

2024

ANNUAL REPORT ON THE STATE AND DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Contents	6
List of abbreviations used	6
SECTION A	11
I. STATE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL ECONOMY. MACROECONOMIC FRAMEWORK. PLACE OF THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR IN THE NATIONAL ECONOMY	11
II. DEVELOPMENT OF THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR IN 2023 AND FORECASTS FOR 2024	15
1. Use of agricultural land and structures in agriculture	15
1.1. Use of agricultural land	15
1.2. Use of agricultural parcels	16
1.2.1. Land Parcel Identification System	16
1.3. Registration of farmers	17
1.4. Participation of the State Land Fund in land relations in Bulgaria	17
1.4.1. Provision of State Land Fund own terrains for rent or lease	17
1.4.2. Distribution of pastures, grasslands and meadows, part of a state and municipal land fund pursuant to art. 37 and the ALOUA 17	17
1.4.3. Establishment of limited rights in rem in SLF lands	18
1.5. Activities on the transfer of registered legal grounds for the use of agricultural land	18
1.6. Consolidation of agricultural land	18
2. Economic and Production results in 2023 and forecast data for 2024	19
2.1. Economic Accounts for Agriculture for 2023	19
2.1.1. Value of gross production of the Agriculture sector	19
2.1.2. Final Production Value	20
2.1.3. Intermediate consumption	22
2.1.4. Gross Value Added	22
2.1.5. Entrepreneurial income	22
2.2. Plant Growing Production Results	23
2.2.1. Grain production	24
2.2.2. Oilseed crops	25
2.2.3. Grain market monitoring	26
2.2.4. Quality grading of harvest 2023	26
2.2.5. Industrial Crops	28
2.2.6. Medicinal and aromatic plants	28
2.2.7. Fruit	29
2.2.8. Vegetables	30
2.2.9. Forecast data for the production of basic cereals and oilseeds from the 2024 harvest	33
2.3. Livestock Breeding Production Results	34
2.3.1. Cattle breeding and buffalo breeding	37
2.3.2. Sheep and goat breeding	39
2.3.3. Pig breeding	41
2.3.4. Horse breeding	43
2.3.5. Poultry farming	43
2.3.6. Beekeeping	45
2.3.7. Rabbit breeding	47
2.4. State of organic production in Bulgaria in 2023	47

2.4.1.	Control System Operators	47
2.4.2.	Organic plant growing.....	47
2.4.3.	Organic Livestock Breeding.....	48
2.4.4.	Organic products market	49
2.5.	Viticulture and wine production.....	49
2.5.1.	Grapes production	49
2.5.2.	Wine production.....	52
2.5.3.	Export and Import of Wine	53
III.	TRADE IN AGRICULTURAL GOODS	56
1.	Key trading indicators	56
2.	Structure of Bulgaria's agricultural trade by country	57
2.1.	Exports by country	58
2.2.	Import by country	59
3.	Structure of Bulgaria's agricultural trade by products	60
3.1.	Export by products.....	60
3.2.	Import by products.....	62
4.	Development of foreign trade in agricultural goods in 2024	64
5.	Activities to support the export of agricultural products	64
IV.	SUPPORT OF THE AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY	65
1.	Support under the First Pillar of CAP	65
1.1.	Area-Based Direct Payments, Transitional National Aid and Coupled Support	65
1.2.	Market support mechanisms.....	74
1.2.1.	Contractual relations in the milk sector.....	74
1.2.2.	Operational programs	74
1.2.3.	Producer organizations and groups.....	75
1.2.4.	Scheme to supply fruits, vegetables, milk and dairy products to kindergartens and schools in Bulgaria (School Fruit Scheme and School Milk Scheme)	76
1.2.5.	Wine sector.....	77
1.2.6.	Public Intervention and Private Storage	78
1.2.7.	Sugar sector	78
1.2.8.	Promotional programs	79
1.2.9.	Quality Policy.....	79
1.2.10.	Temporary Emergency Measures Scheme	80
1.2.11.	Export licensing	80
1.2.12.	Import licensing of agricultural products from third countries	81
2.	Support under the Second Pillar of CAP	81
3.	National Recovery and Resilience Plan	93
4.	Additional state support	95
4.1.	State aid	95
4.2.	Short-term credits	98
4.3.	Investment credit schemes of the Agriculture State Fund	98
V.	AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION ACTIVITIES	100
1.	Control of agricultural and forestry machinery	100
1.1.	Registration of agricultural and forestry machinery	100
1.2.	Technical inspection of the equipment	100

1.3.	Qualification to work with machinery and issuance of certificates	101
1.4.	Testing and certification of used agricultural and forestry machinery	101
2.	Hydromelioration	101
2.1.	Sites for protection against the harmful effects of water	101
2.2.	Irrigation	102
2.3.	Support for investments in hydromelioration infrastructure	103
3.	Plant protection and phytosanitary control	104
3.1.	Monitoring the development of economically important pests and plant protection	104
3.2.	Plant protection	104
3.3.	Phytosanitary Control	108
3.3.1.	Production control of the territory of Bulgaria and movement of plants, plant products and other objects within the EU	109
3.3.2.	Phytosanitary control at export	110
3.3.3.	Phytosanitary control at import	110
3.4.	Control of plant protection products and fertilizers	110
3.4.1.	Results of the control activity on the marketing of PPPs	110
3.4.2.	Results of the control activity on the use of PPP	111
3.4.3.	Analysis of the results of the control of the market and use of PPPs in 2023	112
4.	Fertilizers	113
4.1.	Registration of fertilizers	113
4.2.	Control of fertilizers upon their placing on the market	113
5.	Variety testing, approbation, and seed control	114
6.	Food chain safety	118
6.1.	Animal health and welfare	118
6.2.	Animal identification and veterinary activities	122
6.3.	Food control	125
6.3.1.	Alert and Cooperation Network (ACN (RASFF + AAC+ +FFN+PHN))	130
6.3.2.	Control on veterinary activities, veterinary medicinal products, feed and animal byproducts, border control	133
6.3.2.1.	Control on veterinary medical activity	133
6.3.2.2.	Control of veterinary medicinal products	134
6.3.2.3.	Border control	136
6.3.2.4.	Control of feed and animal by-products	137
6.4.	Analysis of the food chain risks	145
6.5.	Legislative changes and strategic documents in the field of food chain safety	148
7.	Livestock Selection and Reproduction	151
7.1.	Livestock Selection and Reproduction	151
7.2.	Control and coordination of breeding activities	154
8.	Agricultural Science, Training and Advisory Activities	155
8.1.	Agricultural Scientific Research and Scientific Service Activities Provided by the Agricultural Academy	155
8.1.1.	Main research priorities in the Agricultural Academy	155
8.1.2.	Created scientific products, implemented in production	157
8.1.3.	Transfer of knowledge and scientific products	157
8.1.4.	Qualification structure of scientists and training of doctorate students	158
8.1.5.	Specialized scientific journals	158
8.2.	Advisory activities	158
8.2.1.	Vocational training	161

8.2.2.	Improving the "research - advice in agriculture - agricultural business" link	161
8.2.3.	Information support	162
8.2.4.	Agrochemical analyses	162
8.2.5.	NAAS activity under sub-measure 2.1.2 "Consultancy services for small farmers"	162
8.2.6.	NAAS activity under sub-measure 2.1.2 "Consultancy services for small farmers".	162
8.2.7.	Activities under Sub-measure 2.2 "Establishment of Consultancy Services"	163
8.2.8.	Common Agricultural Policy 2021 - 2027	163
8.2.9.	International activity	164
9.	Hail Suppression	164
9.1.	Active impacts with a rocket method	165
9.2.	Active impacts with the aircraft method	167
10.	Reducing the Regulatory and Administrative Burden on Business	169
10.1.	Applied Regulatory Regimes in the MAF System	169
10.2.	Measures Taken in 2023 to Reduce the Regulatory and Administrative Burden on Businesses	169
11.	Risk and crisis management in agriculture	170
11.1.	Sanitary risks	170
11.1.1.	Specific risks in the Livestock sector	170
11.1.2.	Specific risks in the Crop and Forestry sectors	171
11.1.3.	Control during cross-border transit when importing consignments into the EU from third countries and when moving consignments between member states	171
11.2.	Natural and climatic risks	171
11.3.	Economic risks	172
11.4.	Overcoming the negative consequences in agricultural production caused by the global COVID - 19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine	172
11.4.1.	Overcoming the negative consequences caused by the global COVID - 19 pandemic	172
11.4.2.	Overcoming the negative consequences for agricultural production caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine	173
11.5.	Measures for management of sanitation crises and crises caused by adverse climatic and natural disasters in agriculture ..	174
VI.	FORESTRY	175
1.	Characteristics of Forest Areas	175
2.	Changes of Forest Areas	176
3.	Management of Forest Areas	177
3.1.	Afforestation and Protection against Erosion and Torrential Rains	177
3.2.	Logging in Forests	179
4.	Use of Wood and Non-wood Forest Products	179
4.1.	Use of Wood	179
4.2.	Auxiliary Activities and Use of Non-Wood Forest Products	181
5.	Protection of Forest Territories	181
5.1.	Protection of Forest Territories from Diseases, Pests and Other Damages	181
5.2.	Forest Fire Protection	182
6.	Protected Areas	182
7.	Forest certification	186
8.	Inventory and planning in forest areas	187
9.	Hunting Units	188
10.	Protection of Forest Territories and Control	189
11.	Strategic Planning, Improvement of the Regulatory framework and International Activities	190

12.	Financing and investments in forest areas	191
12.1.	Executive Forest Agency	191
12.2.	State-owned forest enterprises	191
13.	Administrative service	192
VII.	FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE	192
1.	Catch and production of fish and other aquatic organisms	192
2.	Import and export of fish and fish products	197
3.	Maritime and Fisheries Program 2014 - 2020 and Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Program 2021 - 2027	201
4.	Common Fisheries Policy	211
VIII.	PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AGRICULTURAL POLICY DOCUMENTS FROM THE NATIONAL STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK IN 2023.	213
	SECTION B	216
	ANNEXES	228

List of abbreviations used

AGC	Administrative Grant Contracts
AEP	Agri-environmental Payments
AACS	Administrative Assistance and Cooperation System
AEAV	Act to Establish an Administrative Violation
BFSA	Bulgarian Food Safety Agency
BSMAEC	Bulgarian Survey for Monitoring the Agricultural and Economic Conjuncture
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GVA	Gross Value Added
BSS	Bulgarian State Standard
Buffaloes	Coupled support scheme for buffaloes/Support for buffaloes coupled with production
BNB	Bulgarian National Bank
BEP	Biological and Economic Properties
BRC	Bulgarian Red Cross
Grants	Grants
RES	Renewable Energy Sources
VMP	Veterinary Medicinal Products
VOC	Verification of Official Controls Directorate General
CLLD	Community-led local development
HNV	Restoration and maintenance of grasslands of high natural value
C-mr	Coupled with production support of cattle in mountain regions
BIP	Border Inspection Posts
BCRP	Border crossing points
GMO	Genetically Modified Organism
PG	Producer Groups
FRM	Forest Reproductive Materials
FMPP	Forestry management plans and programs
E-Gov Agency	E-Government State Agency
SG	State Gazette
SF units	State forestry units
VAT	Value Added Tax
SSF	Scheme for small farmers/Payments for small farmers
SHU	State Hunting Units
SE	State Enterprise
SMR	Scheme for coupled support for ewes and/or goats in mountain regions/Coupled support for sheep and goats in mountain areas
AR-BISS	Additional Redistributive Income Support for Sustainability
SLF	State Land Fund
SMR-EB	Coupled with production support of ewes and goats of endangered breeds
SMR – BP	Coupled with production support of ewes and goats included in breeding programs
SSC	Coupled support scheme for ewes and/or does under selection control
SFA/ SF Agriculture	State Fund Agriculture
SFA-PA	State Fund Agriculture - Paying Agency
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
SSCc-MILK	Coupled Support Scheme for dairy cows under selection control
SSCc-MEAT	Coupled Support Scheme for meat-breed cows under selection control
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development:
EC	European Commission
Eco-OF	Organic farming (livestock) eco scheme
Eco-BEI	Eco scheme for maintenance and improvement of biodiversity and ecological

	infrastructure
Eco-FE	Eco scheme for maintenance and improvement of biodiversity in forest ecosystems
Eco-PRSP	Eco scheme for preservation and restoration of soil potential - promoting green manuring and organic fertilization
Eco-RPU	Eco scheme to reduce pesticide use
Eco-MPG	Eco scheme for extensive maintenance of permanent grasslands
Eco-DCC	Eco scheme for diversification of cultivated crops
Eco-MP	Eco scheme for ecological maintenance of perennials
SMNCP	Single Multiannual National Plan for Foods, Animal Feed, Animal Health and Welfare and Plant Health
EISA	Electronic information system in agriculture
EFSA	European Food Safety Authority
EERP	European Economic Recovery Plan
EU	European Union
ESF	European Social Fund
EAGF	European Agricultural Guarantee Fund
EMFF	European Maritime and Fisheries Fund
EFF	European Fisheries Fund
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
GMOA	Genetically Modified Organisms Act
AFM	Agricultural and forestry machinery
PGI	Protected geographical indication
GDP	Payment scheme for agricultural practices that are climate and environment friendly (green direct payment)
SMR	Statutory management requirements
IND	Infectious nodular dermatitis
PDO	Protected designation of origin
SPMA	Seed and Propagating Material Act
OUALA	Ownership and Use of Agricultural Land Act
LICOAMEU	Law on the Implementation of the Common Organization of Agricultural Markets of the European Union
EFA	Executive Forest Agency
EAVW	Executive Agency on Vine and Wine
EAFA	Executive Agency for Fisheries and Aquaculture
EAVTASC	Executive Agency for Variety Testing, Approbation and Seed Control
EASRAB	Executive Agency for Selection and Reproduction in Livestock Breeding
CV-TCGE	Coupled support for vegetables (tomatoes, cucumbers, gherkins and eggplant)
SV-POG	Coupled support for vegetables (onions and garlic) and starch potatoes
SV-CCWM	Coupled support for vegetables (carrots, cabbage, watermelons and melons)
SVg	Coupled support for vegetables - Greenhouse Production
SV-P	Coupled support for vegetables (pepper)
UAA	Utilized agricultural area
SVF-mr	Coupled support for fruits and vegetables in mountain regions
IIS	BFSA Integrated Information System
SF	Coupled support for fruits
SF-C	Coupled support for fruit crops until fruiting
IACS	Integrated Administration and Control System
SPC	Coupled support for protein crops
UMIS 2020	Unified Management Information System for the EU structural instruments in Bulgaria 2020
C-EB	Coupled with production support of cows of endangered breeds
Traffic police	Traffic police

