



Delegate: Inès Belkhodja
Commission: agriculture
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The European Union is the world's leading agricultural power. In 2019, the continent's agricultural production represented around 418 billion euros, according to a report by the European Commission. According to European Commission estimates, agriculture and related activities employed 9.2 million people across Europe in 2019, or 4.4% of all jobs in the 27 Member States. But the European Union now has to face new challenges following the aftermath of the covid crisis and the current war in Ukraine.

Agriculture in Croatia is oriented towards grain production and cattle breeding, after the decline of fishing.

Croatia has 3.15 million hectares of agricultural land, of which approximately two million are farmed, with 59,000 hectares dedicated to viticulture. Fishing and the processing of fish products are present in the coastal regions (Istria and Dalmatia). Polyculture of cereals, tobacco and vines is practiced in the plains surrounding the capital Zagreb. The region of Slavonia is reputed to be the breadbasket of the country.

70% of Croatian farms are small family businesses and 233,280 farms, occupying 1.3 million hectares, were listed in 2013.

Croatia has made ensuring food security a priority in light of the crisis in Ukraine, rolling out a number of measures to help producers cope with the fallout from the war.

Since the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which threw food systems into global disarray, the Croatian Ministry of Agriculture has focused on protecting the agri-food sector.

« We need to think seriously about the possible consequences of increased demand on the EU market, but we will not abandon the principle of EU solidarity or solidarity with Ukraine » said the Agriculture Minister Marija Vučković emphasizing the need to prevent disruption.

And that's the view she defended at the videoconference meeting of EU agriculture ministers in early March on the consequences of the conflict, where she also said it was time to step up emergency measures, warning of the impact of rising costs for energy, fertilizers, transport and animal feed, and pledged to ensure the food security of European citizens.

She then assured that Croatia is preparing to take all possible measures during this period, stressing once again that it is the citizens who will have to bear the brunt of these additional costs.

And that's the guideline that Croatian measures follow: the Croatian government has adopted a number of measures aimed at guaranteeing the security of food supply to the market and assistance to producers, as well as measures aimed at helping end customers and citizens in the face of a possible expansion of measures.

For the moment, Croatia has provided intervention aid of 200 million kuna (just over 25.5 million euros) to individual farmers for the purchase of artificial fertilizers for spring sowing, while 75 million kuna (10 million euros) have been set aside to help fishermen. (The fishing sector will also benefit from additional compensatory measures). The margin and the frozen price of "blue diesel" (biofuel obtained from vegetable waste or waste oils) for agriculture and fishing have also been reduced.

Additionally, Croatia is facing severe disruptions in the meat and animal market that are slowly unraveling, and prices in the pig sector are historically low. « Over the past two years, we have intervened through a tender of more than 170 million kuna (22.6 million euros) in order to reduce the negative impact on the most agricultural sectors. » explained the State Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture, Zdravko Tušek

Furthermore, the calculation of animal welfare has been changed, on the basis of which an additional 200 million kuna (26.6 million euros) will be allocated for aid to the livestock sector, which was the most affected by the Covid-19 crises and the war in Ukraine.

In the meantime, the ministry is also working on measures that would ensure the viability of the dairy sector until the end of the decade: The continuity of funding for long-term investments in dairy cattle breeding (just over 490 million kuna (65 million euros) per year) is planned in order to strengthen the competitiveness of investments in dairy farms and labeling of products.

Under the rural development program, tenders are being drawn up for investments in grain and oilseed storage capacity, as well as investments to support producer organizations and irrigation.

Finally, speaking to the Croatian Parliament in April, the minister said the country's agricultural production had increased in recent years, noting that changes to the law on agricultural land and the development of the National Strategic Plan (NSP) of the country's common Agricultural policy will continue to support farmers.

Through these plans, EU Member States set out how they intend to achieve the nine objectives of the reformed EU-wide CAP.

The Croatian ministry of agriculture also presented a proposal to allow member states to fully utilize all funds available under their existing rural development programs, a proposal which was later supported by 13 member states.