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Joint statement: Ensuring food security is our primary objective

Europe's food supply chain will work closely together to ensure everybody in Europe continues to have access to safe, quality and affordable food and drink products during the Coronavirus pandemic.

In these difficult times, we are committed to helping our communities, using our collective resources, ingenuity and the dedication of our workforce. Together we emphasise the importance of a well-functioning food supply chain to help in the fight against Covid-19 and to guarantee food security for our fellow citizens.

Human health is our number one concern. Our members have instructed their workforces to follow appropriate measures by adhering to official advice from their relevant authorities to protect themselves and others from Coronavirus.

Following the important and necessary emergency measures taken by EU Member States, our members are reporting increasing difficulties in their business operations. Delays and disruption at country borders have been observed for the delivery of certain agricultural and manufactured products, as well as packaging materials. There is also concern over the movement of workers, notably due to certain border closures and travel restrictions, as well as potential labour shortages as staff follow national movement restrictions to mitigate the crisis.

Given that the agri-food supply chain is highly integrated and operating across borders, any blocks of supply and workers will inevitably disrupt business. Our ability to provide food for all will depend on the preservation of the EU Single Market. We therefore urge the European Commission to work collaboratively with us and to do everything in its power – with a consistent and clear strategy – to ensure an uninterrupted flow of agricultural produce, food and drink products and packaging materials (e.g. through “green lanes”), as well as solutions to prevent and manage labour shortages, so that the food supply chain is able to function effectively.

Key points:

- Preserving the Single Market is the best option to ensure a stable and safe food supply chain, and food security for everybody in Europe and beyond. We welcome the recent Commission guidelines on border management as a good first step. Despite these guidelines, however, we continue to face severe disruptions.
- We urge the Commission to work with Member States to explore ways to support the agri-food sector which has already, and will continue to, come under immense financial pressure. In particular, over the coming weeks and months we urge the Commission to consider Europe's 11 million farmers, 4.7 million manufacturing workers, 294,000 food and drink businesses (including 22,000 agri-cooperatives) and 35,000 trading companies.

- We urge the Commission to work with Member States to monitor the potential lack of workers (including seasonal workers) and the knock-on impact on production, and to prepare contingency plans. The food supply chain should be regarded as an essential sector in all EU Member States.
- We urge the Commission to monitor the price of raw materials and transport as well as unfair trading practices.
- We urge the Commission to ensure any actions are science-led. The Commission should further communicate on the report by the European Food Safety Authority, which noted there is currently no evidence that food is a likely source or route of transmission of the virus. Therefore, in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic, the agri-food sector remains committed to supplying all EU citizens with safe, nutritious, high quality and affordable food.
- Given the integration of the European food and feed sector markets, a continuous and enhanced coordination at European level is essential. In this regard, we express our full support for the work already carried out by the European institutions and their emphasis on the essential role of the food supply chain.

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About us:

[FoodDrinkEurope](#) represents the food manufacturing industry. Made up of 294,000 businesses and 4.7 million workers, the food and drink industry buys 70% of all EU agricultural produce and is Europe's largest manufacturing industry.

[Copa and Cogeca](#) are the united voice of farmers and agri-cooperatives in the EU. Together, they ensure that EU agriculture is sustainable, innovative and competitive, guaranteeing food security to half a billion people throughout Europe. Copa represents over 23 million farmers and their families whilst Cogeca represents the interests of 22,000 agricultural cooperatives. They have 66 member organisations from the EU member states. Together, they are one of the biggest and most active lobbying organisations in Brussels.

[CELCAA](#) is the EU umbrella association representing the trade in agri-food and commodities to the EU Institutions and stakeholders, representing more than 35 000 trading companies. We cover the trade in cereals, grains, oil, sugar, animal feed, wine, meat and meat products, dairy and dairy products, fresh fruits and vegetables, eggs, tobacco, spices and nuts, cut flowers and plants and general produces. Members include ASSUC, CEEV, CIBC, COCERAL, EUCOLAIT, EUROPATAT, EUWEP, GAFTA, UECBV, FC2A, FETRATAB, FRESHFEL, FRUCOM and UNION FLEURS.

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