CP	Consulting packages
CN	Combined Nomenclature
MC of RDP 2014-2020	Monitoring Committee of the Rural Development Programme 2014- 2020
Mol	Ministry of Interior
RRM	Recovery and Resilience Mechanism
YFS	Young Farmers Scheme/Additional income support for Young Farmers
MeC	Coupled with production support for meat cows
MeC-BP	Coupled with production support of meat cows included in breeding programs
DaC	Coupled with production support for dairy cows
DaC-BP	Coupled with production support of dairy cows included in breeding programs
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Food
LAG	Local action groups
FLAG	Fisheries local action groups
MoEW	Ministry of Environment and Water
NRA	National Revenue Agency
HACCP	Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point
NB	National budget
NGF	National Guarantee Fund
NDRVI	National Diagnostic Research Veterinary Institute
NMP	National Monitoring Program for Control of Pesticide Residues in and on Foods of Plant Origin
NMPRC	National Monitoring Program for Residue Control
PD	Penal Decree
NPCGMF	National Program for Control of Genetically Modified Foods
NPCPR	National Program for Control of Pesticide Residues in and on Foods
NBP	National Bee-keeping Program
NRL	National Reference Laboratory
NSI	National Statistical Institute
NAAS	National Agricultural Advisory Service
TNM	Total number of microorganisms
TNSC	Total number of somatic cells
RD Agriculture	Regional Directorates of Agriculture
RDFS	Regional Directorate for Food Safety
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CMO	Common Markets Organization
PO	Producer Organizations
BISS	Basic Income Support for Sustainability
OPIC	Operational Program “Innovation and Competitiveness”
SESG OP	Operational Program “Science and Education for Smart Growth”
CFP	Common Fisheries Policy
EOP	Environment Operational Program
RDOP	Regional Development Operational Program
OPDFS	Consulting packages
HRDOP	Human Resources Development Operational Program
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
Cotton	Special support for cotton
MFP	Maritime and Fisheries Program
TMSA1	Transitional national aid for cattle, decoupled with production
TMSA3	Transitional national aid for ewes and/or does, coupled with production

TNT	Transitional national aid scheme for tobacco, decoupled with production
IRALOUA	Implementing Regulations for the Agricultural Land Ownership and Use Act
PPP	Plant protection products
RDP	Rural Development Program
Priority	European Union Priority
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
RDF	Regional Directorate of Forestry
CMD	Council of Ministers Decision
DUS	Distinctness, uniformity and stability
SAPS	Single Area Payment scheme
ESS	Electronic services system
SV-TCGE	Coupled Support Scheme for Vegetables (tomatoes, cucumbers, gherkins and eggplant)
SV-P	Coupled support scheme for vegetables (pepper)
SV-POG	Coupled support scheme for vegetables (potatoes, onions and garlic)
SV- CCWM	Coupled support scheme for vegetables (carrots, cabbage, watermelon and melon)
SV - other	Coupled support scheme for vegetables (cabbage, watermelons and melons)
SV - main	Coupled support scheme for vegetables (main group)
SVg	Coupled support scheme for vegetables - greenhouse production
LPIS	Land Parcel Identification System
SDC	Coupled Support Scheme for Dairy Cows
SDC-MA	Coupled support scheme for dairy cows in mountain areas
SMKH	Coupled support scheme for meat cows and/or heifers
LDS	Local development strategies
IA	Irrigation associations
SP-other	Coupled support scheme for fruit (plums and table grapes)
SP-main	Coupled support scheme for fruit (main group)
SPC	Coupled support scheme for protein crops
SRP	Scheme for redistributive payment
SPARD	Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Development
AA	Agricultural Academy
LDS	Local development strategies
TSP	Thematic sub-program for small farms
FCA	Physical and chemical analysis
FBI	Food and beverage industry
FTST	Food of traditional and specific taste
CLVSEE	Central Laboratory for Veterinary Sanitary Expertise and Ecology
CLPQ	Central Laboratory for Plant Quarantine
CLCTC	Central Laboratory for Chemical Testing and Control
FCRAC	Food Chain Risk Assessment Center
DOM	Digital orthophoto map
PTC	Professional Training Center
HQ	Headquarters
CPVO	Community Plant Variety Office
ESVAC	European Surveillance of Veterinary Antimicrobial Consumption
OIE	International Office of Epizootics
PPPAMS	Plant Protection Products Authorization Management System
RASFF	Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed

SECTION A

I. STATE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL ECONOMY. MACROECONOMIC FRAMEWORK. PLACE OF THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR IN THE NATIONAL ECONOMY

According to updated NSI data, in 2023 the gross domestic product generated in the country grew by 1.9% compared to the previous year in real terms.

The nominal volume of GDP for the year is worth BGN 185,233 million (EUR 94,708 million).

Average annual inflation for 2023 is 9.5%, as for m. December inflation slows down to 4.7% on an annual basis.

According to data of the BNB for the country's balance of payments, in the course of 2023, a negative trade balance for Bulgaria amounting to BGN 7,681 million (EUR 3,927 million) was formed.

Foreign direct investments in Bulgaria during the year totaled 6,423 million. BGN (3,284 million euros), which represents 3.5% of GDP.

Table I.1. Main macroeconomic indicators of the Republic of Bulgaria

Indicator	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
GDP at current prices, BGN million	119,906	121,088	139,602	168,360	185,233
GDP at current prices, EUR million	61,307	61,912	71,377	86,081	94,708
Annual real rate of change in GDP, % *	3.8	-3.2	7.8	4.0	1.9
Average annual inflation (CPI), %	3.1	1.7	3.3	15.3	9.5
Inflation at the end of the year (CPI), %	3.8	0.1	7.8	16.9	4.7
Trade balance, BGN million	-5,689	-3,796	-5,646	-9,943	-7,681
Trade balance, EUR million	-2,909	-1,941	-2,887	-5,084	-3,927
FDI, BGN million	3,206	5,400	2,808	7,869	6,423
FDI, EUR million	1,639	2,761	1,436	4,023	3,284

Source: NSI – GDP and inflation; BNB – data on trade balance, and FDI (according to the principle of the initial direction of investment, preliminary data for 2023). GDP data for the period 2019 - 2022 have been revised in connection with a benchmark revision and updated data for 2023.

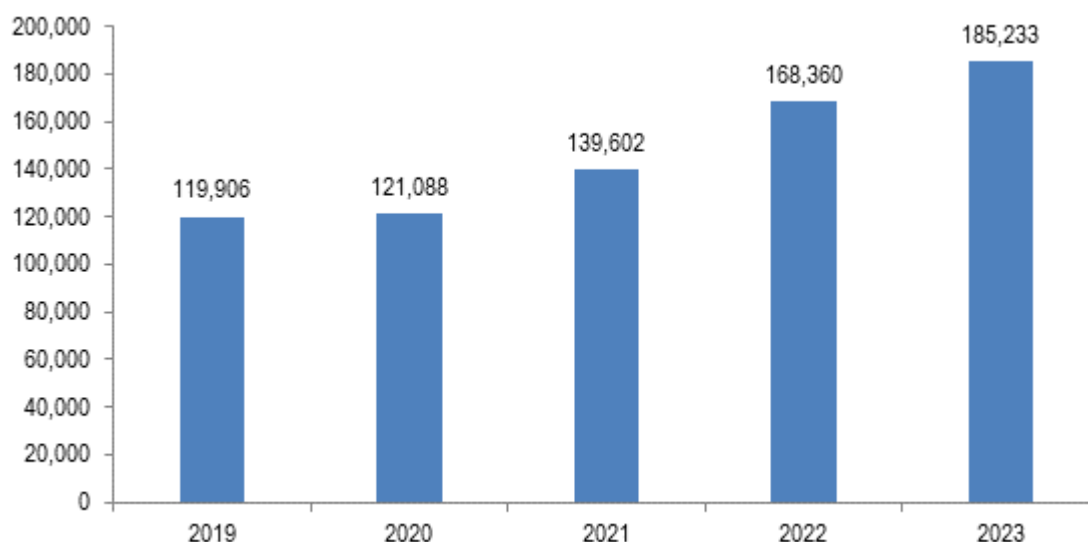
* The real rate of change of GDP was calculated at comparable prices in 2020.

Note: Due to the different methodologies used, the export, import and trade balance data, compiled by the BNB for the balance of payments statistics differ from the export, import and trade balance data, compiled by the NSI for foreign trade statistics.

Gross Domestic Product

The data for 2023 show an increase in GDP of 1.9% on an annual basis in real terms. At current prices, the GDP for the year amounted to BGN 185,233 million (EUR 94,708 million), with BGN 28,733 (EUR 14,691) per capita.

Figure I.1. Amount of GDP for the period 2019 - 2023, BGN million



Source: NSI GDP data for the period 2019 - 2022 are revised in connection with a benchmark revision made and updated data for 2023

Gross Value Added

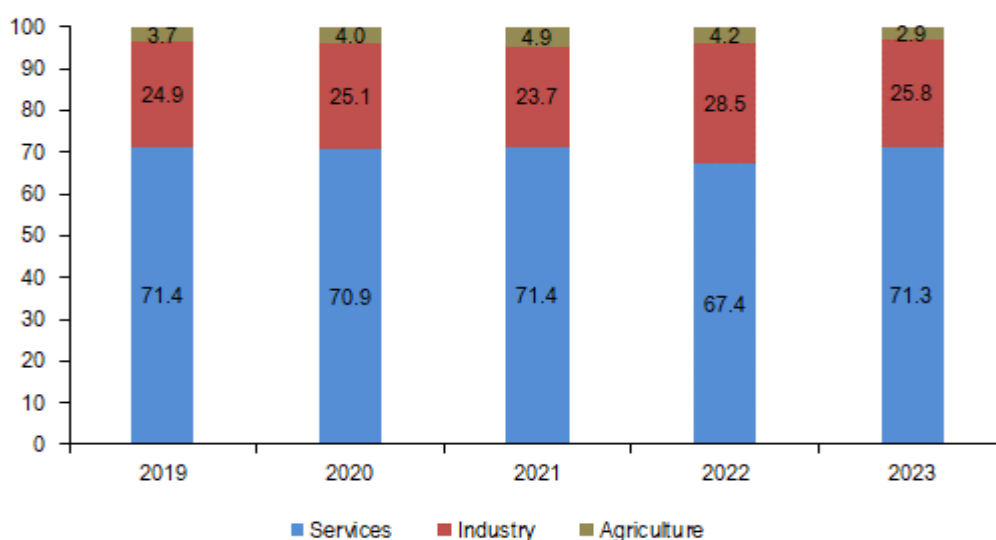
The gross value added generated by the sector of the national economy in 2023 amounted to BGN 162,414 million (EUR 83,041 million) at current prices, showing a real growth of 1.3% compared to the previous year. The added value of the entities from the agricultural sector in 2023 amounted to BGN 4,663 million at current prices. In real terms, it shrank by 15.3% on an annual basis.

By economic sectors, the GVA for 2023 is distributed as follows:

- Industry (including construction) - 25.8%;
- Services - 71.3%;
- Agricultural sector (agriculture, forestry and fisheries) - 2.9%.

