



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Christophe Hansen
Commissioner for Agriculture and Food

Brussels,

Subject: Addressing the impact of severe drought on farmers – Available CAP tools, flexibilities and EU support

To:

H.E. Norbert Totschnig, Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management, Austria

H.E. David Clarinval, Federal Minister of Agriculture, Belgium

H.E. Plamen Abrovsky, Minister of Agriculture and Food, Bulgaria

H.E. David Vlačić, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Croatia

H.E. Christos Senekis, Minister of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment, Cyprus

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H.E. Annie Genevard, Minister of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry, France

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H.E. Janez Cigler Kralj, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food, Slovenia

H.E. Luis Planas, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Spain

H.E. Peter Kullgren, Minister for Rural Affairs, Sweden

Dear Ministers,

Following the heatwaves this summer, severe droughts have affected large parts of the European Union with consequences for farmers and agricultural production in many Member States. This pressure comes on top of financial stress experienced from high fertiliser and energy costs and market price corrections. The EU has demonstrated recently with fertilisers that solutions can be presented quickly to support farmers, and national initiatives are already ongoing on drought.

While we have been closely following the agro-meteorological situation, its negative impact on certain crops and markets are starting to be clearly visible. Latest assessments from the JRC¹ confirm that the persistent drought has worsened significantly the prospects for summer crops across Western and Central Europe, with impacts ranging from moderate yield reductions to severe losses and, in the worst-affected areas, likely crop failure. Maize and fodder crops are under significant stress. The current cooler and wetter conditions may provide some relief, but they cannot be expected to fully offset the losses. The production in other sectors (in particular fruit, vegetables and potatoes) is also expected to decline in several Member States.

These developments once again underline the growing risk to European agriculture. Climate change is increasing both the frequency and the magnitude of weather events, making it essential not only to address immediate pressures, but also to strengthen the long-

¹ [JRC Publications - JRC MARS Bulletin - Crop monitoring in Europe - August 2026 - Vol. 34 No 7](#)

term resilience of the farming sector, to adapt to new realities and endorse early mitigating solutions.

In this context, it is crucial that all available policy instruments be used proactively and in a timely and targeted manner to minimise future effects and support affected farmers.

Already now, a series of policy tools are available to deliver effective relief and mitigate future effects. To this end, please find in the annex an overview of the short-term tools and conditions to deploy them.

I take the opportunity to draw your attention to [the online resources published by the Commission in July on the impacts of heatwaves and forest fires on agriculture](#), providing, in addition to short-term remedies to cope with heat stress, some concrete examples of how to support adaptation in the longer term. Likewise, the farming sector has a role to play in preventing forest fires – a summary overview has been [published here](#).

Given the seriousness of the current situation, I encourage all Member States to assess rapidly which instruments relevant to the current difficulties are most appropriate in their national circumstances and to make full use of the flexibilities and support possibilities already available notably within the CAP Strategic Plans and at national level. The Commission services remain available to facilitate the swift and effective deployment of these measures.

I will discuss both the short-term needs and longer-term transition towards a more resilient and sustainable European agriculture directly with stakeholders to get first-hand information from the ground and I will exchange with you during our forthcoming ministerial meetings in September. We need to closely monitor developments and be ready to secure Europe's food security and farmers future.

Yours sincerely,



Christophe Hansen

Enclosure: Annex. An overview of measures

ANNEX

An overview of measures

Under the current Common Agricultural Policy, Member States have at their disposal a broad set of tools that can and should be mobilised. These include **risk management instruments** – such as insurance schemes, mutual funds and income stabilisation tools – but also eco-schemes, agri-environmental management commitments, support for preventive and restorative investments, advisory services, training, cooperation and sectoral interventions. Together, these instruments can help farmers be better prepared to absorb climate shocks, reduce vulnerabilities and strengthen resilience over time.

For the short term, Member States can immediately make use of several possibilities under the CAP framework.

Following the adoption of the Agricultural Simplification Omnibus III Regulation on 19 December 2025, **a new crisis-type intervention** was introduced under Article 78a of the Strategic Plan Regulation. This intervention allows Member States to compensate production losses suffered by farmers affected by natural disasters, adverse climatic events or catastrophic events, including drought. Support can be provided to active farmers with a **minimum loss of 30%** and must be higher for those who are covered by an insurance scheme or another risk management tool to ensure risk-management is encouraged more in the future.

Member States wishing to use this instrument must introduce it through an amendment to their CAP Strategic Plan. However, expenditure is eligible from the date on which the event occurred to ensure rapid national action.

Following the latest amendment (Regulation 2026/1768) of the Regulation 2021/2115, adopted on 14 July 2026, Member States have the possibility to pay earlier and **increase the percentages of advance payments** for area- and animal-based support under both pillars of the CAP.

Member States may submit **exceptional amendments** to their CAP Strategic Plans; such amendments would not count towards the maximum number of requests laid down in the Strategic Plan Regulation and may be used, for example, to **reinforce support for investments** to restore production potential or to introduce the new crisis intervention.

