

## **7 Core Points for the EU Informal Meeting of Agriculture Ministers in Koblenz**

*On the occasion of the informal meeting of the EU Agriculture Ministers on September 1<sup>st</sup> 2020 in Koblenz, the German Farmers' Association appeals to the EU Council of Agriculture Ministers, the European Parliament and the EU Commission:*

### **1. Learning from Corona: Food security has to come first.**

The Corona crisis has shown how important it is to have an independent, competitive and high-quality food production in Europe. So far, this has been completely neglected in the Green Deal and Farm-to-Fork Strategy.

If the EU wants to achieve more sustainability and climate-neutrality by 2050, the primary focus has to lay on domestic food production and avoiding relocation to other continents. In a social and media environment of 'agribashing', farmers expect political signals, indicating that their work will continue to be valued in the future. Provisions to stabilize domestic production must be initiated.

### **2. Appropriate plant protection and fertilization to safeguard crop yields.**

In the Farm-to-Fork Strategy and the Biodiversity Strategy, the EU must focus on strategies providing solutions instead of politicized reduction targets. The protection of crop yields and quality remains indispensable. The use of plant protection products and needs-based fertilization must therefore remain possible. If new requirements are discussed, impact assessments for food security are necessary.

In the interest of consumers and farmers, it is preferable to pursue a steady optimization process for the use of plant protection products and fertilizers instead of bans. This includes the use of digital techniques, biological and mechanical processes as well as new breeding techniques.

### **3. Prompt CAP decision making.**

The decision of the Heads of State and Government from July 2020 on the financial framework enables the continuation of a strong CAP for farmers and rural areas until 2027. In light of the many challenges in the markets, in climate change, in resource protection and in the generational renewal, the agricultural budget nevertheless is tight.

On the way to a "greener CAP", the objective of securing income for farmers must be preserved. Only economically stable and competitive businesses can meet expectations for higher performance in environmental and nature conservation and animal welfare.

Farmers expect the open points to be resolved quickly so that the new CAP can start from 2023.

#### **4. Common standards for a common market.**

For fair competition in the internal EU market, the legal requirements and standards of agricultural production must be more harmonized. National 'gold plating' must be avoided. This applies above all to animal husbandry / animal welfare, plant protection and fertilization, as well as environmental and water protection. In order to accompany the "Green Deal" consistently in terms of trade policy, agricultural imports from third countries must not undermine the high and cost-intensive EU standards in consumer, environmental, climate and animal protection.

#### **5. Labeling of origin for more animal welfare.**

The high standard of European agricultural products has to become more visible to consumers. This is why the EU needs a framework for marketing standards in addition with mandatory labeling of origin and labeling of conditions of livestock farming for animal products. This should apply to processed and meat products in the retail market as well as to large-scale consumers and restaurants.

In general, European and national products must be clearly recognizable for consumers. Imported goods from third countries must be labeled as such.

#### **6. Higher environmental and animal welfare standards.**

Farmers are often the weakest link in the food chain. Instead of shifting the costs of societal demands on to the farmers, compensation or income must be created for additional services in resource protection and for more animal welfare. The payment of these higher standards compared to the world market must be guaranteed in EU competition law, EU state aid law and international trade agreements of the EU.

#### **7. Climate-neutral EU 2050: only together with agriculture and forestry.**

Agriculture and forestry play a special role in climate protection. Their main and absolutely indispensable task is the supply of food. In addition, there is the cultivation of renewable raw materials and the use of bioenergy.

A "net zero" in climate emissions is only feasible if unavoidable emissions are offset by carbon sequestration ("sinks") elsewhere. To achieve this, agriculture and forestry must be activated as a climate service provider, including for humus formation in soils and in forest. The sink performance of agriculture and forestry must be financially rewarded as part of the CO<sub>2</sub> pricing.

In addition, there is further potential in increasing the climate efficiency of the whole production process (less nitrous oxide and methane), in bioenergy and in renewable raw materials.