Comparing with the previous year, the share of the agricultural sector in the total GVA decreased by 1.3 percentage points.

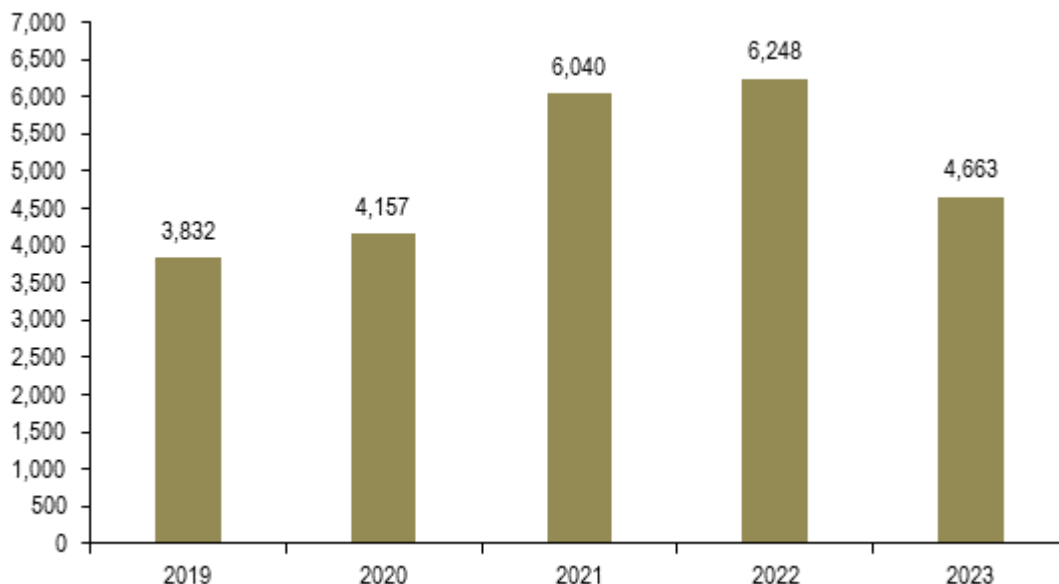
Figure I.2. GVA share by economic sectors for the period 2019 - 2023, %



Source: NSI GDP data for the period 2019 - 2022 have been revised in connection with a benchmark revision and updated data for 2023.

According to NSI preliminary data, in the first quarter of 2024 the real GVA growth for the economy reaches 1.4% compared to the corresponding period in 2023 r., and in the second quarter it is 1.1%. With regard to GVA formed by the agricultural sector, for the first quarter of 2024 a decrease of 5.8% on an annual basis is reported, and for the second quarter - an increase of 2.6%.

Figure I.3. GVA in the Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries sector, 2019 - 2023, BGN million

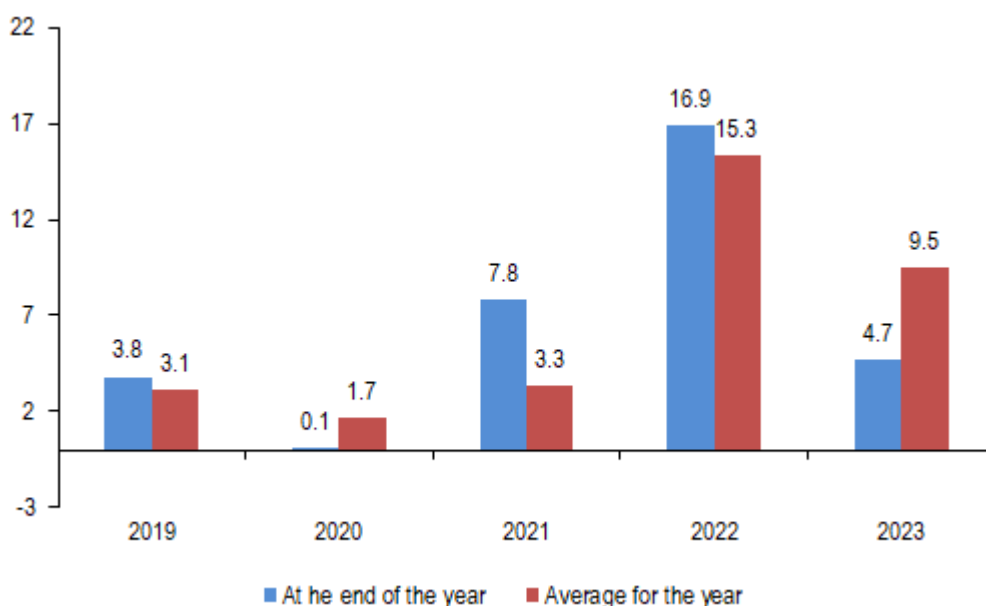


Source: NSI GDP data for the period 2019 - 2022 are revised in connection with a benchmark revision made and updated data for 2023

Inflation

Within 2023 a gradual slowdown in the rate of inflation is observed in the country. Average annual inflation for 2023 is 9.5%, where for December annual inflation compared to the same month of the previous year was 4.7%. As of December 2023, the food prices increased by 25.6% compared to the year before, those of non-food products increased by 13.3%, catering prices - by 23.2%, and service prices - by 10.3%.

Figure I.4. Inflation, 2019 - 2023, %



Source: NSI

Employment and unemployment

According to NSI data, the average annual number of employees aged 15 and over in 2020 was 2,931.9 thousand - 111.4 thousand less than the previous year. The number of persons employed in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sector decreased by 10% annually, down to 166.4 thousand, which leads to a certain decrease of the relative share of the sector in the employment structure by economic activities to 5,7%.

The average annual number of unemployed persons is 132.4 thousand, and the unemployment rate is 4.3%, increasing by 0.2 percentage points compared to 2022.

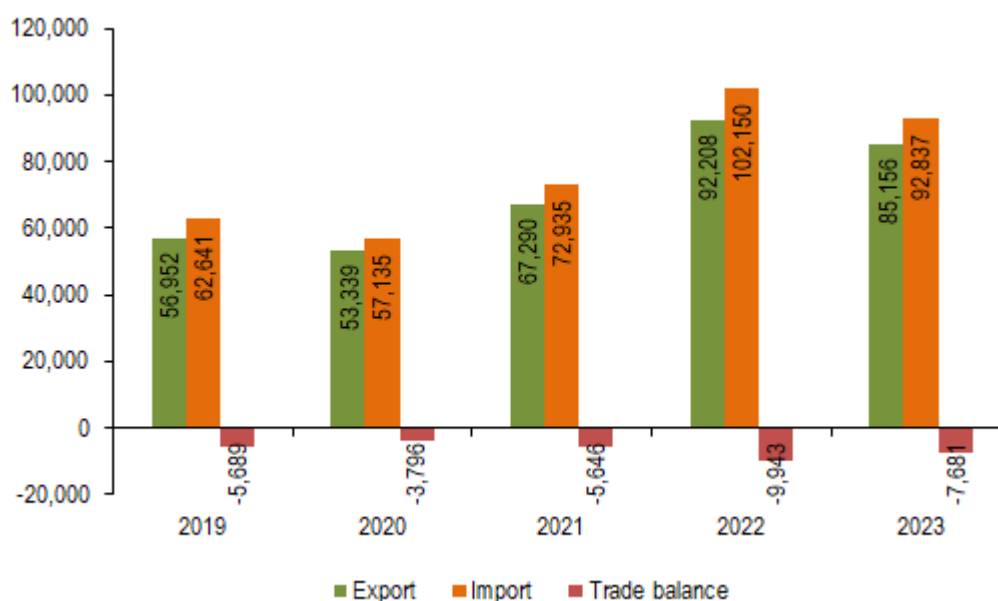
According to preliminary NSI data, in 2023 the average annual salary of employees under employment contracts was 24,147 leva, which is BGN 2,905 or 13.7% more than the previous year. In the sector of agriculture, forestry and fisheries there was a bit smaller increase on an annual basis - by 11%, up to an average of BGN 17,300 per person.

Export and import

According to preliminary data of BNB on the balance of payments, in 2023 Bulgaria's exports amounted to BGN 85,156 million (EUR 43,540 million) - 7.6% below the level of the previous year, representing 46.3% of the country's GDP. A decrease by 9.1% to BGN 92,837 million (EUR 47,467 million) or 50.5% of GDP was reported also in imports.

As a result of imports outpacing exports in rate of decrease, in 2023 the negative trade balance for Bulgaria decreased to BGN 7,681 million (EUR 3,927 million), compared to a deficit of BGN 9,943 million (EUR 5,084 million) for 2022

Figure I.5. Export, import and trade balance for the period 2019 - 2023, BGN million

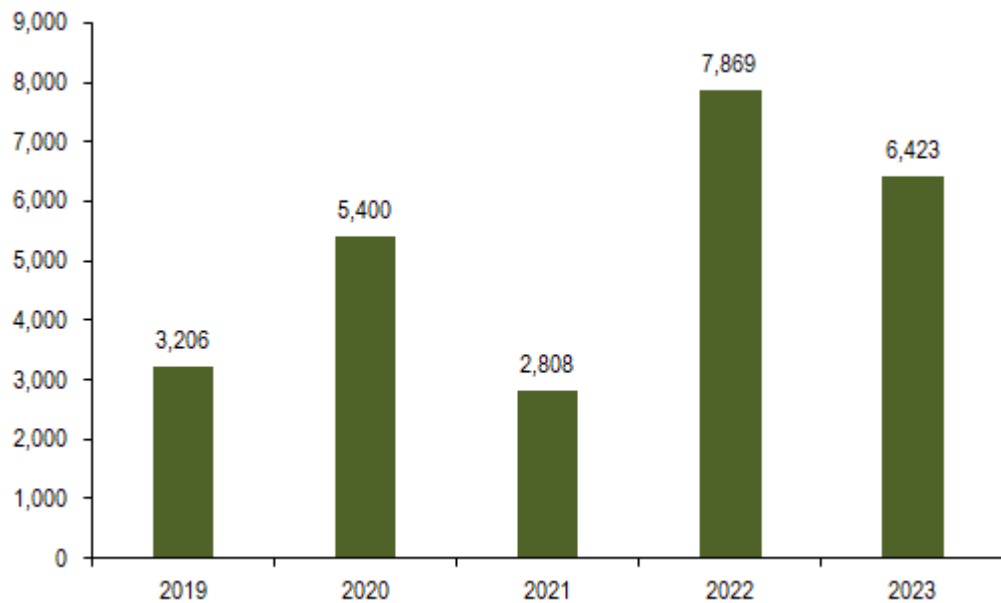


Source: BNB (preliminary data for 2023)

Foreign Direct Investment

According to preliminary data of the BNB, foreign direct investment in the country in 2023 amounted to BGN 6,423 million (EUR 3,284 million), which is 18.4% less on an annual basis. Direct investment during the year represented 3.5% of GDP, compared to 4.7% in 2022.

Figure I.6. Foreign Direct Investment, 2019 - 2023, BGN million



Source: BNB (preliminary data for 2023)

Within 2023, the most investments are attracted in the sectors "Financial and insurance activities" (EUR 1,476.9 million), "Manufacturing" (EUR 1,184.4 million).

II. DEVELOPMENT OF THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR IN 2023 AND FORECASTS FOR 2024

1. Use of agricultural land and structures in agriculture

1.1. Use of agricultural land

The area designated for agriculture in 2023 was 5,208,482 ha, which is about 47% of the territory of the country.

Table II.1. Arable land, utilized agricultural area and land designated for agriculture for the period 2019 - 2023, ha

EMPLOYMENT	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
wheat	1,250,478	1,203,964	1,247,453	1,207,969	1,301,482
barley	112,264	131,340	139,109	127,270	151,880
rye and triticale	28,163	25,875	35,053	31,327	42,042
oats	13,866	11,386	10,421	13,632	15,210
corn	641,555	642,373	633,735	572,048	595,560
other cereals	26,352	22,757	21,903	14,549	19,930
sunflower	789,604	888,200	840,185	985,591	892,956
tobacco	4,849	5,440	3,015	3,207	2,502
industrial oilseed crops	158,305	120,055	142,838	146,800	86,532
other industrial crops	57,878	65,209	64,261	48,837	45,574
potatoes	11,177	11,524	12,363	10,285	8,948
peas, beans, broad beans, lentils and other legumes	42,167	24,989	30,584	22,198	14,934
fresh vegetables	35,627	25,705	31,015	21,206	23,681
annual crops for feed	13,859	8,345	8,115	5,940	8,528
meadows sown with	117,708	119,134	119,942	104,618	103,168

EMPLOYMENT	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
legumes					
meadows sown with cereals	6,625	8,152	7,345	5,010	4,402
fallow land	149,636	161,565	137,707	132,752	153,480
greenhouses	1,503	1,502	1,704	1,904	2,006
ARABLE LAND:	3,461,615	3,477,514	3,486,748	3,455,143	3,472,814
Kitchen gardens	14,636	14,231	13,728	13,332	12,739
orchards	90,221	91,339	90,261	83,572	82,561
vineyards - axenic culture	53,005	51,356	50,252	47,551	46,948
mixed perennials	7,813	7,120	6,820	6,310	6,016
nurseries	1,699	1,703	1,709	1,907	1,506
Total perennials:	152,738	151,518	149,042	139,341	137,031
Permanent grasslands and meadows-orchards	1,408,481	1,403,988	1,397,079	1,414,246	1,380,408
UTILIZED AGRICULTURAL AREA:	5,037,470	5,047,252	5,046,597	5,022,062	5,002,992
Non-cultivated land	185,455	180,651	180,753	204,026	205,490
LAND DESIGNATED FOR AGRICULTURE:	5,222,925	5,227,902	5,227,350	5,226,087	5,208,482

Source: MAF, Agrostistics Department

The **utilized agricultural area (UAA)** is formed by arable land, permanent crops, nurseries, permanent grasslands and kitchen gardens. In 2023 the UAA is in the amount of 5,002,992 ha (45.1% of the country's territory), and compared to the previous year, a decrease of 0.4% was observed.