Derogations related to the implementation of GAEC requirements may be granted in cases where farmers are prevented from complying because of extreme weather conditions.

Under the current CAP, Member States may also recognise a severe drought as a case of **force majeure or exceptional circumstances** because the event itself was unforeseeable and its serious effects on farm holdings could not have been prevented. In such cases, affected farmers may continue to receive CAP payments, even where they are temporarily unable to comply with certain mandatory requirements that would normally have to be met to receive EU support. As clarified by the Commission in its [Communication to the Council on ‘force majeure’ and exceptional circumstances of 30 May 2024](#)², the competent national authority must confirm that a qualifying force majeure event has occurred on the basis of relevant evidence, identify the affected farmers or geographical area (individually or collectively), and formally recognise and document force majeure in accordance with EU rules and national procedures.

By way of illustration, Member States may consider targeted solutions such as exemptions from penalties linked to delayed mowing obligations under an eco-scheme or an agri-environmental management commitment where drought has seriously reduced grass growth and feed availability, or the use of mown vegetation from non-productive areas for animal feed where the drought has clearly created a feed shortage at holding level. Farmers should also retain their right to the aid in such cases. Any such measures should remain limited in scope and duration, be duly justified, and preserve environmental objectives to the extent possible. It is for national authorities, and not the Commission, to identify potential cases of force majeure or exceptional circumstances and to assess the farmers and areas concerned.

Likewise, I invite you to explore built-in flexibilities under other Union legislation relevant for farmers. For example, the possible flexibilities under the Nitrates Directive as regards calendar-linked obligations could be examined considering the specific climatic situation, as some Member States have already done. Member States implementing financial instruments under their CAP Plans (including loans, guarantees and working capital finance) can also encourage the implementing bodies and participating financial institutions to make use of available flexibilities within the existing architecture. This could

² European Commission, *Communication from the Commission to the Council on force majeure and exceptional circumstances in Regulation (EU) 2021/2116 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the financing, management and monitoring of the common agricultural policy*, COM(2024) 225 final, 31 May 2024

include longer loan maturities, grace or repayment periods, and flexible repayment schedules, to better accommodate farmers' income volatility and unforeseen shocks.

Organic farming

Under the EU organic legal framework MS can authorise exceptional derogations from the organic production rules in response to catastrophic circumstances – when officially recognised as such by the national authorities – resulting from adverse climate event and including severe drought. For instance, MS could authorise the use of conventional feed for organic farming to face shortages of organic feed. Such exceptional derogations can target some operators or a whole region for a lapse of time of up to one year maximum.

Other Union instruments

Under EU regional policy, the **EU Solidarity Fund** can be mobilised in the event of severe natural disasters exceeding the applicable national thresholds in order to help cover emergency and recovery operations.

A recourse to the agricultural reserve should be considered as a last resort, given its limited financial resources.

Ongoing work under the **Water Resilience Strategy** is supporting investments and action in this field, including the reorientation of Cohesion Funds towards water resilience, funding and advisory support through the European Investment Bank, and further initiatives to promote irrigation efficiency, water reuse, digital solutions and farmers' skills in water resilience.

State aids

Beyond the CAP and other EU instruments, EU State aid rules provide further possibilities for immediate national support to farmers. Member States may use Article 25 of the Agricultural Block Exemption Regulation, which sets out the conditions for aid to make good damage caused by adverse climatic events that can be assimilated to a natural disaster. They may also make use of the Agricultural de minimis Regulation. In both cases, support can be granted without prior notification to the Commission. Alternatively, Member States may notify aid schemes to the Commission under Chapter 1.2.1 of Part II of the Agricultural State aid Guidelines, concerning aid to compensate for damage to agricultural production or the means of agricultural production.

National actions

Apart from optimising the use of relevant EU policies and instruments, Member States are encouraged to also develop complementary action at national level. This includes considering appropriate tax or social security reductions or exemptions, and implementing measures tailored to national circumstances.

Private sector action

Initiatives from within the entire food supply chain can help, with a view to ensuring that the strengthening of the resilience of the food system does not rest solely on the primary sector.

Long term actions

In the longer term, both through CAP and national funds, Member States can help farmers reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related risks by improving their preparedness, investing in prevention, risk-management as well as adaptation actions. Insurance schemes, mutual funds and other risk-management and risk-sharing tools enable farmers to better absorb losses and recover more quickly following adverse climate events.

Support and advice are key to steer farmers towards adapting to increasingly frequent adverse climate events, by using climate-resilient crops and varieties, diversifying production towards heat- and drought-tolerant species and encouraging resilient farming practices and systems in general.

Farming practices that strengthen soil health and water-holding capacity through reduced tillage, permanent soil cover and increased soil organic matter can make a difference. For livestock, longer-term action could include investment in climate-resilient housing and water systems, precision monitoring, agroforestry and breeds that are heat-tolerant animals.

Long-term investment in sustainable water management, including water-storage infrastructure, natural water-retention measures, treated-water reuse and circular approaches to water management is key.

Resilience and adaptation are therefore a priority action, and the Commission will follow-up on these with more detailed guidance in Autumn this year.