Dear [Redacted],

Thank you for your letter dated 28 June 2023 in which, due to the current adverse climatic conditions, you ask for the extension of the derogation from the application of GAEC standards 7 and 8 in claim year 2024 as well as for wider flexibilities in the implementation of eco-schemes and agri-environmental climate commitments.

The Commission is doing its utmost to help affected farmers cope with current challenges. The Commission has recently announced a package of short-term measures aimed at alleviating the situation of farmers in countries hit by droughts, floods, and other adverse weather conditions. The Commission has proposed mobilising additional EU funding from the agricultural reserve for EU farmers, including the Lithuanian farmers, to cope with high input costs, diverse market problems and adverse climatic events. Moreover, the Commission will allow paying higher advances under both pillars of the CAP and grant flexibilities in certain sectorial programmes. The Commission will also readily assess any exceptional amendments of CAP strategic plans that can be used, for instance, to reinforce the budget for investments to re-establish production potential (e.g., destroyed crops or loss of farm animals). In addition, under the temporary EU state aid rules, Member States, including Lithuania, can mobilise national resources to grant support.

I am afraid that climate change will further exacerbate the issue of water scarcity and drought in the EU, including in Lithuania, impacting both the frequency and magnitude of drought episodes. This is why current ways of exploiting water resources and producing food need to undergo this transition towards a resilient farming sector, to preserve farming and guarantee food security in a changing climate.

As you know, the enhanced conditionality is an important part of the new green architecture of the CAP, agreed by the co-legislator in the latest CAP reform to make sure that the CAP delivers on its environmental objectives. The authorisation to grant
derogations from the application of GAEC standards 7 and 8 for claim year 2023 was adopted on an exceptional basis, to contribute to addressing the concerns on global food security generated by Russia’s unprovoked war in Ukraine. The derogations were carefully framed to address exactly that purpose while not undermining the transition towards a more sustainable agriculture.

While I understand the difficult situation farmers are currently in, the agreed package of measures will provide relief in the short term. In the long-term, helping farmers to adapt to the new climatic conditions and increasing their resilience is the appropriate way forward. Conditionality contributes to these long-term objectives and should not be undermined by further derogations. Let me also mention that the new CAP offers a toolbox to support the farming sector to deal with risk and many Member States, including Lithuania, have planned the relevant interventions in their CAP Strategic Plans. I hope they will be used to the fullest.

Yours sincerely,

Janusz WOJCIECHOWSKI