



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

The Director-General

Brussels
SANTE.DDG2.G.1/PM/AG
ARES (2020) 1935180

Your Excellencies,

Subject: Smooth transport of seed and other plant reproductive material to ensure seed and food security

The crisis caused by COVID-19 is affecting the marketing and use of seeds and other plant reproductive material within the European Union. The necessary movement restrictions imposed to protect our population from the virus inevitably cause difficulties with the production and transfer of these commodities. It has come to our knowledge that border controls and restrictions seriously start hampering seed supply chains and on-time delivery of seed.

We are already in the sowing period of the year. We have a window of a few weeks that are critical to ensure timely delivery of plant reproductive material to European farmers.

The effects of any limitations caused by lack of seed or its slow delivery at this crucial time would potentially be devastating in many parts of Europe's agriculture and food and feed production. Without a timely seed supply, there is a security risk for our entire agri-food supply chain.

For this reason, it is important to secure the functioning of the internal market of seeds and other plant reproductive material, to the extent possible. The provisions of the respective Directives on the marketing of seeds of agricultural and vegetable crops, vine, fruit plants and vegetables¹ must be respected and implemented. Otherwise, we risk facing a critical shortage of food and feed supply in the second part of this year, something that we cannot afford in a time of great volatility.

Moreover, seed and other plant reproductive material are imported into the Union in significant amounts. It is equally important to ensure their timely importation and movement. Closing borders or even slowing down the transboundary movement of seeds could create a significant problem in the seed supply chain in the Union.

¹ Directives 66/401/EEC, 66/402/EEC, 68/193/EC, 2002/53/EC, 2002/54/EC, 2002/55/EC, 2002/56/EC, 2002/57/EC, 2008/72/EC and 2008/90/EC

Letter to the Permanent Representations of all Member States

It is also important to note that, according to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), there is currently no evidence that food, including seed, is a likely source or route of transmission of the virus.²

For this reason, I appeal to you and the competent authorities of the Member States to ensure the most favourable conditions possible for the supply of our farmers with all plant productive material they need for a successful harvest in 2020, while respecting all necessary restrictions for the health of our people. I would appreciate if you bring this letter to the attention of all services concerned and take the most appropriate actions to this end.

Yours sincerely,

Anne BUCHER

c.c.: Mr B. Van Goethem, Mr A. Brouw, Ms D. André,
Ms P. Mannerkorpi

² <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/news/coronavirus-no-evidence-food-source-or-transmission-route>