



CORONAVIRUS:

Emergency response to support the agriculture and food sectors

April 2020 #Coronavirus #StrongerTogether



"The outbreak of the coronavirus is having an unparalleled effect on our society and economy. Our farmers and every actor of the EU food supply chain are working hard to keep feeding Europe, despite the difficulties they face. The European Commission will continue to support farmers and food producers, collaborate with EU member states, and take whatever measures are necessary to ensure the health and well-being of the people of Europe."

Janusz Wojciechowski, *European Commissioner for Agriculture*

Following the outbreak of coronavirus, the European Union's agri-food sector is showing its resilience and continues to provide Europeans with high quality and safe food. Nonetheless, farmers and producers are facing difficulties and increasing pressure. Ensuring food security through a strong food supply chain remains one of the Commission's priorities.

The Commission has already introduced new measures to increase flexibility in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). It has issued practical advice and guidelines to guarantee movement of goods and critical workers. In addition, it is facilitating national level support by making state aid rules more flexible.

Since the beginning of the crisis, the European Commission has been in close contact with Member States and sectoral organisations to closely monitor the situation and take preliminary action. We will take further action to support them, as the situation evolves.



Guidelines to ensure an efficient food supply chain



Measures directly supporting farmers and rural areas



Increased CAP flexibility

1 Guidelines to ensure an efficient food supply chain

Green lanes to keep food flowing across Europe: the Commission is coordinating closely with Member States to ensure a functioning single market for goods by creating green lanes. These green lanes, based on designated key border crossing-points, will have border crossing checks that will not exceed 15 minutes. Passage is now granted for all goods, including agri-food products.

Seasonal workers qualified as 'critical workers' to secure food sector support:

The Commission published practical guidelines to ensure that, within the EU, mobile workers who qualify as critical in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic can reach their workplace. Seasonal workers are critical to the agricultural sector in terms of harvesting, planting and tending functions, especially in the current season.



2 Measures directly supporting farmers and rural areas

The Commission has also announced the following measures to directly support farmers and rural areas:

- **Flexibility in the use of financial instruments under rural development:** Farmers and other rural development beneficiaries will be able to benefit from loans or guarantees to cover operational costs of up to €200,000 at favourable conditions, such as very low interest rates or favourable payment schedules.
- **Higher advances of payments:** to increase the cash flow of farmers, the Commission will increase the advances of direct payments (from 50% to 70%) and certain rural development payments (from 75% to 85%). Farmers will start receiving these advances from mid-October.
- **Higher state aid possible for farmers and food processing companies:** under the Commission's temporary framework for state aid, farmers can now benefit from a maximum aid of €100,000 per farm. Food processing and marketing companies can benefit from a maximum of €800,000. This amount can be topped up by 'de minimis' aid. This type of national support specific to the agricultural sector can be granted without prior approval from the Commission, and has a ceiling of €20,000 (and €25,000 in specific cases). With the new rules, Member states can now assist farmers with state aid of up to €120,000 (or €125,000).



3 CAP simplification and increased flexibility measures

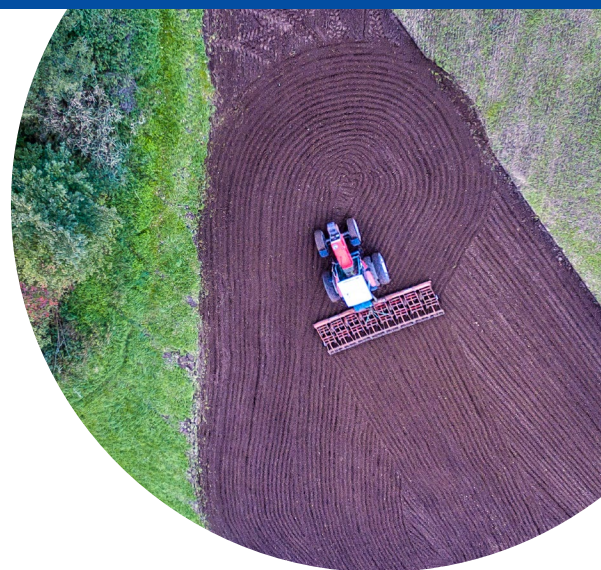
Member States and farmers are facing practical difficulties in meeting certain requirements under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the Commission aims to help through a range of concrete measures.

- **Extension of deadline for CAP payment applications:** the deadline will be extended by a month, from 15 May to 15 June 2020, offering more time to farmers to fill in their application for both direct payments and rural development payments.
- **Fewer farm on-the spot checks:** EU countries carry out checks to ensure that eligibility conditions are met. However, in the current exceptional circumstances, it is crucial to minimise physical contact between farmers and inspectors. This measure will help reduce administrative burden and avoid unnecessary delays.

Under the CAP's rural development policy, similar measures were taken, included in the coronavirus response investment initiative plus (CRII+) [announced on 2 April 2020](#):

- **Postponement for the submission of annual reports:** the deadline for EU countries to submit these reports on the implementation of their rural development programmes is postponed, giving more time to regional and national authorities to put it together.
- **No amendments to partnership agreements required:** EU countries will not have to amend their partnership agreements to modify their rural development programmes, lifting some administrative procedures.

In addition, the European Commission calls on all EU countries to use the possibility **to amend their rural development programmes**. Money still available under their rural development programme can be used to finance relevant actions to face the crisis. The Commission will support Member States and react promptly to any requests for programme changes.



> Up to to
€120,000
for state aid

> **70% and 85%**
advances for CAP
payments

> **€200,000**
loans or guarantees
for operational costs

Up-to-date
information is available
on the **Commission's**
coronavirus response
website.