The **arable land** includes the areas where crop rotation is applied, the temporary meadows with cereals and legumes, the fallow land and the greenhouses. In 2023, the arable land increased by 0.5% annually, to 3,472,814 ha or 69.4% of the utilized agricultural area in the country.

Orchards - axenic culture in 2023 form 1.7% of the country's UAA. The areas occupied by them are 82,561 ha or 1.2% less compared to the previous year.

Vineyards - axenic culture - in 2023 they occupied 46,948 ha, which was 1.3% less than in 2022. The share of vineyards in the country's UAA was 0.9%.

Non-cultivated land includes both abandoned permanent crops and arable land, which have not been used for agricultural production for more than five years, but their operational recovery is possible with minimal resources. In 2023, uncultivated land occupied 205,490 ha (about 1.9% of the country's area) - 0.7% above the previous year's level.

1.2. Use of agricultural parcels

1.2.1. Land Parcel Identification System

The Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS) is a main part of the Integrated Administration and Control System (IACS), on the basis of which areas are declared for support and administrative control is carried out on the submitted applications for support, based on area. Therefore, the data in it must be as up-to-date and reliable as possible.

In 2023, the maintenance of LPIS data covers the following activities:

- Update of the digital orthophoto map (DOM) of the country based on aerial photography in 2023 is 31.19% (34,610.55 sq. km);
- Update of the physical blocks according to the new DOM - boundaries, way of permanent use;
- Carrying out field inspections, using GNSS devices, to measure and survey the inspected physical blocks with a total area of 312,567.94 ha (10,729 physical blocks);
- Recording the findings and measurements from these field inspections in the LPIS databases;

- Update of digital data for landscape elements in agricultural lands according to GAEC 8, as part of the requirements to the information contained in the LPIS;
 - Performing quality control of the LPIS data and preparation of the annual report on the state of the LPIS to the European Commission;
 - The updated physical blocks are used when performing administrative checks on submitted support applications;
 - Updating of a specialized layer "Permanent grassland" by issuing orders on individual applications.
- Planned activities in 2024 related to updating and maintaining the data in the LPIS include:
- Aerial survey of 36,761 sq. km, which is 33.13% of the country's territory;
 - Updating the data on boundaries and the way of permanent use of physical blocks;
 - Recording the findings and measurements from these field inspections in the LPIS databases;
 - Creating and updating a specialized layer for landscape elements under GAEC 8;
 - Updating of a specialized layer "Permanent grassland" by issuing orders on individual applications;
 - Performing quality control of the LPIS data and preparation of a report on the quality of the system as part of the IACS to the European Commission.

1.3. Registration of farmers

Pursuant to Ordinance No. 3 of 1999, the Register of Farmers serves to collect information about farmers and their activities in order to support agriculture and rural development.

The activity on keeping of a register of farmers covers registration of new farmers, re-registration and updating of the data for already registered ones, as well as deregistration of farmers upon termination of their activity.

In the 2022/2023 business year, the total number of registered farmers was 70,677, and by June 2024 - 65,057, with the deadline for registration of new farmers in the 2023/2024 business year being 30.09.2024.

Table II.2. Farmers registered under Ordinance No. 3/1999

	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024*
Total number of registered farmers	88,162	80,905	76,965	72,371	70,677	65,057

Source: MAF, LPIS

* Data as of June 2024

1.4. Participation of the State Land Fund in land relations in Bulgaria

1.4.1. Provision of State Land Fund own terrains for rent or lease

Agricultural lands from the State Land Fund (SLF) are provided for lease and rent following a tender procedure in accordance with the provisions of the Agricultural Land Ownership and Use Act (ALOUA) and the Rules for implementation of the ALOUA (RIALOUA). As of 2023, the total amount of agricultural properties provided for rent or lease by the SLF to individuals and legal entities amounted to 11,337 ha.

In 2023, based on the provisions of Art. 24a, para. 1 of the ALOUA and Art. 47b, para. 1 of the RIALOUA, tenders were held for renting and leasing of available agricultural lands from the SLF in the country for business year 2023/2024. Of the announced 47,939 ha of available agricultural land, 24,396 ha were contracted, and a total of 1,233 lease/rental agreements were concluded.

1.4.2. Distribution of pastures, grasslands and meadows, part of a state and municipal land fund pursuant to art. 37 and the ALOUA

The pastures, grasslands and meadows part of the state and municipal land fund are leased or rented to

owners or users of livestock facilities with grazing farm animals registered in the Integrated Information System of the BFSA, according to the number and type of registered animals, at prices determined by a market mechanism.

The areas determined for the 2023/2024 economic year from the municipal land fund (MLF) are 145,992 ha for general use and 367,113 ha for individual use. The submitted applications for allocation are 3,788 for 123,477 ha, with 76,887 ha allocated for general use, and 107,009 ha for individual use of pastures and meadows. The announced by order of the Minister of Agriculture and Food pastures and meadows of the SLF amount to 26,630 ha. 252 applications for 8,326 ha were submitted, 3,007 ha were allocated. The concluded contracts for use, after distribution of MLF, are 2,773 for 56,120 ha, for SLF - 117 for 1,410 ha. The conducted tender procedures and concluded one-year lease contracts for lease of properties from MLF are 130 for 1,911 ha, for SLF - 27 for 317 ha.

1.4.3. Establishment of limited rights in rem in SLF lands

In 2023, 100 requests from mayors of municipalities, legal entities and individuals were considered in relation to investment intentions for construction or expansion of site and/or linear sites affecting lands owned by the SLF, were considered. Pursuant to Art. 24c of the ALOUA, 16 preliminary consents were prepared for assigning the elaboration of a detailed development plan for the design of sites and routes in connection with the construction of water supply and sewage networks, routes of power lines and elements of the technical infrastructure.

15 contracts for establishment of limited rights in rem in lands from the state land fund were concluded on the grounds of art. 24 (1) of the ALOUA, Art. 47 (20, 21, 24) of the IRALOUA.

1.5. Activities on the transfer of registered legal grounds for the use of agricultural land

In relation to ensuring the implementation of the Direct Payments 2023 campaign, digital, text and geographic data from the restored property map and cadastral maps and registers of legal grounds for use were periodically collected, processed, verified and loaded into the Integrated Administration and Control System of State Fund Agriculture - Paying Agency. Pursuant to the provisions of the Farmers Support Act, 53,587 applications have been submitted by applicants under interventions for direct support for 3,876,192 ha.

During the campaign, a total of 13,382,838 registered legal grounds for 4,656 lands passed through a pre-specified set of checks, processing and controls. Of these, 8,498,679 properties are within actual boundaries for area of 4,632,604 ha and 4,884,159 are in land consolidation areas under voluntary agreements and/or allocations over an area of 488,415 ha.

For the Direct Payments 2023 campaign, 402 farmers were subjected to additional checks on the presence or absence of legal grounds for the use of agricultural land, as a result of which adjustment data was submitted to SFA-PA.

1.6. Consolidation of agricultural land

Procedures for consolidation of agricultural lands started in 15 lands on the territory of the country - Nikolaevo, Municipality of Pleven, District of Pleven; Suhindol, Municipality of Suhindol, District of Veliko Tarnovo; Fakia, Municipality of Sredets, Burgas province; Asenovo village, Strazhitsa municipality, Veliko Tarnovo province; Lenkovo village, Gulyantsi municipality, Pleven province; Ugyrchin town, Ugyrchin municipality, Lovech province; Radyuvene village, Lovech municipality, Lovech province; Dolno Yabalkovo village, Sredets municipality, Burgas province; Gorno Ablanovo village, Borovo municipality, Ruse province; The village of Gorsko Slivovo, Letnitsa municipality, Lovech province; Zhrebino village, Elhovo municipality, Yambol province; Lalkovo village, Elhovo municipality, Yambol province; Markovo village, Kaspichan municipality, Shumen province; Strazhitsa town, Strazhitsa municipality, Veliko Tarnovo province; Strelets village, Gorna Oryahovitsa municipality, Veliko Tarnovo province, with applications covering about 10,000 ha.

2. Economic and Production results in 2023 and forecast data for 2024

2.1. Economic Accounts for Agriculture for 2023

Table II.3. Main economic indicators for agriculture for the period 2021 - 2023, BGN million

	Indicators	2021	Change 2022/2021 %	2022	Change 2023/2022 %	2023
1	Value of crop and livestock production (at producer prices*), including:	10,072.3	20.3%	12,113.7	-20.3%	9,649.2
1.1	Crop production	8,133.8	20.4%	9,796.1	-27.1%	7,137.9
1.2	Livestock production	1,938.5	19.6%	2,317.6	8.4%	2,511.3
2	Agricultural services	546.3	9.0%	595.3	0.1%	595.7
3	Non-agricultural inseparable secondary activities	202.3	35.0%	273.2	9.4%	299.0
4	Value of gross production from the Agriculture sector (at producer prices *) (line 4 = line 1.1 + line 1.2 + line 2 + line 3)	10,820.9	20.0%	12,982.2	-18.8%	10,543.9
5	Value of final production from the Agriculture sector (at basic prices**)	10,821.4	19.2%	12,901.9	-18.2%	10,554.4
6	Intermediate consumption (excluding internal turnover)	5,612.8	24.5%	6,988.7	-9.3%	6,337.4
7	Gross value added at basic prices	5,208.6	13.5%	5,913.2	-28.7%	4,217.0

Source: NSI

* Producer prices - prices, excl. subsidies on products

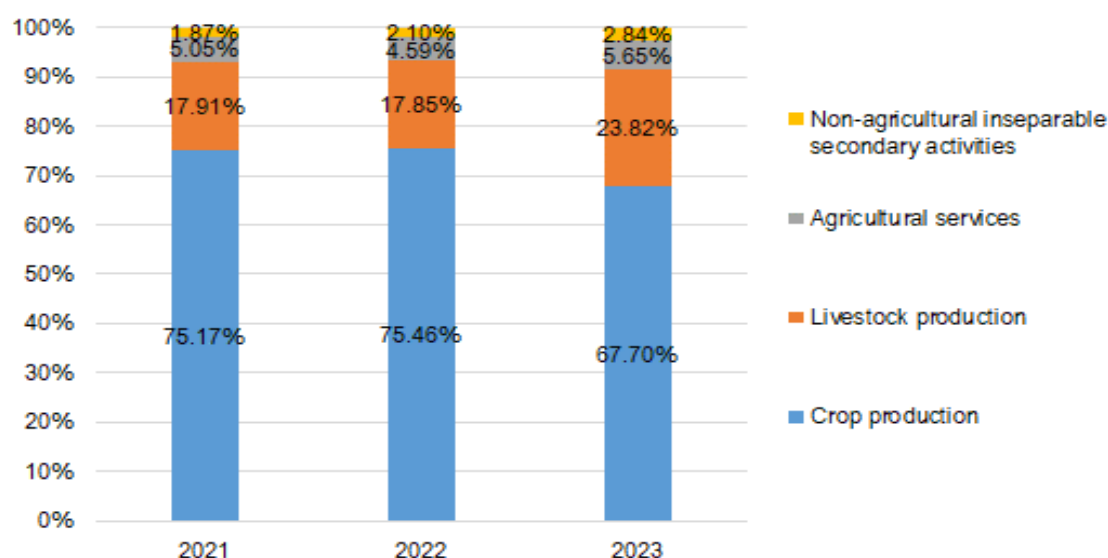
** Basic prices - prices, incl. subsidies on products

2.1.1. Value of gross production of the Agriculture sector

The value of the gross production of the Agriculture sector for 2023 at current producer prices (according to preliminary data) amounted to BGN 10,543.9 million, showing a decrease of 18,8% compared to the previous year (Appendix 2). It is formed by the value of:

- Crop production - BGN 7,137.9 million (with a share of 67.7%);
- Livestock production - BGN 2,511.3 million (with a share of 23.8%);
- Agricultural services - BGN 595.7 million (with a share of 5.7%);
- Production from inseparable secondary activities - BGN 299.0 million (with a share of 2.8%).

