Thank you for your letter on the adverse weather conditions in several parts of the European Union and their impact on the agricultural sector in a number of Member States, which come on top of the challenging situation deriving from Russia’s war of aggression in Ukraine.

Let me first assure you that the Commission and myself personally take the adverse climatic events currently affecting several Member States very seriously. Since several years, the Commission services have been closely monitoring the worrying meteorological conditions in large areas of the EU, as well as their effects on crops and related market developments and decided to address such situations by identifying appropriate available instruments within the CAP and proposing different solutions to MS.

I am afraid that climate change will further exacerbate both the frequency and magnitude of extreme weather events, including issue of water scarcity and drought in the EU. This is why current ways of producing food need to undergo a transition towards systems that are more resilient and sustainable. This is necessary to preserve farming and guarantee food security in the context of a changing climate. It is therefore vital to develop robust long-term strategies to support the farming sector in the transition. The new CAP offers a tool-box of elements that Member States can use to support such strategies and I have strongly and repeatedly encouraged Member States to make the most out of the available tools, working in synergy with national and other EU support.

At the same time, further to requests by Member States, I have tasked my services to assess a range of measures that could be used in the short term to support farmers in these difficult moments, including flexibilities in implementation of the CAP Strategic Plans in 2023 and derogations for 2024, taking into account, in particular, the results of the current year’s harvest.

While I understand the difficult situation farmers are currently experiencing, it remains important that we address it by means which will not negatively impact the efforts to address
the environmental and climate challenges. Many elements of the green architecture are needed not only due to their contribution to climate change mitigation, protection of natural resources and halting biodiversity decline, but also because they will help farmers to adapt and increase their resilience in the face of the higher frequency and magnitude of extreme weather events such as drought. Repeated and broad derogations from key elements of the green architecture could imply that we revert on progress agreed in the last CAP reform exactly to address the need for a transition towards a resilient farming sector, and put at risk the steps forward towards that transition, exacerbating the issues in coming years.

That said, the Commission has prepared a package of short-term measures that Member States affected by adverse weather conditions may apply:

- Exceptional support of EUR 330 million from the CAP budget for 22 Member States, which they may complement up to 200% with national funds; the regulation was adopted on 14 July 2023,

- Increased percentages of advance payments for area- and animal-based support under both pillars of the CAP,

- Flexibilities in the sectorial programmes for fruit and vegetables and the wine sector,

- Exceptional amendments of the CAP Strategic Plans that would not count towards the maximum number of requests set in Article 119 of the Strategic Plan Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2021/2115) and which could be used, for instance, to reinforce the budget for investments to re-establish production potential e.g. destroyed crops, loss of farm animals, damaged buildings, machinery and infrastructure,

- Amendments of the current Rural Development Programmes that could channel uncommitted funds for similar purposes,

- The use of the force majeure clause which would allow affected farmers to retain the right to receive aid if the non-compliance with the condition for the granting of the aid is due to a recognised case of force majeure.

I believe that this package will bring the necessary immediate support, and that the transition towards more sustainable practices will bring long term benefits for farmers and future generations.

Yours faithfully,

[Signature]

Janusz Wojciechowski