

Mr Janusz Wojciechowski
Commissioner for Agriculture
European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200
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April 27, 2020

Dear Commissioner,

As you have acknowledged more than once, the European flower & live plants sector (cut flowers, indoor and outdoor plants for ornamental purpose and bulbs) has been hit the hardest by the exceptional crisis derived from COVID-19.

The sector as a whole has suffered since mid-March a dramatic and direct collapse of demand and consumption in most EU Member States and at international level with the large-range closure of all shops drop out of sales channels and distribution disruption as well as the cancellation of festivities and flower related celebrations, closure of the hospitality industries and the paralysis of gardening services in public and private spaces.

The 'domino' effect that has ensued since mid-March and is still unfolding on the overall supply-chain is bringing the whole sector to the brink of a total collapse across the EU and beyond, with immense ramifications in terms of bankruptcy of businesses and related employment across the supply-chain (breeding, production, wholesale, trade, distribution channels and retail shops).

Spring (March to May) is the period when most of the turnover is being realised within the sector. These highly perishable products rely on a natural plant cycle that cannot be interrupted during the ongoing crisis; this has triggered since mid-March the inevitable destruction of production and stocks to a massive scale across the EU and beyond.

The viability and survival of the complete ornamental sector in the EU, and all related jobs and businesses, is now at stake. This sector has never benefited from any kind of support from the CAP and has always functioned as a purely market-driven sector under the most competitive terms. Its socio-economic contribution in the EU and at international level is immense.

Flowers & live plants have an enormous potential in being part of the solution for the overall EU Green Deal ambitions by greening cities and offsetting the effects of climate change and positively contribute to the quality of life and a healthy lifestyle for EU citizens, including mental health, and to the social coherence across generations.

Although two Member States have recently announced a support package specifically for the ornamental sector in their country, operators in each and every Member State will need the various segments of the supply-chain across the EU, as well as the existing market structures in each country to function again post-crisis for this sector to recover.

The EU market needs growers from the Netherlands and Belgium but also growers from Spain, France, Italy, Denmark, Germany and other Member States. Wholesalers and

specialised shops (florists and garden centres) are needed in all the EU countries to distribute & sell ornamental products for the entire EU ornamental industry to survive. Consumption of flowers and live plants produced within the EU is destined at 85% for the EU internal market.

More European financial support to this sector is therefore highly needed and should go far beyond the national support that some Member States will be able to allocate on a case-by-case basis. The European Commission needs to act now and should activate as soon as possible the legal instruments currently available under e.g. Art. 221 of the CMO Regulation for exceptional measures to be enforced.

In addition and as was our plea for other sectors, we also strongly urge the Commission to be more ambitious and pragmatic in its support and give high priority to allocate funds from outside the CAP budget to address the current crisis in the flower & live plants sector. Exceptional circumstances call for exceptional measures and the European Commission should do its utmost to swiftly put in place tailor-made and urgent support options in order to offer a lifeline to this sector.

As **Members of the European Parliament**, we consider it the duty of the European Commission to not abandon this highly interdependent and very performing European sector and to invest in it as soon as possible.

Only then will most of the **760.000 jobs** be saved and **the 48 bn EUR turnover**, which this economically healthy sector normally adds to the EU economy annually, be partly secured.

Yours sincerely,

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