Figure II.1. Structure of the value of gross production from the Agriculture sector for the period 2021 - 2023, %



Source: MAF calculations based on NSI data

The decrease in the total amount of gross agricultural output is a consequence of the decline in the Plant Growing sub-sector (by BGN 2,658.2 million or 27.1% compared to the previous year). The value of production from the Livestock breeding subsector increased by BGN 193.7 million or 8.4% and Non-agricultural inseparable secondary activities increased by BGN 25.8 million (9.4%). The gross production in the Agricultural Services direction remains at the level of the previous year.

Significant decline from 2022 mark the leading areas of the plant growing sub-sector - grain production - with 1,441.7 million BGN (25.5%) and oil crops - with BGN 1,190.3 million (42.7%). For fruits, a decrease of BGN 31.7 million was registered (9.1%), in the production of potatoes - with BGN 11.9 million (13.3%). An increase in gross production in terms of value is present in the direction of Vegetables (without potato production) - by BGN 13.6 million (by 2.8%) and tobacco - by BGN 8.7 million (33.2%).

In most of the main production lines in the Animal Husbandry sub-sector, growth in the value of production on an annual basis is reported as follows:

Livestock:

- Pigs - by 36.4% (BGN 127.9 million);
- Poultry - by 18.2% (BGN 67.2 million);
- Ewes and goats - by 19.4% (BGN 29.9 million).

Livestock production:

- Eggs - by 24.6% (BGN 78.4 million).

The value of cattle production decreases by BGN 24.0 million (11.9%) and of milk by BGN 77.5 million (9.8%).

The total amount of agricultural products sold (crop and livestock products) in 2023 amounted to BGN 9,585.0 million or 90.9% of the gross production of the Agriculture sector (Annex 1). The crop production sold during the year amounted to BGN 7,378.0 million (70.0% of the gross production), and the sold livestock production - amounted to BGN 2,207.0 million (20.9% of the gross production). Outside the sector, crop and livestock production were sold for BGN 8,427.8 million (including export), and within sales between agricultural enterprises - for BGN 1,157.2 million.

The agricultural units used for production purposes agricultural products (seeds, planting material, feed, etc.) produced during the year in the amount of BGN 424.9 million (4.0% of gross production).

Agricultural products, mainly agricultural products processed on the farm, amounting to BGN 350.6 million (3.3% of gross production) were used for own needs on the farms.

Produced goods - fixed capital (production of perennial crops and productive animals/livestock) for own needs amounted to BGN 169.6 million (1.6% of gross production).

2.1.2. Final Production Value

The value of final production from the Agriculture sector (value of production after deducting internal turnover) at basic prices (prices including subsidies by products) for 2023 amounted to BGN 10,554.4 million and showed a decrease of 18.2% (by BGN 2,347.5 million) compared to the previous year (Appendices 4 and 5).

The structure of the final production in agriculture for 2023 preserved the formed ratios between the branches of the sector, outlined in terms of the gross production value. And in the final production the relative share of the crop production is the largest - 67.5%. For 2023, the relative share of livestock production was 24.0%, of agricultural services - 5.6% and of the production of inseparable non-agricultural secondary activities - 2.8%.

Cereals and oilseed crops remain with the largest share in the final production value in the sector. The two groups of crops together (respectively cereals - amounting to BGN 4,104.0 million and oilseed crops - BGN 1,589.6 million) account for 53.9% of the value of production in the Agriculture sector. Out of these, the following had the greatest contribution to the formation of the final production in the sector in 2023:

- Soft wheat - a share of 24.9% with BGN 2,630.6 million final production;

Despite the registered growth of 6.8% in the physical volume in the production of soft wheat, the value of the production decreased by BGN 976.8 million (by 27.1%) compared to the previous year, under the influence of price factors (a 31.7% drop in production prices compared to the high levels reached in 2022).

- Sunflower - a share of 13.4% with BGN 1,416.3 million;

In terms of value, the sector recorded a significant decrease of 41.6% (by BGN 1,006.6 million) on an annual basis, caused both by the contraction of the physical volume (by 16.4%) and by the drop in prices (by 30.1%) compared to the previous year.

- Corn for grain - a share of 9.5% with BGN 1,003.7 million;

In grain maize there is also a serious decrease in the final production compared to the previous year - by 28.6% or by BGN 402.2 million. It is the result of the decrease in prices (by 25.4%), combined with a slight contraction of the physical volume of production (by 4.3%).

Sub-sector Vegetables (without potato production) creates production worth BGN 532.6 million and forms a share of 5.0% of the final production in the industry. The sub-sector registered a growth of 3.9% (by BGN 20.1 million) as a result of the slight increase in producer prices for all types of vegetables (by 5.9%) and keeping the volume of production at a level slightly lower than the previous year (by 1.9%).

In 2023 the Fruit sub-sector occupies a share of 3.4% (with BGN 355.4 million) of the value of final production from the Agriculture sector. The sub-sector recorded a drop of 8.1% (by BGN 31.0 million) as a result of the contraction of the physical production volume of all types of fruit (by a total of 22.3%), which cannot be compensated by the increase in the prices of the producer (with 18.3%).

In 2023, the final production of the Livestock sub-sector reported a growth of 8.6% compared to the previous year, reaching BGN 2,535.2 million. There is a slight decrease in physical volume of livestock production - by 4.9%, which is offset by an increase in prices (by 14.2%).

A growth in physical volume of production in the main areas of the sub-sector was recorded only in the pigs and eggs production. The Poultry production and Ewes and Goats maintain the level of the physical volume of production from the previous year. The physical volume of production decreased more significantly in the areas of Cattle and Milk Production, which was not compensated by the increase in prices, and both areas recorded a decrease in the value of final production on an annual basis.

The divisions of the livestock sub-sector with the largest contribution to the total value of final production from the Agriculture sector in 2023 were:

- Milk production - a share of 7.0%, with BGN 734.9 mln final production (with BGN 78.0 million less compared to 2022);

In milk production, in value terms, a decrease of 9.6% is reported on an annual basis - as a result of the contraction of the physical volume (by 9.5%) and the retention of producer prices at the level of the previous year.

- Pig breeding - a share of 4.5% with BGN 479.4 million;

The value of production from pig breeding increased by 36.3% on an annual basis, under the influence of the increase in prices (by 33.1%) as well as of the slight growth of the physical volume by 2.4%.

- Poultry - a share of 4.1% with BGN 436.9 million;

Keeping the production at the level of the previous year, a significant increase in the value of the final product was reported in poultry farming by 18.2% on an annual basis, due to the increase in prices (by 18.3%).

- Egg production - a share of 3.3% with BGN 345.8 million;

The registered growth of 27.3% (BGN 74.3 million) of the final production in the egg sector compared to 2022 is a consequence of the slight increase in physical volume (by 1.3%) and the reached significantly higher (by 25.7%) production prices.

- Sheep and goat farming - share of 2.2% with BGN 229.4 million.

The direction maintains the volume of production from the previous year and recorded a growth of 13.3% (or by 27.1 million BGN), under the influence of price factors.

- Cattle breeding - share of 2.1% with BGN 216.8 million.

For 2023, the sub-sector registered a significant decrease of physical volume of 19.2% on an annual basis. It is compensated to a large extent by the increase in prices (by 18.0%), which leads to a contraction of the final output from cattle breeding in value terms by only 4.7% (or by BGN 10.7 million) compared to 2022.

2.1.3. Intermediate consumption

The intermediate consumption used to generate the final production in the sector in 2023 amounted to BGN 6,337.4 million (Appendices 3 and 4).

The largest share in its structure are the feed expenses - 21.2% (BGN 1,351.0 million), fuels and oils - 18.5% (BGN 1,171.5 million), and fertilizers and soil improvers - 18.2% (BGN 1,152.7 million), followed by costs for agricultural services - 9.4% (BGN 595.7 million), maintenance and costs for plant protection products and pesticides - 8.1% (BGN 391.6 million).

Intermediate consumption decreased by 9.3% (or by BGN 651.3 million) compared to the previous year as a result of a decrease in both the physical volume of goods and services consumed for production purposes (by a total of 4.0%) and their prices (with a total of 5.5%).

In terms of value, the decrease is the largest for fertilizers and soil improvers - by BGN 260.0 million, the group of fuels and oils - with BGN 134.2 million and fodder - with BGN 128.3 mln.

A growth in the physical volume marks the consumption of fertilizers and soil improvers (by 19.5%, with a price drop of 31.7%), plant protection preparations and pesticides (by 4.5%, with a price drop of 3.9%), of seeds and planting material (by 3.0%, accompanied by a price increase of 13.5%).

In 2023, intermediate consumption represented 60.0% of the production value, or 100 final production units were created by the Agriculture sector with the use of 60 intermediate consumption units.

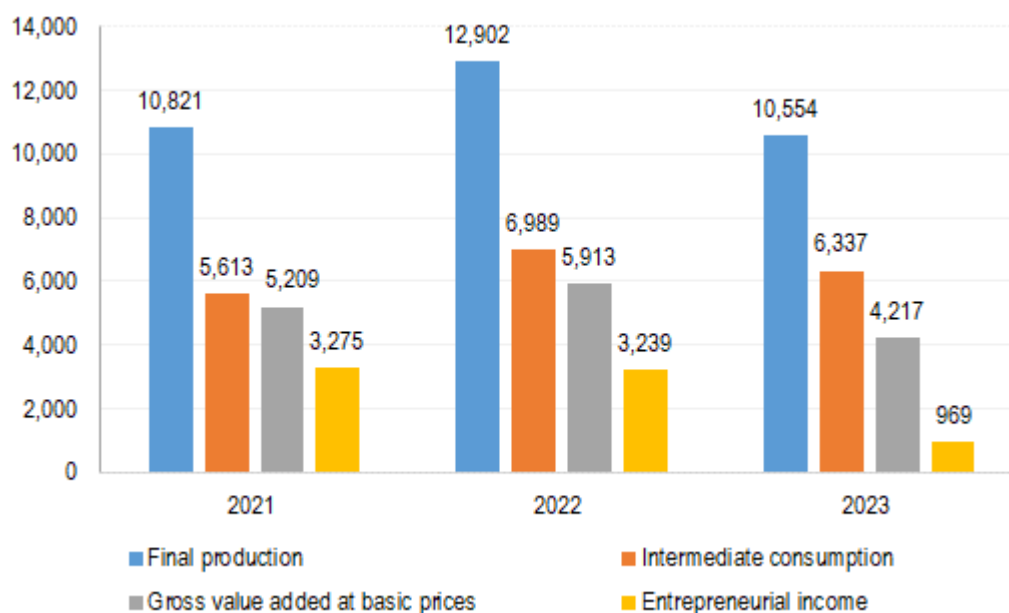
2.1.4. Gross Value Added

The gross added value created in the Agriculture sector in 2023 is in the amount of BGN 4,217.0 million (at current base prices), noting a decrease of 28.7% (BGN 1,696.2 million) on an annual basis under the influence of a serious drop in prices (by 26.6% in total - producer prices and input prices). (Annexes 4 and 5)

2.1.5. Entrepreneurial income

For 2023, the entrepreneurial income in the sector amounted to BGN 969.4 million - 70.1% below the level of the previous year (Annex 4). The drop in entrepreneurial income is a consequence of the decrease in Gross Value Added compared to 2022 and emerging trends in employee compensation costs, lease payments and consumption of fixed capital.

Figure II.2. Basic economic indicators for the Agriculture sector for the period 2021 - 2023, BGN million



Source: NSI

2.2. Plant Growing Production Results

The reporting year 2023 is characterized by dynamic agro-climatic conditions.

During the winter months in early 2023 periods of extreme temperatures alternated with colder weather. During the second ten-day period and in the last days of March, negative minimum temperatures were recorded in the agricultural regions of Kyustendil, Blagoevgrad, Plovdiv, Pazardzhik, Haskovo, Elhovo, Chirpan, Stara Zagora, Shumen, Razgrad, Dobrich, Silistra, Sliven, Karnobat, etc, in places below minus 3 - 5°C, caused varying degrees of frost damage to the flowers and young buds of stone fruit species. Partial frost damage to the early blooming stone fruit species was also recorded in the first ten days of April. The dry autumn of 2022 prevented seasonal tillage in many places in the country, which is why the agrotechnical deadlines for sowing winter rapeseed were missed in most of the agricultural regions. The lack of moisture in the upper soil layers was a limiting factor for the germination and sprouting of autumn crops sown in early October. As a result, the rapeseed crops could not overwinter successfully, they froze due to the low winter temperatures and had to be plowed up.

