

RECOMMENDATIONS

NATIONAL CONVENTION ON THE EUROPEAN UNION IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA (NCEU-MK)

Second session - Second cycle

Working Group 1 - Agriculture and rural development, Skopje, 24 November 2020

"The market of agricultural products in context of the Covid 19 pandemic"

1. It is necessary to take **temporary measures to tackle the crisis in agriculture** along the lines of those implemented in the EU, applicable in our country.
 - a) The Government should grant direct one-time assistance to the most affected categories of agricultural producing companies in the agri-food complex, especially to small agricultural holdings;
 - b) MAFWE (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Water Economy) and the Government should consider the possibility of advancing some of the future direct payments;
 - c) MAFWE and the Government should consider the possibility of increasing the planned maximum amounts in context of certain regular measures.
2. Relevant institutions (Government, MAFWE, MLSP-Ministry of Labor and Social Policy) should consider the possibility of establishing teams to support agricultural holdings **in case of illness of the family labor force** and the inability to carry out daily farm activities.
3. MAFWE should also promote further use of **measures for modernization of agricultural holdings**, especially in the field of investments for storage, product finishing, product processing, or logistics. For the most vulnerable category of micro and small agricultural holdings, it is also necessary to provide **access to capital** for investments that will trigger their development and sustainability.
4. MAFWE should encourage greater use of measures for **diversification of agricultural holdings** in context of their agricultural and non-agricultural activities. Closing some sales channels forces other channels to be found or strengthened, e.g., direct sales, direct delivery, or e-commerce.
5. MAFWE and other relevant stakeholders (civil society organizations) should consider in detailed manner the need for more intensive education, promotion, and support for the application of **the new rules of sale of farm products from the doorstep**.
6. MAFWE and the Government should take into account the need for **digitalization of the agricultural sector**, which is a prerequisite for a functional system of communication and exchange of information throughout the chain; a potential to generate new revenue streams (e.g., e-commerce); opportunities for digitalization of certain operations and activities (e.g., livestock feeding, fertigation, farm accounting, etc.).

7. MAFWE and the Government should consider the possibility of drafting a **National Food Security Strategy** - i.e., a sustainable and stable access to secure and quality food at affordable prices.
8. MAFWE and the Government should review the possibility for faster introduction of the measure "Improvement of training" as part of the IPARD2 program and its inclusion in the next IPARD3 cycle, but also the inclusion of such measures in the national program that represents investment in farmers' knowledge and skills.