

CC(18)9159:1 – CB/jk

Ms Cecilia Malmström  
Commissioner  
International Trade and Trade  
Agreements  
European Commission  
200, rue de la Loi  
BE-1049 Brussels

Brussels, 10<sup>th</sup> December 2018

**Re: Urgent enforcement of the safeguard clause on rice imports from Cambodia and Myanmar**

Dear Commissioner,

On 4<sup>th</sup> December, DG Trade submitted for vote at the Generalised Preferences Committee a proposal to enforce the safeguard clause on rice imports from Cambodia and Myanmar. The Committee delivered a “no opinion”, which allows the Commission to move forwards with the adoption of the legal proposal.

Since the entry into force of the Generalised Scheme of Preferences covered by the Everything But Arms Agreement, imports of quota-free and duty-free Indica rice from Cambodia and Myanmar have considerably increased, from 27,000 tonnes in 2009 to more than 300,000 tonnes in 2017. This substantial increase of imports has had a very negative impact on the economic situation of the rice sector, leading to a significant decrease in Indica rice production (drop of 40% in 2017 compared to 2012).

The safeguard investigation carried out by the Commission reached the same conclusions: the increasing imports of rice from Cambodia and Myanmar have caused serious difficulties for the entire EU rice sector.

Rice is deeply rooted in European culture and is grown in eight EU countries, from Portugal to Bulgaria. Rice cultivation provides many jobs in EU regions, above all in areas where it is not possible to grow any other crops. It is vital to preventing rural exodus. Rice fields also provide many environmental benefits: they are essential for preserving biodiversity, providing a wet habitat and a source of food for many animal species, which would be at risk of extinction without this crop. In addition to this, many rice fields are situated near natural parks and wetlands, close to watercourses and/or the sea, as well as in areas with a very delicate hydrogeological balance. Without the rice fields, these areas would be subject to progressive desertification due to the combined effect of the increase in water salinity and droughts during the summer months.

We believe that it is in the EU's interests to maintain rice production in view of the new key challenges in European farming, such as climate change, water resources shortages and the decline in biodiversity.

For all these reasons, we urge you to adopt the proposal to enforce the safeguard clause as soon as possible during the next meeting of the College of Commissioners.

We thank you for taking our request into consideration.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pekka Pesonen', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Pekka Pesonen  
Secretary General