In the months of May and June 2023 in many places in the country, intense rains and hailstorms were recorded, which caused mechanical damage to spring and fruit crops, lodging of autumn crops.

Extremely high temperatures in July adversely affected flowering and fertilization in vegetable crops and later maize hybrids. During the first and second ten days of July, intense rain and hailstorms were recorded again - another test for agricultural crops and risk of spoiling the ripened grain harvest.

In the month of August, intense rainfall and hailstorms were recorded in many places in the country, which caused serious damage to a number of agricultural crops, and the high temperatures adversely affected the development of vegetable crops and the later hybrids of corn.

During the first ten days of September, abnormal temperatures were recorded, which accelerated the final phases of the development of later agricultural crops. At the beginning of the second ten-day period, in some areas, precipitation of economic significance was reported, which, after the deepening drought, improved the conditions for carrying out the pre-sowing treatments of the areas intended for sowing autumn crops.

In October, agrometeorological conditions were determined by dry weather and temperatures above climatic norms. In most of the agricultural regions, drought prevents seasonal tillage. For this reason, the pre-sowing treatment of the areas intended for sowing with winter cereal crops was suspended in some places, and the agrotechnical deadlines for the sowing of wheat and barley were missed.

In the first half of November, rains of economic importance fell, which improved the conditions for carrying out seasonal tillage and the lagging autumn sowing. In the second half of November, the agro-meteorological conditions were more dynamic, with alternating short periods of excessive temperatures and cold weather. At the end of the second ten-day period, temperatures dropped. In the high fields and in places in the northeastern regions (Razgrad and Dobrich), where precipitation and snow fell, the values of the average day and night temperatures came close to the biological minimum necessary for vegetation to occur during autumn crops. In the eastern regions and along the Black Sea coast, the storms caused serious mechanical damage to permanent plantations, such as many broken branches and uprooted trees.

In December, the agrometeorological conditions were determined by average day-night temperatures 3 - 4 °C above the climatic norms. After the wintry weather at the end of November, the temperatures rose significantly at the beginning of December. The warm weather for the season led to the resumption of the vegetation processes for wheat and barley in part of Eastern Bulgaria and along the Black Sea coast. In the second half of the first ten days, there was a cooling and a change in the agro-meteorological conditions. At the end of the ten-day period, the mean night-time temperatures in the agricultural regions were below the biological minimum necessary for vegetation to occur in winter cereal crops. During the second ten days of December, the agro-meteorological conditions were determined by excessive temperatures, which kept the autumn crops at relative rest. In the second half of the ten-day period, in some places in Western Bulgaria and in the most southern regions, the agro-meteorological conditions acquired a wintry character. In these areas, there was also snowfall and the crops were briefly under a thin snow cover. The end of December is characterized by unusually warm weather for the season. In the last week of December, in many places in the country, maximum temperatures up to and above 20 °C were recorded (Vidin and Montana - 23 °C, Plovdiv, Pazardzhik, Haskovo and Stara Zagora - 22 °C) and average daily values significantly above the biological minimum, necessary for vegetation to occur in winter cereal crops.

The reported damage to agricultural crops in 2023 is the result of adverse weather events - frost/cracks, storm with heavy/torrential/prolonged rain, accompanied by strong winds, flooding, hail and drought/aridity.

2.2.1. Grain production

In 2023 all major cereals (except rye and corn) saw an increase in production compared to the previous year. Both the larger size of harvested areas and the increased productivity per unit area of most crops contribute to this.

Table II.4. Grain production in 2022 and 2023 harvest years

Crop	Harvested areas (ha)			Average yield (tons/ha)			Production (tons)		
	2022	2023	Change 2023/2022	2022	2023	Change 2023/2022	2022	2023	Change 2023/2022
Wheat	1,206,580	1,220,906	1.2%	5.16	5.43	5.1%	6,230,431	6,623,700	6.3%
Rye	8,326	7,655	-8.1%	1.96	1.81	-7.8%	16,345	13,858	-15.2%
Triticale	14,136	35,150	148.7%	2.97	3.22	8.3%	41,974	112,993	169.2%
Barley	122,411	149,980	22.5%	4.93	5.14	4.2%	603,546	770,347	27.6%
Oat	11,442	13,005	13.7%	2.18	2.25	3.4%	24,931	29,318	17.6%
Corn for grain	520,461	534,637	2.7%	4.80	4.48	-6.7%	2,496,318	2,393,122	-4.1%
Rice	10,577	11,203	5.9%	6.15	6.08	-1.2%	65,063	68,070	4.6%

Source: MAF, Agrostistics Department

Wheat

Wheat production in 2023 amounted to 6,623.7 thousand tons - an increase of 6.3% compared to 2022, due to unfavorable climatic conditions in the process of crop development, which led to an increase in average yield with 5.1%. The Areas, sown with wheat in 2023 were 1,224,994 ha - 1.3% more on an annual basis, of

which 1,220,906 ha were harvested (+1,2% compared to an year earlier). The relative share of the areas with wheat to the total arable land is 37.5%.

The Northwest region has the largest share of wheat areas - 22.7%%, followed by the Northeast with 21.9%% and the Southeast with 21%.

According to data from BSMAEC survey of the Agrostistics Department, in 2023 wheat-on-wheat is grown on 4.8% of the area, compared to 5% in the previous year. A good crop rotation was performed on about 94.6% of the area with wheat harvest in 2023. After trench crops, 79.3% of the area was planted with wheat, compared to 76.4% in 2022. The wheat rotation during the year included 2.6% fallow lands.

Rye and triticale

The rye grain produced in 2023 was 15.2% below the level of the previous year, as a result of a decrease in both the harvested area (by 8.1%) and the average yield (by 7.8%).

The harvested areas with triticale in 2023 increased by 148.7% compared to 2022, and the average yield - by 8.3%. Thus, the production of triticale reached 113 thousand tons - over two times and a half more on an annual basis.

Most harvested areas with rye and triticale are observed in the South Central region—2,407 ha of rye and 9,035 ha of triticale.

Barley

Barley production in 2023 amounted to 770.3 thousand tons. This is an increase of 27.6% per annual basis, taking into account an increase in both the harvested areas - by 22.5% and the average yield - by 4.2%.

The largest area of barley in 2023 was in the Southeast region (26.4% of the total in the country), followed by the Northeast region (23.9%).

In view of crop sequence, a good crop rotation was performed on about 78.7% of the areas with barley. The share of sunflower is again the highest - 45.5%. The fallows included in the barley crop rotation in 2023 are 2.9%. After trench crops, 61.7% of the area was sown with barley.

Oat

With 13.7% more harvested area and 3.4% higher average yield per hectare, production is up 17.6% compared to 2022. The most areas with oats were harvested in the Southwest region (33.9% of the total for the country).

Corn for grain

The obtained corn for grain in 2023 decreased by 4.1% compared to the previous year, to 2,393.1 thousand tons. The dry and hot weather during the summer months adversely affected the development of the corn hybrids - premature yellowing of the leaves and poor seeding of the cobs, which led to a decrease in the average yield by 6.7%.

The areas sown with corn for grain during 2023 were 540,260 ha, of which 534,637 ha were harvested, respectively 3.4% and 2.7% more compared to 2022.

The Northwestern region has the largest share in the total harvested corn fields during the year (35.9%), followed by the North-central region (27.9%) and the Northeastern region (27.7%).

Corn has the largest share of wheat predecessor - 59%. Barley included in the corn crop rotation this year represents 4.8%.

Rice

In 2023, the country produced 68.1 thousand tons of rice husk - 4.6% more compared to the previous year. There was a decrease in both the harvested areas (by 5.9%) and the average yield (by 1.2%).

2.2.2. Oilseed crops

The main oilseed crops grown in our country are sunflower and winter rapeseed.

Table II.5. Oilseed crops production in 2022 and 2023 harvest years

Crop	Harvested areas (ha)			Average yield (tons/ha)			Production (tons)		
	2022	2023	Change 2023/2022	2022	2023	Change 2023/2022	2022	2023	Change 2023/2022
Sunflower	916,959	869,907	-5.1%	2.31	2.03	-12.2%	2,117,319	1,764,594	-16.7%
Rapeseed	129,334	79,794	-38.3%	2.29	2.57	12.1%	296,169	204,788	-30.9%

Source: MAF, Agrostistics Department

Sunflower

Sunflower production in 2023 amounted to 1,764.6 thousand tons. The amount is 16.7% below the level of the previous year, taking into account a decrease in both the harvested areas - by 5.1% to 869,907 ha and the average yield - by 12.2% to 2.03 tons/ha. The areas sown with sunflower during 2023r were 873,697 ha - by 4.9% less on an annual basis.

The areas with sunflower in the North-East region represent 22.8% of the total harvested areas in the country in 2023, followed by the North-West region with 22.6%.

The share of sunflower located on wheat precursor is the largest - 68%. Barley included in the sunflower crop rotation during the year was 6.9%. The share of cultivated sunflower as a monoculture for a period of 6 years back is 86.3%.

Rapeseed

In 2023, 204.8 thousand tons of rapeseed were produced in the country, which is 30.9% less compared to 2022. The areas sown with rapeseed in 2023 were 80,518 ha, of which 79,794 ha were harvested - a decrease of 38.3% per annual base. The average yield sees an increase of 12.1%.

2.2.3. Grain market monitoring

In 2023 there was an increase in the total grain storage capacity in Bulgaria.

During the year the Register of grain storage sites in the country was updated, as 51 new grain storage sites were entered, 264 circumstances of the registered sites were changed and 33 were deleted. As of 31.12.2023 there are a total of 4,231 active grain storage facilities in the country, with a capacity of 18,352,535 tons.

2.2.4. Quality grading of harvest 2023

In order to carry out a representative characterization of wheat, barley, sunflower, corn and rice husk from the 2023 harvest, 3,196 samples of 4,400,261 tons of the harvested grain were taken and analyzed.

Wheat quality grading in the 2023 harvest

The final results of the laboratory analyses of average wheat samples from 2023 harvest conducted by the BFSA show that 48.7% of the wheat produced in the 2023 harvest is of high baking quality and is classified as First, Second and Second B group, respectively, with 66.3% in the previous year. The reported decline of nearly 18 percentage points is a result of unfavorable metrological conditions in 2023.

The allocation of grain in groups is as follows:

- First group - 1.6%, compared to 7% in 2022;
- Second group - 11.8%, compared to 15.4% in 2022;
- Second B group - 35.3%, compared to 43.9% in 2022;
- Third group - 51.3%, compared to 33.7% in 2022.

The average values of the main indicators that determine the quality characteristics of the grain from the 2023 harvest for the country are:

- moisture content: $11.1\% \pm 0.5\%$, compared to $10.9\% \pm 0.5\%$ in 2022;
- hectolitre mass: $75.2 \text{ kg} / 100 \text{ dm}^3 \pm 2.3 \text{ kg} / 100 \text{ dm}^3$, at $75.8 \text{ kg} / 100 \text{ dm}^3 \pm 2.7 \text{ kg} / 100 \text{ dm}^3$ for 2022;
- wet gluten yield: $21.3\% \pm 2.6\%$, compared to $25.9\% \pm 3.3\%$ in 2022;
- gluten release: $6.9 \text{ mm} \pm 1.2 \text{ mm}$, compared to $7.4 \text{ mm} \pm 1.4 \text{ mm}$ for 2022;
- baking strength: $55.0 \text{ cond. units} \pm 4.6 \text{ cond. units}$, compared to $58.1 \text{ cond. units} \pm 5.8 \text{ cond. units}$ for 2022;
- protein content: $11.7\% \text{ v.c.} \pm 1.1\% \text{ v.c.}$, at $12.7\% \text{ v.c.} \pm 1.2\% \text{ v.c.}$ for 2022;
- falling number: $372.8 \text{ sec.} \pm 38.5 \text{ sec.}$, compared to $337.0 \text{ sec.} \pm 49.7 \text{ sec.}$ for 2022

Barley quality grading in the 2023 harvest

The assessment was made on the basis of a batch of 282,862 tons of barley, from which 415 samples were taken and analyzed.

The average values of the main quality indicators of the barley harvest in 2023 were as follows:

- protein content: $11.5\% \pm 0.7\%$, compared to $11.6\% \pm 1.3\%$ in 2022;
- hectolitre mass: $61.1 \text{ kg}/100 \text{ dm}^3 \pm 2.0 \text{ kg}/100 \text{ dm}^3$, at $60.1 \text{ kg}/100 \text{ dm}^3 \pm 3.7 \text{ kg}/100 \text{ dm}^3$ for 2022;
- equality of batches: $84.6\% \pm 7.0\%$, compared to $79.5\% \pm 13.2\%$ in 2022;
- humidity: $11.5\% \pm 0.6\%$, compared to $11.2\% \pm 0.9\%$ in 2022;
- crop impurities: $1.1\% \pm 1.5\%$, compared to $1.3\% \pm 1.3\%$ in 2022;
- other impurities: $1.1\% \pm 1.2\%$, compared to $0.9\% \pm 0.6\%$ in 2022

Sunflower quality grading in the 2023 harvest

The data from the analyzed average samples show that the sunflower harvested in the 2023 harvest has good values for the main quality indicators of moisture, fat content and impurities, which are laid down in the standard. The final results show that 70.8% of the analyzed samples meet the requirements of the sunflower seed quality standard, compared to 80.4% in the previous year.

