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The European Commission takes action for global food security and to support farmers and consumers in the EU

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On 23 March in Brussels, the European Commission presented a set of measures to improve global food security and to support farmers and consumers in the EU in view of rising food prices and the costs of raw materials, energy and fertilisers as a result of the military conflict in Ukraine.

The EC is committed to taking all necessary action to ensure that, as a net exporter of food and producer of agricultural commodities, the EU contributes to global food security in countries such as North Africa and the

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Middle East, which rely on imports of cereals. In addition, the EU is one of the main providers of humanitarian aid in the aforementioned countries.

At present, the availability of food in the Union is not at risk, since Europe to a large extent produces many of its own agricultural products, but the agricultural sector is a major importer of specific products, for example feed proteins. This fact, combined with the high costs of inputs such as fertilisers and fossil fuel energy, creates undeniable challenges for agricultural producers.

Strengthening global food security

To support the food crisis in Ukraine and the rapid restoration of its export markets, the EU emergency support programme is allocating EUR 330 million.

The Commission will ensure regular monitoring and analysis of food prices and will continue its engagement in international organisations (FAO, WTO, G7, G20) for the coordination of policies. In addition, the EU will increase humanitarian aid for the regions and populations that are most severely affected by food insecurity.

Support for farmers in the EU

In support of European farmers and as a guarantee for European food security, the EC will allocate EUR 500 million for direct support to agricultural producers, including through the use of the Crisis Reserve. The funds will be intended for the sectors most affected by the higher costs of inputs and the closure of export markets. Member States may supplement this support with up to 200% from national funds.

EU Member States are allowed to pay in advance a higher percentage of advance payments under CAP direct payments so that farmers can cope with cash-flow difficulties as from 16 October 2022.

Market protection measures are being introduced in support of the pigmeat sector.

An exceptional and temporary derogation is allowed for the production of crops on fallow land, while at the same time maintaining full green payments for farmers. This will increase the EU’s production capacity despite the limited availability of fertile land.

Additional temporary import requirements for feed will be introduced in order to ease the pressure on the feed market.

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A new temporary crisis framework is proposed, which will cover agricultural producers, fertiliser manufacturers and the fisheries sector. It will take the form of support to ensure liquidity and to cover increased gas and electricity costs.

Support for consumers in the EU

Measures to improve the supply of basic foodstuffs will help to alleviate price pressure.

Member States may also introduce reduced rates of value added tax.

Member States will be able to use EU funds such as the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD), which supports the actions of EU countries to provide food and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived.

The Green Deal is likely to lead to lower agricultural yields

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Sustainable agriculture

Despite the expressed doubts of a large part of the Member States that, in the critical situation created, it would be appropriate to put the implementation of the “Green Deal” on the back burner for some time, the European Commission emphasises the importance of strictly following it.

The measures laid down in the “Farm to Fork” strategy and the “Biodiversity” strategy will, according to the EC, guarantee food security. Greater use of innovation will contribute to a sustainable increase in yields, for example precision agriculture, new genomic techniques, improved nutrient management, integrated pest management, biological alternatives to chemical pesticides, etc.

According to the EC, more than ever it is necessary to increase resilience by reducing the dependence of European agriculture on energy and on imports of energy-intensive products and feed. Resilience requires diversified sources of imports and market opportunities through a stable trade policy. Under the “Horizon Europe” programme, investment will be made in research and innovation to replace the use of synthetic fertilisers. Greater efficiency in the use of nitrogen, the transition to environmentally friendly ammonia for fertilisers and the utilisation of biomass are among the proposals presented by the Commission last week in Brussels. Therefore, the EC calls on the Member States to use all available instruments in their CAP Strategic

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Plans for the period 2023–2027. This applies, for example, to the use of risk management instruments, the development of precision agriculture or coupled support to promote protein crops.