

**INVITATION TO A VIRTUAL MINISTERIAL MEETING**  
**on “Regional food production – a backbone for vital rural areas”**  
**23 June 2020, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM**

The COVID-19 crisis has turned out to be a wake-up call for Europe in many ways. Among other things, it has raised our awareness for the importance of food security and the relevance of the European agriculture as a systemically important infrastructure. Our farmers and all actors along the food supply chain worked hard to ensure that safe and high quality food continued to be available throughout the pandemic.

The European internal market has proven to be a main pillar of the European model of agriculture and the European agri-food system. A resilient European agriculture and food supply chain are essential for maintaining food security. While an open and rule-based multilateral trading system remains highly important, regional food production and short supply chains have proven to be equally essential and have contributed significantly to the European food supply. Consumers got to know the advantages of regional producers and appreciated the quality of their products.

Against this background, we would like to invite you to the virtual ministerial meeting **“Regional food production – a backbone for vital rural areas”**, which will be hosted jointly by Austria, Germany and the Croatian Council Presidency on **Tuesday, 23 June 2020**.

The meeting is designed as a **panel discussion** and will **start at 12 p.m. and last until 2 p.m.** The debate will be structured as follows:

The panellists

- **Elisabeth Köstinger**, Austrian Federal Minister for Agriculture, Regions and Tourism
- **Julia Klöckner**, German Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture
- **Marija Vučković**, Croatian Minister of Agriculture and Council President
- **Janusz Wojciechowski**, European Commissioner for Agriculture
- **Norbert Lins**, Chair of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, European Parliament

will discuss the importance of European and regional food production and their contribution to vital and dynamic rural areas.

The debate will be broadcasted online for a wider public. Throughout the meeting, we will provide the audience with the possibility to participate in the debate by submitting questions.

We would therefore like to invite you to forward this invitation to other interested parties and relevant stakeholders. Please find detailed information on the registration process in the annex.

Please be informed that the virtual meeting will be held in English.

We are looking forward to welcoming you to our videoconference as well as to a fruitful and interesting debate.

Yours sincerely,

Elisabeth Köstinger  
Minister for Agriculture,  
Regions and Tourism

Julia Klöckner  
Minister of Food  
and Agriculture

Marija Vučković  
Minister of Agriculture, President of the Council

Ministerial panel discussion on “Regional food production – a backbone for vital rural areas”, 23 June 2020

The European agricultural sector is going through turbulent times. The COVID-19 pandemic has once more proven the sector’s importance for the European population. It has become clear that it constitutes an essential infrastructure in every Member State. It secures the supply for all European citizens with high quality and affordable food - even in times of crises.

The importance of successful regional concepts, short supply chains and the strengthening of sustainable European food production became particularly visible during the pandemic. The key aspect in this context was the uninterrupted functioning of the internal market and its logistics. The rules of the common market have proven their worth. Supporting efforts to revive the internal market is not just an act of solidarity; we are helping ourselves by helping each other. However, COVID-19 has also shown shortcomings of globalized supply chains and trade flows. Furthermore, the COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the mutual dependence and interconnectedness of our economies and societies. While protectionism has been on the rise in the last months, a reinforced, open, rules-based multilateral trading system is more important than ever.

European agriculture contributes indispensably to the preservation and development of vital and dynamic rural areas. Vital rural areas provide for attractive living and working environments, generate added value and thus create employment (in agriculture, regional tourism, direct marketing, regional public services, digitisation, forestry, local industries, etc.). It is crucial to invest in the identity of rural communities and in the growth potential of rural areas.

We should now take advantage of the current sensitivity among the European population for the importance of the functioning of the food supply chains. To do this, the services agriculture provides should be communicated in a more comprehensible manner. Successful strategies should be developed and demonstrated in this regard.

In this context, regional products can play a central role, as for a growing proportion of the population it is important to know where their food comes from, even if it is processed food. Regional specialities can help to create identity and connection with landscape and regions. Particularly relevant aspects in this context are high quality standards, short transport routes, sustainable farming methods and the creation or preservations of local jobs. Regional products are of great importance for the valorisation of landscapes and rural areas.

## **Registration for the virtual Ministerial Conference**

To participate in the livestream of the virtual Ministerial Conference no special technical equipment is required. However, a fast and stable internet connection to reduce any lag to a minimum, as well as an up-to-date browser with html5 support such as

- Chrome 30+
- Firefox 27+
- Internet Explorer 11
- Microsoft Edge
- Safari 9+

would allow for the best participation. Any device can be used - computer, laptop, tablet, smartphone.

### **Registration:**

You are kindly requested to register for the conference in advance at your earliest convenience. For this purpose, please follow this link:  
<https://www.conference-streaming.at/regionalfoodproduction>

You will be forwarded to the invitation and registration platform. There you can obtain detailed information on the event. Furthermore, you will find the registration form further down on the page.

Please enter your email address, your full name, your institution, and create a personal password. By clicking the “register” button, your registration will be finalised.

You will then receive an automatic email with a confirmation link for verifying your email address. By following this link you will be automatically led to the

registration platform, which also functions as the login page on the day of the conference. Moreover, the email includes a second link to add the conference to your calendar.

### **On the day of the event:**

On Tuesday, 23 June 2020, please sign in on the login page with your email address and password in order to follow the livestream. You will also have the possibility to actively participate throughout the event.

Directly under the live images you can pose questions to the specific panellists. The questions will be forwarded to the moderator and integrated in the discussion at an appropriate time.

### **Questions and help:**

Should you have any questions concerning the registration process, please don't hesitate to contact [help@conference-streaming.at](mailto:help@conference-streaming.at)

### **Interpretation**

The meeting will be held in English. No interpretation is provided.