

**JOINT DECLARATION OF THE MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE OF
ESTONIA, LATVIA, LITHUANIA
ON THE COMMISSION COMMUNICATION ON A VISION FOR AGRICULTURE AND
FOOD**

We, the Ministers of Agriculture of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania discussed and agreed on our common position on the Commission Communication on The Future of farming and agri-food sectors.

In this regard we:

APPRECIATE the Commission's recognition of agriculture and food, including fisheries, as strategic sectors of the Union.

WELCOME the Commission's vision for the EU future proof agri-food sector as an attractive and predictable sector in the future, covering widest range of objectives that are essential for enabling of food production, sufficient income for farmers, a fair standard of living for the agricultural community, vibrant rural areas, strong farmer's position in the food chain and affordable food produced in a sustainable way to EU citizens, while using opportunities of technological development, research and innovation.

RECOGNISE that the sector is showcasing its resilience, but due to the current pressure of geopolitical tensions undergoes aggravating trends for its viability and EU strategic autonomy. **UNDERLINE** the EU's Eastern border regions' rural areas particular vulnerability due to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and **EMPHASIZE** the urgent need for dedicated EU's support to tackle the considerable negative impact on the rural areas and agri-food sector.

INSIST on providing strong and separate EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) for the agri-food sector that is ensuring its primary objective of food production and food sovereignty under the current pressure of geopolitical tensions. **STRESS** the need to maintain a strong CAP that is advancing viable rural areas and generational renewal, contributes to environmental and climate objectives, provides public goods, and strengthens the bioeconomy. **INSIST** that dedicated and appropriate resources and instruments are needed for the future CAP to achieve these objectives.

EMPHASIZE that the CAP direct payments are crucial in supporting and stabilising agricultural income at farm level due to the volatile nature of this profession and market imbalances. **INSIST** on completing the external convergence of direct payments to ensure a level playing field for all EU farmers from 2028, eliminating divergent and unequal levels of direct payments between EU Member States. **CALL** for direct payments to remain fully EU funded.

REITERATE that a strong and targeted CAP rural development policy is needed, which is an indispensable and key instrument for the profound necessity to ensure viability of rural areas, boost resilience, modernisation and innovation of the agri-food sector, and to promote the sustainability

of the rural economy, in particular in agriculture and forestry. CALL for the Commission to advocate for substantial CAP funds to be allocated for the Member States that are experiencing most difficulties in the rural regions.

WELCOME the Commission's orientation away from mandatory conditions towards a more incentives-based policy. Meanwhile, CALL for a balanced approach between economic, social and environmental sustainability requirements for the agri-food sector, by simplifying and streamlining existing requirements, including base definitions (e.g. permanent grassland) and avoiding raising the additional burdens for the sector.

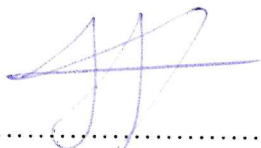
EMPHASIZE that unlocking full potential of additional income sources for farmers requires simple and flexible regulatory framework, e.g. removal of CAP restrictions to sell biogas produced on farm to the market or provide services using machinery/equipment purchased with CAP support.

SUPPORT the Commission's intention to pursue, in line with international rules, a stronger alignment of production standards applied to imported products, notably on pesticides and animal welfare.

REITERATE that future CAP Strategic Plans must be truly strategic and provide for greater flexibility, and the results-based delivery model of the CAP needs to be profoundly simplified and continued with less administrative burden for farmers, food and feed businesses and the related administrations, e.g., by removing the unit amount approach.

CALL for the CAP policy that is better tailored to and genuinely respects the national and regional specificities given the diversified nature of the sector.

STRESSES the need for a timely introduction and adoption of the new legislative proposals for the CAP post-2027, to provide a sufficient timing for the co-decision procedure and for national administrations to adapt their systems for the smooth transition and implementation.



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Mr Hendrik Johannes Terras

**Minister of Regional Affairs and
Agriculture of the Republic of Estonia**



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Mr Armands Krauze

**Minister of Agriculture of the Republic
of Latvia**



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Mr Ignas Hofmanas

**Minister of Agriculture of the
Republic of Lithuania**