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Answer given by Mr Wojciechowski
on behalf of the European Commission
(8.7.2020)

The Commission is taking the necessary steps to address the difficulties caused by COVID-19. The Commission opened the possibility to grant higher advances, up to 70% for direct payments and 85% for rural development area and animal-related measures. Earlier payment of advances is also possible for rural development measures. For budgetary reasons, Member States cannot pay direct payments for claim year 2020 before 16 October 2020, as this would fall under the 2020 budget.

The Corona Response Investment Initiative (CRII)¹ and the Corona Response Investment Initiative Plus (CRII+)² have introduced flexibilities for the reallocation of resources between the cohesion policy funds³ and additional facilities to implement all the European Structural and Investments Funds (ESI Funds) to reduce administrative burden. In addition, the REACT-EU proposal⁴ provides an additional allocation to the outermost regions such as Azores (on top of share of national envelope).

For the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, specific measures targeting farmers, agri-food businesses and rural communities were adopted to alleviate the socio-economic impact of the pandemic. These include loans with low interest rates to support stand-alone working capital, favourable payment schedules under financial instruments, increased advances for area and animal-related measures, or temporary liquidity support. They do not necessitate the reallocation of resources among the ESIF.

The Commission is following market developments in all sectors and has taken support measures where needed. The short production cycle of poultry does not make it appropriate for granting private storage aid. The continued good performance of the pig sector does not justify support measures.

¹ Regulation (EU) 2020/460

² Regulation (EU) 2020/558

³ European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), European Social Fund (ESF) and Cohesion Fund (CF)

⁴ COM(2020) 451 final