaged in the CAP strategic plans, incentivizing their cultivation among farmers in a profitable way, that should be completed by a strong and coordinated impetus at EU level with the development of a genuine European strategy for proteins.