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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	AOB item for the meeting of the “Agriculture and Fisheries” Council on 22 and 23 September 2025 Trade relations with Ukraine in view of the revised EU-Ukraine Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) - <i>Information from Slovakia</i>

The European Union's trade agreements with third countries have a fundamental impact on the sustainability and competitiveness of the agricultural sector. Our primary task in trade policy should be to strengthen the viability of farmers and not expose them to unfair competition from third countries.

Experience from previous years clearly shows that the liberalization of trade with Ukraine has a negative impact on our farmers. By adopting the ATM Regulation in 2022, the European Union provided Ukraine with additional trade benefits in the light of the war, which has caused an excessive influx of cheap Ukrainian products into our markets. As a consequence, our farmers have been facing market distortion, loss of competitiveness and low profitability. The strongest impacts are felt by farmers in bordering countries, including Slovakia, which has been repeatedly pointing to the risks associated with uncontrolled imports from Ukraine.

Slovakia expected that the revision of the DCFTA would bring a balanced and mutually beneficial long-term solution that would protect the interests and competitiveness of European farmers. Instead, the draft agreement represents a unilateral concession to Ukrainian exports at the expense of our producers. The dramatic increase in quotas brought about by the revised agreement does not correspond to the Commission's initial information about a moderate increase. Such sharp increases directly threaten our growers, beekeepers, livestock breeders and food producers. The decline in prices on the domestic market, the loss of traditional export destinations and economic pressure could cause their destruction. This would have irreversible consequences not only for agriculture, but also for the food security.

Another problematic element is the proposal to harmonise production standards only from the end of 2028. Providing an additional period of time until 2028 will disadvantage our primary producers, who already have to comply with strict production standards under the current legislation. Our producers will thus be disadvantaged twice - in terms of price and quality. Agricultural products from Ukraine will thus gain privileges that our farmers cannot compete with. Furthermore, the impact on human, animal and plant health is also a concern, as products imported from Ukraine may contain increased amounts of pesticides and other substances which are prohibited in the European Union.

A positive element of the agreement is the safeguard measures in Article 3, which can be triggered even in the event of market disruptions in one or more Member States. However, this is only to apply to additional quota volumes (not the original ones), and we still lack information on how this safeguard mechanism will be triggered and based on what thresholds. An imbalanced approach can be seen, especially compared to the safeguard mechanism set in the agreement with the MERCOSUR countries, which is more targeted. In the case of the agreement with Ukraine, we need a robust safeguard mechanism that will ensure proper protection against market distortion.

Despite the fact that the draft revision of the DCFTA has broad support from the Member States, Slovakia continues to hold a negative position towards the revised agreement. In order to mitigate the negative impacts of the proposed measures, we would welcome, in line with the joint declaration of the frontline Member States of 9 July 2025, the establishment of a special fund for farmers, which would compensate for the losses of primary producers due to excessive imports from Ukraine.