The average values of the main quality indicators of sunflower harvest in 2023 are:

- moisture content: $5.8\% \pm 0.5\%$, compared to $5.7\% \pm 0.5\%$ in 2022;
- fat content: $44.8\% \pm 2.1\%$, compared to $45.6\% \pm 1.9\%$ in 2022;
- crop impurities: $1.4\% \pm 0.8\%$, compared to $1.5\% \pm 0.7\%$ in 2022;
- other impurities: $3.1\% \pm 1.8\%$, compared to $2.7\% \pm 1.5\%$ in 2022

Corn quality grading in the 2023 harvest

The final results show that 90% of the analyzed batch meets the requirements of the maize grain quality standard in terms of moisture and impurities, compared to 90.4% in 2022.

The average values of the main quality indicators of the corn harvest in 2023 are:

- moisture: $12.3\% \pm 0.6\%$, compared to $12.3\% \pm 0.6\%$ in 2022;
- crop impurities: $2.9\% \pm 1.7\%$, compared to $3.8\% \pm 2.0\%$ in 2022;
- other impurities: $1.0\% \pm 0.5\%$, compared to $0.6\% \pm 0.5\%$ in 2022;
- starch content: $72.5\% \pm 0.7\%$, compared to $72.7\% \pm 0.8\%$ in 2022;
- hectolitre mass: $72.0 \text{ kg} / 100 \text{ dm}^3 \pm 1.9 \text{ kg} / 100 \text{ dm}^3$, at $70.5 \text{ kg} / 100 \text{ dm}^3 \pm 2.3 \text{ kg} / 100 \text{ dm}^3$ in 2022

Rice husk quality grading in the 2023 harvest

The final results show that 94.1% of the analyzed batch in 2023 meets the requirements of the rice husk quality standard in terms of moisture and impurities, compared to 100% in 2022. Regarding the content of the so called "red grains", 82.4% of the analyzed quantity of barley met the requirements of first quality, at 83% in 2022.

The average values of the main quality indicators of rice husk harvest 2023 are:

- moisture: 12.6% \pm 1.2%, compared to 12.5% \pm 0.6% in 2022;
- crop impurities: 1.1% \pm 0.7%, compared to 1.3% \pm 0.2% in 2022;
- other impurities: 0.6% \pm 0.3%, compared to 1.2% \pm 1.0% in 2022;
- red grains: 0.6% \pm 0.4%, compared to 0.6% \pm 0.4% in 2022;
- yellowed grains - none, same as in 2022, 2021, 2020, 2019, and 2018;
- bare grains: – 1.5% \pm 1.0%, compared to 2.1% \pm 0.8% in 2022;
- hectolitre mass: 59.0 kg / 100 dm³ \pm 1.4 kg / 100 dm³, at 59.5 kg / 100 dm³ \pm 1.7 kg / 100 dm³ in 2022.

2.2.5. Industrial Crops

Tobacco

The tobacco production in 2023 amounted to 3,945 tons, which is 3.2% more compared to 2022. An increase in the planted areas by 4.2% on an annual basis, up to 1.65 tons/ha, is reported.

Cotton

The total harvested amount of staple cotton in 2023 is up 5.6% on annual basis to 1,147 tonnes, mainly due to a 5.5% increase in average yield.

2.2.6. Medicinal and aromatic plants

In 2023, the areas occupied by basic medicinal, aromatic and essential oil plants, such as Damask rose (rose flower), lavender (fresh flower), balm (dry mass), coriander (seed), fennel (seed), milk thistle (seed), etc., amounted to 42,534 ha, which is 7.2% less than in 2022.

The harvested areas with these crops are 39,685 ha, 4% less than the previous year.

Table II.6. Production of basic essential oil crops from the 2022 and 2023 harvests

Crop	Harvested areas (ha)			Average yield (tons/ha)			Production (tons)		
	2022	2023	Change 2023/2022	2022	2023	Change 2023/2022	2022	2023	Change 2023/2022
Lavender	15,194	10,710	-29.5%	3.86	3.45	-10.7%	58,585	36,898	-37.0%
Oil-bearing rose	4,293	4,208	-2.0%	2.48	2.50	0.7%	10,657	10,517	-1.3%
Lemon balm	579	472	-18.5%	2.73	3.19	16.8%	1,579	1,504	-4.7%
Coriander	17,524	21,370	21.9%	1.27	1.26	-0.4%	22,181	26,942	21.5%
Fennel	1,209	564	-53.3%	0.98	0.27	-72.3%	1,190	154	-87.1%

Source: MAF, Agrostistics Department

The planted areas with oil rose amounted to 4,510 ha (-11% on an annual basis), of which 4,208 ha (-2%) were harvested. With a slightly higher average yield per hectare (+0.7%), the amount of rose flower produced in 2023 decreased by 1.3% compared to the previous year, to 10,517 tons.

The lavender produced in 2023 was 37% below the level of the previous year, as a result of a decrease in both the harvested area (by 29.5%) and the average yield (by 10.7%).

In 2023 coriander production reached 26,942 tons - an increase of 21.5% compared to 2022. A growth of harvested areas by 21.9% was registered.

In the case of lemon balm, an 18.5% year-on-year decrease in area is reported, which is largely offset by an increase in the average yield of 16.8%. The production amounted to 1,504 tons - 4.7% less compared to 2022.

Fennel production in 2023 shrinks by 87.1% on an annual basis, to 154 tons, taking into account a decrease in harvested areas and average yield, respectively by 53.3% and by 72.3%.

2.2.7. Fruit

The total areas with fruit, shell and berry plantations in agricultural holdings in 2023 were 59,904 ha, which is 5% below the level of the previous year. Of these, 40,816 ha were harvested - 10.3% less on an annual basis. Due to climate and other reasons about 18% of the productive areas with orchard trees were not harvested. 25% of the areas planted with orchard trees were irrigated.

Cherries had the largest share of harvested areas in 2023 - 23.6%, followed by plums and cherry plums with 22.7% and walnuts with 18.4%. For almost all of the main orchard tree crops, a decrease in the harvested areas compared to 2022 was observed, ranging from 1.5% (plums and cherry plums) to 66.7% (peaches and nectarines). A decrease is present only in peaches and nectarines (by 0.4%) and hazelnuts (by 12.9%).

The areas of young orchards that have not started fruiting were 7,495 ha. The largest relative share of them was occupied by walnuts - 34.6%, followed by plums and cherry plums - 18.1%.

Around 61% of the newly planted crops in the business year 2022/2023 were stone species, 20% - nut species and 19% - pome fruits and berries. Of the stone species, the largest share was occupied by plums and cherry plums (39%), followed by apricots and cherries (23% each), while nut species were led by walnuts (83%) and hazelnuts (12%).

In 2023, a total of 179,613 tons of fruit were produced in the country - 19.2% less than the previous year, due to unfavorable climatic conditions in the country. An increase in production compared to the previous year was recorded for plums and cherry plums - by 1.9% and hazelnuts - by 5.3%. In the rest of the fruit species, the production is lower, with the largest decrease in peaches and nectarines (-55.3%), followed by apricots and chard (-43.0%), almonds (-35.2%), cultivated rose hips (-29.7%) and apples (-24.7%).

The leading place in fruit production was occupied by the Southcentral region with 25.2% and the Southeastern region with 24.6%. The production of apples (33.6%) and plums and cherry plums (27.9%) is concentrated in the South-Central region, and in the South-Eastern region - that of peaches (44.8%) and cherries (38.8%). In the North Central region, 85.6% of the apricots in the country were harvested, and in the production of raspberries, the highest share is occupied by the Northeastern region - 40.3%.

Table II.7. Fruit production in the 2022 and 2023 harvest years

Orchard crops	Harvested areas (ha)			Average yield (kg/ha)			Production (tons)		
	2022	2023	Change 2023/2022	2022	2023	Change 2023/2022	2022	2023	Change 2023/2022
Apples	3,720	3,562	-4.2%	12,474	9,807	-21.4%	46,403	34,933	-24.7%
Pears	575	468	-18.6%	5,391	5,365	-0.5%	3,100	2,511	-19.0%
Peaches and nectarines	2,533	1,483	-41.5%	9,547	7,282	-23.7%	24,182	10,799	-55.3%
Apricots	3,049	2,199	-27.9%	6,245	4,936	-21.0%	19,040	10,855	-43.0%
Plums and cherry plums	9,398	9,256	-1.5%	6,028	6,238	3.5%	56,650	57,737	1.9%
Cherries	10,799	9,648	-10.7%	4,993	4,791	-4.0%	53,920	46,222	-14.3%
Sour cherries	1,111	934	-15.9%	3,834	3,505	-8.6%	4,260	3,274	-23.1%
Walnuts	8,327	7,509	-9.8%	485	459	-5.4%	4,035	3,450	-14.5%
Almonds	1,506	1,077	-28.5%	637	578	-9.3%	960	622	-35.2%

Orchard crops	Harvested areas (ha)			Average yield (kg/ha)			Production (tons)		
	2022	2023	Change 2023/2022	2022	2023	Change 2023/2022	2022	2023	Change 2023/2022
Hazelnuts	1,529	1,727	12.9%	496	463	-6.7%	759	799	5.3%
Raspberries	1,566	1,572	0.4%	3,634	3,598	-1.0%	5,691	5,656	-0.6%
Cultivated rose hips	923	851	-7.8%	1,961	1,496	-23.7%	1,810	1,273	-29.7%
Other orchard tree varieties	489	530	8.4%	-	-	-	1,367	1,482	8.4%
Total:	45,525	40,816	-10.3%	-	-	-	222,177	179,613	-19.2%

Source: MAF, Agrostistics Department

In 2023 the average yield of plums and cherry plums increased by 3.5% compared to the previous year. For the rest of the fruit species, a decrease in yields of between 0.5% and 23.7% is reported, the most significant for peaches and nectarines, cultivated rose hips, apples and apricots and blackberries, and the least for pears and raspberries.

97% of the fruits produced during the year were sold. The largest share is the production intended for direct sales and in the commercial network - 56%. Quantities for processing represent 37%.

2.2.8. Vegetables

In 2023, the main areas used for vegetable production in the agricultural holdings were 30,674 ha, which was 0.9% less than the previous year. The open areas planted with fresh vegetables, strawberries, potatoes and legumes amounted to 29,520 ha - by 1.2% less on an annual basis. Greenhouse areas grow by 7.5% compared to 2022, up to 1,154 ha.

Table II.8. Main areas used for vegetable production - harvests in 2022 and 2023, ha

Main areas	2022 harvest	2023 harvest	Change 2023/2022
Open areas with fresh vegetables, strawberries, potatoes, and legumes	29,869	29,520	-1.2%
Total greenhouse area	1,073	1,154	7.5%
Total area	30,942	30,674	-0.9%

Source: MAF, Agrostistics Department

The total harvested open areas with vegetables in 2023 are 28,988 ha - 1.2% less than in 2022. By crop groups, an increase in harvested areas is observed in vegetables of the genus Brassica (by 4.4%), fruit vegetables (by 9.6%) and tuber and onion vegetables (by 23.9%), and a decrease in strawberries (by 7.6%), potatoes (by 23.4%) and fresh legumes (by 33.6%). Harvested open areas of leafy or stem vegetables are unchanged year-on-year.

The areas with the largest relative share of the total harvested open areas with vegetables during the year are those occupied by potatoes - 24.2%, watermelons - 12.8%, onions 10.4%, melons - 9.6% and tomatoes - 8.8%.

By type of vegetable crops, in 2023, a significant growth was reported on an annual basis in the harvested open areas with gherkins (more than twice), cauliflower (by 56.4%), onions - green (by 51.1%), cucumbers (by 47.9%), melons (by 34.3%), salads and lettuces (by 32.2%) and onions - mature (by 30.1%). On the other hand, the harvested open areas occupied by garlic - mature, leeks, potatoes, garden peas - green, broccoli, garden beans - green and spinach - by between 20.6% (garlic - mature) and 62.1% (spinach) decrease significantly.

