



Brussels, 2 April 2020

For the kind attention of:

- **AGRICULTURE AND FOOD COMMITTEE, NACIONAL ASSEMBLY OF BULGARIA**
- **MRS MARIANA NIKOLOVA, CHAIR OF NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TRIPARTY COOPERATION**
- **MRS DESISLAV TANEVA, MINISTER OF MAF**
- **MRS DENITSA SACHEVA, MINISTER OF MLSP**

Subject: EFFAT support to Bulgarian agro-food social partners - workers operating along the food value chain deserve recognition and protection during the COVID-19 outbreak

Dear Sir, Madame,

I am writing to you on behalf of all EFFAT affiliates. EFFAT is the European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions, also representing domestic workers. As a Trade Union Organisation with 2.6 million members, representing 125 national trade unions from 38 European countries, including Bulgaria, EFFAT defends the interests of more than 25 million workers throughout the food chain. EFFAT is a member of the ETUC and the European regional organisation of the IUF.

Our Bulgarian affiliates in the agri-food sector, have informed us that, together with their social partners, are calling on the Bulgarian Government to give special attention and respect to all workers and companies operating throughout the food chain. You will agree with me that today, thanks to their daily effort, enough, affordable and safe food is available for everyone during this emergency. Although we are all benefiting from their tireless and indispensable work, the measures taken to protect their health and livelihood are often too weak or even totally absent.

It is well documented that agricultural workers are often victims of difficult and precarious employment conditions across Europe – whether their work contract is seasonal or temporary, or whether they have been employed illegally. The COVID-19 outbreak has revealed even more the dire picture and absolute lack of guarantees and social protection for some of the most precarious workers in agriculture. The situation is also difficult for self-employed and small farmers/producers. There is therefore an urgent need to act immediately to protect the most vulnerable actors in the food value chain.

In this respect, we encourage the Bulgarian Government and all relevant institutions to support the fair demand of our Bulgarian affiliates and their social partners to support **all actors operating along the food chain** by extending to them the Government's Package of economic and social support adopted to tackle the COVID-19 outbreak.

Moreover, these dramatic times show once more that strong tripartite social dialogue is needed to save the agro-food sector and address the problems of the pandemic. To make sure this is possible, your support is of course essential.

All workers today are hit by uncertainty. This is particularly true for the sectors we represent, that are already among the most precarious and difficult ones. The risk of poverty and social exclusion is extremely high, and this pandemic has certainly exacerbated the social and economic conditions of thousands of Bulgarian food and agricultural workers. This is particularly true for seasonal workers, self-employed, and family workers etc.

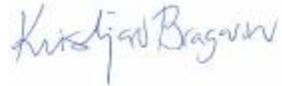
The dramatic social and economic conditions experienced by the agro-food workers may cause major instability for the whole food chain. In this respect, a possible solution could be ensuring an easier access for Bulgarian products to supermarket chains. Promoting shortest supply chains as well as

fighting against unfair trading practices could have a positive economic and social impact for the most vulnerable actors in the food chain.

In this unprecedented situation, the priority must be safeguarding workers health, as well as protecting workers jobs and income. Workers employed along the food chain deserve recognition and need your strong support in this difficult time. We therefore call on your government to listen to the Bulgarian social partners in the agri-food supply chain and take all necessary measure to save jobs and protect workers health and income.

Sincerely yours,

Kristjan Bragason



EFFAT General Secretary