

Maroš Šefčovič

Executive Vice-President for a European Green Deal,
Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight

Janusz Wojciechowski

Commissioner for Agriculture

Dear Vice-President, dear Commissioner,

For several months now, major demonstrations involving large numbers of farmers are taking place in many EU Member States. Each of these demonstrations is not simply the result of a national situation specific to each Member State, but rather the symptom of a Europe-wide crisis.

We, the ministers of agriculture of France, Spain, Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, note that there are common motivations and similar demands being expressed across Europe through these farmers' protests. The low average income of farmers, compared to the rest of the population, and the rise in production costs and production standards, against the backdrop of inflation amplified by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, are the catalysts for these movements throughout Europe.

Beyond these circumstantial motivations, more structural concerns are being expressed. Among the issues legitimately raised by farmers across Europe are the perception of a lack of long-term prospects for their profession, a failure to recognise the strategic nature of their activity, the need for transparent and thorough consultation given the direct impact European regulations have on their work and the sector's lack of attractiveness. This situation is leading to difficulties in renewing the generations of producers, which is generating deep-seated fears for the future of the farming sector. These fears are fuelled by a certain amount of rhetoric, which tends to call for a form of decline in agricultural activity on the one hand, and on the other hand, by the way in which farmers perceive the European Green Deal, which generates concerns rather than shared ambitions.

In all our Member States, farmers are questioning the accumulation of standards on their farms (increasingly arising from outside the CAP), even though they are the first victims of climate change, which is impacting their activity more and more often and more severely. Without questioning the need to take action for the climate and protect resources, we note that these new and even higher standards have become increasingly difficult for farmers to accept, especially when the same production standards may not be required for products from

third countries. Finally, European farmers, who for the most part remain deeply attached to the CAP, are having more difficulty perceiving the direction that has been given to this policy. The current CAP pursues so many different objectives. . It is evident after the first year of implementation its management is becoming extremely complex both for farmers and administrations. The political vision underlying its main objectives, enshrined in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, must remain a critical priority.

We are determined to provide the needed answers within our own Member States. But a crisis on a European scale calls for European responses, commensurate with the legitimate demands being voiced throughout the Union.

We therefore welcome the letter sent by the Presidency to the European Commission after the last Council meeting, and call upon the European Commission to propose concrete steps forward and precise solutions to the difficulties that were highlighted by all the Ministers on Monday 26 February at the meeting of the Council of Agriculture Ministers of the European Union.

First of all, we are asking for very short-term responses to urgent problems, which are sometimes quite simple to resolve if we collectively give ourselves the means to do so. We know that the Commission is willing to respond, and we recognise that the work has already begun. We are now expecting strong and immediate action on issues such as system of conditionality, the pressure of controls, largely due to the AMS implementation, the right to error, and simplifying the management of CAP national strategic plans.

But we also insist on the need to give clear perspectives to farmers who have been mobilized for weeks. It is necessary to act politically in the medium term and to give ourselves a clarified action timetable, including specific milestones. It is crucial for us to be able to communicate to farmers about the midterm changes before autumn and to make them as visible as possible.

We call upon the Commission to define its action plan more precisely, both in terms of the direction it wishes to take, and the means and method it intends to deploy. In particular, the willingness to adapt the CAP relevant basic acts needs to be clarified, and targeted on the precise needs that we collectively wish to address. Beyond the CAP, the Commission's intentions to strengthen the place of farmers in the food supply chain must also be clearly specified. Finally, the Commission will have to provide analysis and respond in relation to possible distortion of competition from imported products.

Given the level of farmers' expectations, it is of upmost importance that we know quickly what changes will be made and in what timeframe. We need to move forward together, in a concrete way, to provide farmers with tangible answers.

This is why we now need a timetable for action that will enable us to complete the work we are undertaking to meet the expectations of European farmers and consolidate the food security and strategic autonomy of the European Union and its Member States.

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Luis Planas Puchades

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Martine Hansen

Luxembourg Minister of Agriculture, Food
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Hon Dr. Anton Refalo

Maltese Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries
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