

Emergency aid for the "Fruit and Vegetables" sector from the EU

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Following the consultative council on fruit growing and vegetable production held on 21 July 2022, it was decided that farmers will be granted extraordinary aid, authorised by the European Commission, to support holdings directly affected by the economic crisis resulting from the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, the Union of Danube Fruit Growers announced.

The financial aid under the temporary measure established for the "Crop production" sector will amount to BGN 222 million. This budget includes as priority sectors nut fruits, roses, rice and the production of salads, lettuce, asparagus, okra, etc.

Support for fruit and vegetables will be determined on the basis of the applications submitted for coupled support for 2022, and the budget is allocated by crops as follows: 15% for vineyards, oil-bearing rose, rice, nuts and 85% for fruit and vegetables. EUR 62 000 is the amount set as a ceiling per holding; by comparison, until now the aid for a single holding amounted to a maximum of BGN 35 000.

The measure is expected to be launched at the end of August, and accordingly the funds will possibly be paid out by the end of October 2022.

The technological cards, on the basis of which the costs and rates under the respective measure are calculated, have also been updated. Until now, farmers were supported on the basis of outdated technological cards with obsolete fertiliser norms, plant protection products, yields, etc.

Several other topics were also raised at the consultative council. Aid for investments in tangible assets in agricultural holdings related to the primary production of crop agricultural products is a topic that has long been discussed among the sectoral organisations. The total budget for this aid is BGN 10 million, but the State Fund Agriculture is expected to vote for an increase in the funds so that all submitted applications and projects, which currently exceed the amount of the specific budget, can be financially covered.

Another issue raised at the Consultative Council was the non-regulated import of plant protection products from third countries that are not members of the European Union.

In 2019, the then cabinet of the Ministry of Agriculture declared its readiness to criminalise the non-regulated import of PPPs. Unfortunately, no concrete actions were taken. At the meeting on 21 July, the new team of the agricultural administration stated that it intends to renew the fight against the illegal import of PPPs, because all sectoral organisations expressed concerns that there are imports of fruit from Moldova, Turkey and Ukraine treated with unauthorised products.

The issue of the increased quotas for duty-free imports of fruit and vegetables from Moldova was also discussed, and the Ministry assured those present that measures will be taken to protect the interests of Bulgarian agricultural producers and consumers.