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E-002995/2022

Answer given by Mr Wojciechowski
on behalf of the European Commission
(26.10.2022)

The Commission is aware of the challenges that EU farmers and companies, including Greek apple producers, are facing in this difficult period for the EU economies. In March 2022, the Commission adopted exceptional market measures¹ providing Member States with a budget to be used to support farmers affected by the crisis. Around half of the Member States, including Greece, decided to use these funds to help the fruit and vegetable sectors. Greece notified the use of € 26 million for the sector.

Moreover, support remains available under the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP), in particular in the sectorial operational programmes and Rural Development programmes (and from 2023 in the CAP strategic plans). These include a wide range of measures, including crisis management tools, such as market withdrawals and risk management. Encouraging producer organisations and market transparency, the CAP aims to improve the functioning of the food chain and farmer's bargaining power. Moreover, the Recovery Plan for Europe, Next Generation EU², brings additional EUR 7.5 billion into rural development programmes; part of these funds channelled to Greece are also available for Greek fruit growers.

The Commission is working with Member States to reduce energy prices. Regarding national taxation, Member States have the competence in setting the levels and exemptions, including any relevant flexibilities. Some Member States are subsidizing within certain limits energy prices through national aid and/or the Temporary Crisis Framework for State Aid³ in order to reduce production costs.

As regards sanctions, they are designed to not target food and agricultural products and are aimed at defending our European security and values.

¹ COM(2022) 133 final.

² https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/recovery-plan-europe_en

³ Communication from the Commission on the Temporary Crisis Framework for State aid measures to support the economy following the aggression against Ukraine by Russia (OJ C 131 I, 24.3.2022, p. 1), as amended by Commission Communication C/2022/5342 (OJ C 280, 21.7.2022, p. 1).