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Subject: Council conclusions on the contingency plan for ensuring food supply and food security in times of crisis
- *Approval*

The Annex to this note contains draft conclusions on the above-mentioned subject as agreed within the Special Committee on Agriculture on 6 December 2021 with a view to their approval at the meeting of the “Agriculture and Fisheries” Council on 12 and 13 December 2021.

Council conclusions on the contingency plan for ensuring food supply and food security in times of crisis

The Council of the European Union

RECALLING:

- the Treaty objectives of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) relevant in relation to food supply and food security;
 - the Commission's 2020 Strategic Foresight report focused on resilience;
 - the Farm to Fork Strategy and the Council conclusions of 19 October 2020 on the Farm to Fork Strategy, in which the Council welcomed the Commission's intention to develop a contingency plan designed to ensuring food supply and food security in times of crisis;
 - the Council conclusions of 23 November 2021¹ on enhancing preparedness, response capability and resilience to future crises, which aim at enhancing the EU's collective response to future crises by improving in particular cross-sectoral and cross-border crisis management, while emphasising that crisis-related measures should be temporary, proportionate and fully coordinated, with the objective of resuming as soon as possible the normal functioning of the single market.
1. **REITERATES** the strategic role of the EU agriculture, fisheries, aquaculture and food sectors in ensuring sufficient and varied supply of safe, nutritious, affordable and sustainable food to people at all times, including in times of crisis, and the importance of the Single Market in this respect by ensuring free circulation of goods, persons, live animals, services and capital.

¹ doc. 13780/21

2. **ACKNOWLEDGES** that food production capacity and distribution through the food supply chain are increasingly affected by uncertainty as well as price and supply volatility resulting in particular from climate change and related extreme weather events, environmental degradation, plant and animal health issues, and the availability and affordability of key inputs (i.e. feed and feed additives, fertilisers, energy, labour, etc.) and also by risks outside the food systems.
3. **EMPHASISES** that the EU food system has proven its resilience and well-functioning in the Covid pandemic, despite problems encountered by some sectors as a consequence of health related measures, short-term problems affecting the movement of persons and goods, including agricultural inputs and packaging material, and the closure of food services.
4. **ACKNOWLEDGES** that swift and coordinated actions at the EU level, such as green lanes, mobility of cross-border and seasonal workers, additional EU support, adjusted state aid rules, open trade flows, transparency and communication addressed the most pressing initial difficulties. However, **RECOGNISES** that the Covid pandemic has revealed areas for improvement, which should be addressed to further improve the resilience of the food sector and allow for an integrated approach, both at the EU level and in cooperation with third countries.
5. **AGREES** that enhanced cross-sectoral and cross-border coordination and cooperation at EU level are essential to respond effectively to crises, including those related to food supply and food security and **UNDERLINES** the need to respect national and EU competences and to build on as well as strengthen appropriate existing EU mechanisms, without duplication and overlapping.
6. **WELCOMES** the Commission Communication on the contingency plan for ensuring food supply and food security in times of crisis, which focuses on preparedness and aims at identifying shortcomings and improving crisis management.

7. **AGREES** that the existing EU policy framework relevant for food supply, including the Common Agricultural Policy and the Common Fisheries Policy, already includes a wide range of measures aimed at increasing the resilience of the food sector by providing effective and timely responses to crisis situations, **NOTES** that the CAP crisis-response measures were not revised in the last reform, and **RECOGNISES** the established prevention and crisis mechanisms at Member State level, including voluntary approaches on strategic reserves in some Member States.
8. **SHARES THE VIEW** that further activities at the EU level should build upon these policy instruments, and **AGREES** that action at EU level should focus on stepping up coordination and improving contingency planning on preparedness, including by exchanging examples of best practices existing at national or regional levels.
9. In this respect **SUPPORTS** the Commission's intention to establish a permanent European Food Security Crisis preparedness and response Mechanism (EFSCM) involving public authorities from Member States and with the participation, in the appropriate form to be determined, of those third countries whose food supply chain is integrated with the EU, as well as stakeholders representing all stages of the food chain and sectors supporting the functioning of the chain and industries providing inputs or various goods and materials needed in food production.
10. **REITERATES** that the subsidiarity principle and Member State specificities should be taken into account in the organisation of contingency planning at national and European levels, including in nominating one single authority per Member State for coordination and contact purposes and **STRESSES** the need to avoid increased administrative burden.
11. **AGREES** for the Commission to convoke the Expert Group, established under the EFSCM, regularly and to activate the EFSCM immediately, and as frequently as necessary, in case of a crisis threatening food supply and food security in the EU.

12. **WELCOMES** the Commission's intention to conduct a study to review the risks, vulnerabilities and critical infrastructure of the food supply chain, including on commodities or raw materials where EU relies on a limited number of sources or where EU production is highly insufficient, while respecting Member States' national security regulations and ensuring appropriate treatment of sensitive or confidential information.
13. **AGREES** on the need to reflect on ways to address or mitigate risks and vulnerabilities identified including structural issues putting at risk food supply chains such as those due to climate change and the specific exposure of primary producers. The particular situation of EU territories most vulnerable to disturbances in times of crisis, including the outermost regions², remote or mountainous areas, islands and island states should be taken into account.
14. **RECOGNISES** that it should be considered to complement the existing market observatory for agricultural and fisheries markets with specific dashboards for monitoring food supply and food security and, in light of the connectedness with international markets, the important role of the Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS).
15. **WELCOMES** the intention of having the EFSCM develop recommendations on ways to improve the diversity of sources of supply between shorter and long food supply chains and on guidelines for crisis communication on food supply and food security, **ACKNOWLEDGES** at the same time the importance of open, transparent and rules-based international trade and a market-oriented common agricultural policy in this regard and **INVITES** the Commission to expound the method for drafting such recommendations in the meetings of the Expert Group.
16. **NOTES** the Commission's intention to carry out a study on the role of information technologies to improve market transparency, in particular in times of crisis, and **AGREES** that it is also beneficial to create a network of correspondents from the relevant private sector organisations while taking necessary measures to protect sensitive information.

² The situation of outermost regions is recognised in Article 349 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

17. **STRESSES** the importance of enhanced strategic and crisis communication and **ACKNOWLEDGES** that sharing information, for example through periodic reporting on the state of preparedness, including the global context, and activities of the EFSCM to EU institutions is important, while respecting Member States' assessment related to security.
 18. **REITERATES** the importance of early, regular and transparent communication to stakeholders and the public to avoid disinformation and information manipulation and to ensure public confidence.
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