

Mr. Pekka Pesonen,  
Copa-Cogeca Secretary General

July 24, 2023, Tallinn

## **Appeal for Support and Cooperation Amid Drought-Induced Challenges in Estonian Livestock Sector**

Dear Mr. Pekka Pesonen,

We would like to start by expressing our gratitude to Copa-Cogeca for the work done in protecting European farmers. We have been closely monitoring your activities and challenges over the past few weeks due to extreme weather conditions and the geopolitical situation. As an organization, representing Estonian family farms, we have decided to reach out to you to share the current situation in the Estonian livestock sector, which pertains to fodder procurement and what is currently happening in the fodder market.

In Estonia, farmers have not been able to secure enough fodder due to drought. It is estimated that only a quarter of the necessary fodder amount has been collected from the first mowing, and even less might come from the second mowing. Observations of the Estonian climate show that this year has been very extreme. In addition to unusually low precipitation and sunny days, the cultivation of plants was regionally affected by night frosts in May and early June. According to climate norms, May should be the rainiest of the spring months, but this year it was the driest. In many places, not a drop fell from May 18 to the end of the month. Also, there was 30% more sunlight in May than usual - 372.1 hours (the norm is 284.2 hours). There has been even less precipitation in June and even more sunlight. The night frosts at the beginning of June were so extreme that all-time record low temperatures were reached in several places.

In addition to the high production costs and persistently volatile market prices, there is significant pressure on livestock purchasing prices due to the drought, leading to large-scale animal selling to slaughterhouses. Dairy farmers continue to face challenges with decreased milk purchasing prices. Hence, besides the drought, there are several other factors complicating the situation for producers. Estonian farmers are deeply concerned about the surging prices of feed (hay and silage), which have become economically unviable and unaffordable. Feed prices are influenced also by the export of feed to third countries, which has seen rapid growth in Estonia in recent years, with 35,000 tonnes of animal feed exported in 2022. In both milk and meat production, animal feed accounts for the largest share of inputs.

Consequently, many producers have already made the difficult decision to cease livestock farming. However, the situation is worrisome as it seriously jeopardizes the diversity of agriculture in Estonia and the diversity of rural areas, with small family farms being the most affected. Family farms are inevitably in the weakest position in the supply chain, and their support is crucial since their role in rural areas is much broader. We also wish to emphasize that the crisis affects sectors, such as beef and sheep farmers, who manage valuable permanent grasslands and other valuable grasslands that cannot be used for food production in any other way. Their role in preserving biological diversity and environmental conservation is substantial. It is essential to maintain extensive livestock farming, making this issue timely and deserving of attention.

We hope that you will take this information into account while speaking about the difficult market situation at the meeting with the Spanish Council Presidency on Tuesday, 25<sup>th</sup> of July. We believe that it is not only Estonian farmers who are in a similar situation, but the difficult situation has affected agricultural production in many member states. We stress that solving this situation is critical to ensure the sustainability of small producers and maintain the diversity of agriculture, and we call on Copa-Cogeca to cooperate in finding solutions to this challenging situation.

With respect,

**Kerli Ats**

Estonian Farmers' Federation

Tel. +372 5647 5660

E-mail: [kerli@taluliit.ee](mailto:kerli@taluliit.ee)