

# Bulgaria supported the continuation of crisis aid for the agricultural sector until the end of 2023

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At the meeting of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council of the European Union in Luxembourg (18 October), Bulgaria stated its agreement to extend the emergency support under the Temporary Framework for State Aid until the end of 2023 and insisted that the aid ceiling be proportionally increased. The emergency support under the Temporary Framework for State Aid made it possible to mitigate part of the economic difficulties faced by agricultural holdings, stated in his address the caretaker Deputy Minister of Agriculture Georgi Sabev.

“The intensive import of sunflower seeds from Ukraine over the past 5 months has led to a decrease in demand for Bulgarian sunflower seeds from processing enterprises in the country. The inability to market the production in a timely manner and the difficulties, combined with high production costs, lead to a lack of sufficient liquidity and to the inability to normally start the autumn sowing campaign,” noted Deputy Minister Sabev.

The phytosanitary and veterinary measures applied in Bulgaria should be financially secured in view of the fact that our country is an external border of the EU, explained the Bulgarian Deputy Minister of Agriculture. According to him, the proposed reduction of the co-financing rate, especially for measures that have already been planned in the national budget and implemented, is extremely unacceptable for Bulgaria and may prove to be a real threat to disease control and eradication in the future.

The import of agricultural products into the Union from third countries was also on the meeting agenda. Georgi Sabev commented that goods imported into the EU must comply with the EU's high standards for the environment, animal welfare and plant health. Otherwise, unfair competition is created, which is dangerous for the development of the agricultural sector and rural areas in the Union. For Bulgaria, sensitive issues continue to be the import of honey, sunflower oil and poultry meat from Australia and MERCOSUR countries, as well as the protection of geographical indications such as Bulgarian Rose Oil and Straldzha Muscat Rakia in the free trade agreement with Australia.

In connection with the EU-China agreement on mutual protection of geographical indications, Georgi Sabev recalled that the Asian country is becoming an increasingly significant producer of rose oil, therefore for Bulgaria it is extremely important that the Protected Geographical Indication “Bulgarian Rose Oil” be included as a protected product in China as soon as possible.

### **Agriculture ministers discussed the creation of a new EU forest strategy**

During the second part of their meeting in Luxembourg, the European agriculture ministers discussed the importance of close cooperation between the Member States in drafting the framework of the European Union for forest monitoring and strategic plans. At the beginning of the session, Czech Minister Zdeněk Nekula recalled that the Agriculture Council had approved the creation of a new EU forest strategy. Details about it were presented by Austria and Finland.