

Increased support for EU farmers affected by the COVID-19 crisis: Council adopts exceptional measures



Today, the Council adopted a regulation which allows member states, as an exceptional measure, to pay up to EUR 7 000 to farmers and up to EUR 50 000 to small and medium enterprises (SME's) active in processing, marketing or development of agricultural products or cotton, except fishery products. The aim is to make use of available funds under existing rural development programmes to provide support to farmers and SME's worst-hit by the COVID-19 crisis and to address the liquidity and cash-flow problems stemming from the closures of shops, markets and restaurants.

The COVID-19 crisis is a great test for EU solidarity. The act adopted today will help many farmers and small companies to continue to operate. It is also important to stress the swift response of both the Council and the European Parliament who agreed to approve this legislation urgently, ensuring support for one of the sectors worst-hit by the pandemic.

Marija Vučković, minister for Agriculture of Croatia

The regulation allows member states to identify beneficiaries and to adapt the amount of payments, by defining objective and non-discriminatory eligibility conditions and possibly selection criteria.

In the case of farmers, such criteria may include:

- production sectors
- type of farming
- farm structures
- type of marketing of products
- number of seasonal workers

In the case of SME's, the criteria may include:

- sectors
- types of activity
- type of regions

The support should be limited to a maximum 2% of the total contribution to the rural development programmes from the European agricultural fund for rural development (EAFRD). The payments are to be made by 30 June 2021, based on applications for support approved by 31 December 2020.

The regulation was adopted by written procedure.

Background

The adopted regulation amends Regulation (EU) 1305/2013 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). The Commission adopted its proposal on 30 April 2020. The European Parliament voted in favor of the amending regulation on 19 June 2020. After today's adoption by the Council, the regulation will be published in the Official journal of the EU and will enter into force on the same day.