

## PRESS RELEASE

### 13<sup>th</sup> EU - Albania SAA Subcommittee on Agriculture and Fisheries

Videoconference - Brussels/Tirana, 2 December 2021

Representatives from the European Commission (Commission) and Albania held discussions on 2 December 2021 on the level of implementation of the SAA and of the approximation of Albanian legislation to the EU *acquis* in the field of **agriculture and fisheries**, including **food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary issues**. The meeting was co-chaired for Albania by **Ms. Ermira Gjeci**, Deputy Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development and for the EU by **Mr. Alberto Cammarata**, Deputy Head of Unit in the Albania and North Macedonia Unit of the Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations in the European Commission.

At the meeting, the parties discussed developments in those areas and exchanged detailed trade statistics on trade in basic and processed agricultural products, and fishery products. The Commission highlighted the need for Albania to have in place robust **sector strategies** for all three sectors under the scope of this Subcommittee, and to assure adequate administrative capacities across the sectors. Robust sector strategies linked to appropriate budgeting process are also essential for successful implementation of IPA III. The Commission invited Albania to take on board the recommendations provided in its 2021 country report.

As regards **agriculture and rural development**, the Commission welcomed the efforts of the Albanian authorities in the implementation of the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance for Rural Development (**IPARD** - the EU-funded rural development programme). The Commission emphasised the need to examine opportunities to expand the scope of IPARD II Programme with additional measures. It also highlighted the need to ensure adequate human resources for the implementation of IPARD III programme in an efficient and fully transparent manner.

The Commission again urged Albania to establish the **farmers' register** and to improve the quality of data in the **animal register**. Both registers are key for national policy setting, including on veterinary matters, as well as for smooth and successful implementation of IPARD. The Commission also encouraged Albania to carry out the next Census of Agriculture Holdings (CAH) in 2023.

In the areas of **food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary issues**, it is of outmost importance that the country completes and implements the reform of the veterinary sector and intensifies the monitoring and surveillance in animal disease control. The Commission invited Albania to continue aligning its legislation in these areas with the latest developments of the EU *acquis*, as well as to ensure full traceability along the entire food chain.

Concerning **fisheries**, the Commission acknowledged the good progress in the fisheries sector, especially concerning the vessel monitoring system (VMS) that was re-established and is fully functional as of May 2021. The Commission expressed its satisfaction for the very constructive cooperation with Albania within General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) framework and invited Albania to continue implementing the GFCM recommendations, especially regarding the demersal management plan for 2022 and the multiannual management plan for the sustainable exploitation of small pelagic stocks in the Adriatic Sea.

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