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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 26 January 2026: Severe Damage to Malta's Agriculture and Fisheries Sectors - Call for EU Solidarity and Flexibility - <i>Information from Malta</i>

Malta wishes to formally raise the serious, tangible and destructive weather conditions caused earlier this January and the consequences on its agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture sectors. The unprecedented hailstorm event, heavy rain and Storm Harry have left the Maltese Islands in a catastrophic situation - once again proving that climate-driven extreme weather events are no longer exceptional occurrences in the Mediterranean.

Damages to farmland, rural infrastructure, strategic ports and fish farms in several parts of the country immediately have left a ripple effect across the entire economy, supply chains, and coastal activities. Due to our geophysical realities, these events are classified as a nationwide disaster.

Agriculture: The Maltese agricultural sector has recently been affected by a succession of exceptionally severe climatic events, beginning with localised hailstorms that battered several of Malta's key farming areas. These hailstorms caused immediate damage to crops, bruising produce and stripping plants of leaves, thereby weakening them just before further extreme weather hit. This initial impact was rapidly followed by a major storm, which brought winds of up to 110 km/h and resulted in widespread destruction across both open fields and protected agricultural systems. The storm's intensity, combined with heavy rainfall, led to crop lodging, uprooting, and breakage, as well as considerable structural damage to essential farming infrastructure such as greenhouses, rubble walls, reservoirs, and irrigation systems. These losses threaten the sector's long-term productivity and soil health. In addition, rainfall in the aftermath has severely restricted farmers' access to their land, making it difficult to carry out urgent repairs or protective measures, thereby increasing the risk to the upcoming spring harvest and local food availability. Livestock farmers have also faced significant issues, particularly concerning the storage and preservation of animal feeds. In response, the Government is formally recognising these events as a major adverse occurrence and is actively collecting detailed information directly from farmers to enable a comprehensive assessment of the full extent of the damage and losses sustained.

Fisheries and Aquaculture: Numerous fishing vessels, including small-scale and coastal fishing activities, and fish farms sustained structural damage which has rendered a significant number of fishers temporarily unable to carry out normal fishing operations. Extensive losses of fishing gear including nets, traps, longlines and Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs), were recorded, leading to immediate income loss and requiring time- and cost-intensive replacement before fishing activities can resume. Damage to landing sites, quays and port-related infrastructure has directly affected safe access, mooring and unloading activities, creating immediate health and safety concerns for fishers and preventing normal landing and first-sale operations. The extreme sea conditions caused severe damage to offshore and nearshore fish farms (including cages, moorings and ancillary infrastructure) and to the feeding systems, harvesting schedules and biosecurity management. Our stakeholders have also reported loss of farmed fish stocks due to structural failures, stress-related mortality and escape incidents further aggravating economic losses and recovery timelines.

Consequently, these events have placed additional financial pressure on sectors that already operate with narrow margins, reduced domestic food supply, and further strain the sustainability of territories already facing structural challenges.

Conclusion

In this regard, Malta calls on the Commission and other Member States for solidarity in view of the critical and persistent structural challenges and to strengthen our efforts in having a coordinated EU-level approach to strengthen mitigation and resilience. To this effect, the classification of farmers and fishermen as high-risk clients and climate-risks excluded from insurance policies are urgent matters of concern that must be addressed at the earliest. Our commitments and mutual understanding should be reflected through provisions that allow flexibility when it comes to the existing and forthcoming legal framework – including State Aid, financial and investment instruments and the outcome of the next Multi-Annual Financial Framework.