Table II.9. Areas, production, and average yields of vegetables - 2022 and 2023 harvests

Crops	Open harvested areas (ha)		Greenhouse harvested areas (ha)		Production (tons)							Average yield from open areas (kg/ha)	
					From open areas		Greenhouse production		TOTAL				
	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	Change 2023/2022	2022	2023
Fruit and vegetables, including:	12,529	13,735	c	1,181	248,365	250,794	108,543	106,534	356,908	357,328	0.1%	-	-
Tomatoes	2,488	2,540	589	639	69,381	59,537	57,074	56,113	126,455	115,650	-8.5%	27,886	23,440
Cucumbers	219	324	431	389	4,231	5,603	46,794	44,528	51,025	50,131	-1.8%	19,320	17,293
Gherkins	53	128	3	c	1,146	2,383	96	c	1,242	c	-	21,623	18,617
Eggplants	415	357	c	5	9,689	10,106	c	132	c	10,238	-	23,347	28,308
Zucchini	165	154	3	1	3,602	3,034	57	15	3,659	3,049	-16.7%	21,830	19,701
Pumpkins and gourds	798	704	c	-	9,978	9,343	c	-	c	9,343	-	12,504	13,271
Melons	2,080	2,794	0	c	21,485	29,487	8	c	21,493	c	-	10,329	10,554
Watermelons	3,338	3,714	-	-	79,978	80,130	-	-	79,978	80,130	0.2%	23,960	21,575
Pepper (incl. hot pepper)	2,215	2,371	123	147	42,332	46,264	4,461	5,741	46,793	52,005	11.1%	19,112	19,512
Sweet corn	721	649	-	-	6,522	4,907	-	-	6,522	4,907	-24.8%	9,046	7,561
Fresh legumes, including:	918	610	c	2	4,603	1,710	c	20	c	1,730	-	-	-
Garden peas - green	734	529	-	-	2,666	1,408	-	-	2,666	1,408	-47.2%	3,632	2,662
Garden beans - green	184	81	c	2	1,937	302	c	20	c	322	-	10,527	3,728
Vegetables of the Brassica genus, incl.	1,918	2,003	1	-	41,319	47,090	39	-	41,358	47,090	13.9%	-	-
Headed cabbage	1,774	1,847	1	-	39,551	44,963	39	-	39,590	44,963	13.6%	22,295	24,344
Cauliflower	78	122	-	-	1,188	1,878	-	-	1,188	1,878	58.1%	15,231	15,393
Broccoli	66	34	-	-	580	249	-	-	580	249	-57.1%	8,788	7,324
Leafy or stem vegetables (excluding vegetables of the Brassica genus), including:	633	633	c	31	7,636	9,945	789	302	8,425	10,247	21.6%	-	-
Garlic - green	84	73	c	1	1,122	1,348	c	9	c	1,357	-	13,357	18,466
Salad greens and lettuce	149	197	39	22	3,306	3,623	702	215	4,008	3,838	-4.2%	22,188	18,391
Spinach	95	36	c	1	518	153	c	5	c	158	-	5,453	4,250
Leek	89	70	-	-	997	1,033	-	-	997	1,033	3.6%	11,202	14,757
Green onions	88	133	1	2	866	3,146	14	32	880	3,178	261%	9,841	23,654

Crops	Open harvested areas (ha)		Greenhouse harvested areas (ha)		Production (tons)							Average yield from open areas (kg/ha)	
					From open areas		Greenhouse production		TOTAL				
	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	Change 2023/2022	2022	2023
Other leafy or stem vegetables (dill, parsley, green onion, asparagus, etc.)	128	124	7	5	827	642	59	41	886	683	-22.9%	6,461	-
Tuber and onion vegetables, including:	3,139	3,890	c	1	39,636	51,698	c	17	c	51,715	-	-	-
Onions - ripe	2,318	3,016	c	-	27,459	38,956	c	-	c	38,956	-	11,846	12,916
Carrots	359	446	0	-	9,540	9,707	4	-	9,544	9,707	1.7%	26,574	21,765
Garlic - ripe	335	266	c	-	1,287	1,073	c	-	c	1,073	-	3,842	4,034
Other tuber and onion vegetables s (beetroot, seed onion, turnips, radishes, etc.)	127	162	6	1	1,350	1,962	106	17	1,456	1,979	35.9%	10,630	-
Other vegetables (okra, etc.)	310	407	-	-	781	1,490	-	-	1,456	1,490	2.3%	2,519	-
Potatoes	9,159	7,019	1	5	172,193	119,135	16	104	172,209	119,239	-30.8%	18,800	16,973
Strawberries	748	691	26	68	4,902	4,061	227	1,145	5,129	5,206	1.5%	6,553	5,877
Total vegetables	29,354	28,988	1,233	1,288	519,435	485,923	109,726	108,122	629,161	594,045	-5.6%	-	-

Source: MAF, Agrostistics Department
c – confidential data

The total production of vegetables in 2023 is in the amount of 594 thousand tons - by 5.6% less compared to the previous year, mainly due to a serious drop in the harvested amount of potatoes. The production from open areas decreased by 6.5% on an annual basis, up to 485.9 thousand tons, and the greenhouse production - by 1.5%, up to 108.1 thousand tons.

In 2023, the production of potatoes was the largest - 119.2 thousand tons (20.1% of total vegetable production), followed by tomatoes - 115.7 thousand tons (19.5%), watermelon - 80.1 thousand tons (13.5%), Pepper - 52 thousand tons (8.8%), Cucumbers - 50.1 thousand tons (8.4%) and headed cabbage - 45 thousand tons (7.6%).

In almost all groups of vegetables there was an increase in the harvested quantities produced from open areas compared to the previous year, reaching 30.4% for tuber and onion vegetables. On an annual basis, the production from open areas of the group "fresh legumes" is less - by 62.9%.

Among the more significant crops, a significant increase in the production obtained from open areas was observed for mature onions (by 41.9%), melons (by 37.2%), cucumbers (by 32.4%), headed cabbage (by 13.7%) and pepper (by 9.3%), and a decrease was observed for potatoes (by 30.8%), sweet corn (by 24.8%), strawberries (by 17.2%), tomatoes (by 14.2%) and pumpkins (by 6.4%).

In 2023 in the case of the main vegetable crops, there are divergent changes in the average yields from open areas compared to the previous year. Average yields of pepper, melons, pumpkins, ripe onions, cabbage and eggplants are higher on an annual basis - by between 2.1% (pepper) and 21.2% (eggplants), and lower -

those of potatoes, watermelons, strawberries, cucumbers, tomatoes, sweet corn and carrots - within 9.7% (potatoes) - 18.1% (carrots).

Table II.10. Total production of basic vegetables from the 2022 and 2023 harvests, tons

Types of vegetables	2022 harvest	2023 harvest	Change 2023/2022
Tomatoes	126,455	115,650	-8.5%
Pepper (sweet and hot)	46,793	52,005	11.1%
Cucumbers	51,025	50,131	-1.8%
Potatoes	172,209	119,239	-30.8%
Headed cabbage	39,590	44,963	13.6%
Ripe onions*	27,459	38,956	41.9%
Strawberries	5,129	5,206	1.5%

Source: MAF, Agrostistics Department

* Data is from open areas only

The greenhouse production in the country was determined by several major vegetable crops - tomatoes, cucumbers, salads and lettuce, peppers. Its development is determined on the basis of market demand. Part of the production is intended for export.

The total production of greenhouse vegetables in 2023 amounted to 108.1 thousand tons, which was 1.5% less than in the previous 2022.

Among the main greenhouse vegetables, only pepper production showed growth compared to the previous year - by 28.7%. Greenhouse production of tomatoes and cucumbers decreased by 1.7% and 4.8% respectively on an annual basis, and that of salads and lettuce - by 69.4%.

Table II.11. Greenhouse production of basic vegetables from the 2022 and 2023 harvests, tons

Types of vegetables	2022 harvest	2023 harvest	Change 2023/2022
Tomatoes	57,074	56,113	-1.7%
Pepper	4,461	5,741	28.7%
Cucumbers	46,794	44,528	-4.8%
Salad greens and lettuce	702	215	-69.4%
Other vegetables (excluding mushrooms)	695	1,525	119.4%
Total	109,726	108,122	-1.5%

Source: MAF, Agrostistics Department

The trend for modernization of existing greenhouses with the application of new and more modern technologies for quality vegetables from greenhouse production continues.

There is a diversification of the types of vegetable crops grown in greenhouses. In addition to the main greenhouse crops, potatoes, green onions, green garlic, zucchini, melons, strawberries and others were also produced.

2.2.9. Forecast data for the production of basic cereals and oilseeds from the 2024 harvest

According to estimated data available at the beginning of m. November in 2024 wheat and barley production increases by 3.6% and 32.3% respectively compared to the previous year. Both crops reported slightly higher average yields on an annual basis, and in the case of barley this was combined with a significant increase in harvested areas. At the same time, the rapeseed production estimate points to a decline of 16%, due to a decrease in both harvested areas and average yield.

At this stage, the production of the two main spring crops - corn and sunflower - is expected to be significantly below the level of the previous year, mainly as a result of the looming serious decrease in the average yields per hectare, as a result of the unfavorable climatic conditions during the economic year (the most the already dry and hot weather in the summer of 2024).

Table II.12. Forecast for the production of major cereals and oilseeds in 2024

Crop	Indicator / year	2023	2024 (forecast)	Change 2024/2023
Wheat	Areas (thousand ha)	1,221	1,213	-0.6%
	Average yield (tons/ha)	5.43	5.65	4.2%
	Production (thousand tons)	6,624	6,859	3.6%
Corn for grain	Areas (thousand ha)	535	510	-4.6%
	Average yield (tons/ha)	4.48	2.70	-39.7%
	Production (thousand tons)	2,393	1,400	-41.5%
Barley	Areas (thousand ha)	150	188	25.4%
	Average yield (tons/ha)	5.14	5.40	5.1%
	Production (thousand tons)	770	1,019	32.3%
Sunflower	Areas (thousand ha)	870	920	5.8%
	Average yield (tons/ha)	2.03	1.50	-26.0%
	Production (thousand tons)	1,765	1,438	-18.5%
Rapeseed	Areas (thousand ha)	80	69	-13.5%
	Average yield (tons/ha)	2.57	2.50	-2.6%
	Production (thousand tons)	205	172	-16.0%

Source: MAF, Agrostistics Department (forecast data for 2024).

2.3. Livestock Breeding Production Results

The state policy in the field of livestock breeding is aimed at creating conditions for sustainable development of the sector and protection of the interests of farmers.

Animal husbandry is essential for ensuring the food security of the population, the production of quality and safe food for consumers and products with high added value, with effective management of natural resources. As one of the priority sectors with specific and dynamic character, livestock continues to be supported through various financial instruments with European budget funds under the two pillars of the CAP (for direct payments and market measures and for rural development), as well as with national funds.

In 2023, the classification of carcasses of cattle, pigs and sheep (lambs) according to the EU Scales continued to be applied. The classification aims to improve market transparency and increase the competitiveness of meat products on the European market, as well as to provide feedback to farmers on the results of their livestock production methods.

Towards the end of 2023, there was a decrease in the number of farms raising farm animals compared to the previous year. The biggest decrease was recorded in goat farms - by 23.9% and Sheep by 19.1%, followed by swine farms - by 18.2% and cattle - by 16.2%. The number of buffalo farms remains unchanged from 2022. Farms raising hens and laying hens are 15.9% less year-on-year, and those with chickens for meat - by 13%. The number of farms with bee colonies decreased by 7.7%.

In 2023 the number of most types of livestock went down compared to 2022, with goats going down by 4.9%, sheep - by 2.2%, cattle - by 1.1%. The number of birds and bee colonies went down by respectively 6.4% and 0.8% year-on-year. The exceptions are pigs and buffaloes, whose total number increased by 20.4% and 3.1%, respectively, compared to the previous year.

Within the year, a growth of 7.6% and 3.1% respectively of ewes and beef cows was reported.

Table II.13. Number of animals in 2022 and 2023

Type of animals	2022	2023	Change 2023/2022
Cattle - total, including:	559,544	553,363	-1.1%
cows - total, including:	361,476	355,565	-1.6%
- milk cows	197,996	187,096	-5.5%
- beef cows	163,480	168,469	3.1%
buffaloes - total, including:	20,317	20,941	3.1%
female buffaloes	14,841	15,317	3.2%
sheep - total, including:	1,096,399	1,072,768	-2.2%
ewes - total, including:	928,849	901,209	-3.0%
- milk sheep - ewes	758,821	718,303	-5.3%
- meat sheep - ewes	170,028	182,906	7.6%
Goats - total, including:	184,019	174,952	-4.9%
Does	156,285	145,265	-7.1%
Pigs - total, including:	601,702	724,745	20.4%
total breeding sows over 50 kg	59,851	79,577	33.0%
Poultry - total, thousand, including:	15,507	14,522	-6.4%
hens and pre-laying hens	7,139	6,583	-7.8%
chicken for meat	6,673	5,947	-10.9%
waterfowl	1,632	1,928	18.1%
other poultry	63	64	1.6%
Bee colonies	823,250	816,673	-0.8%

Source: MAF, Agrostistics Department

Note: the data on animals of the genus LR (large ruminants), SR (small ruminants) and pigs are as of 1 November, for poultry - as of 31 December, and for bee colonies - as of 1 October.

In 2023, the average number of farms for all types and categories of livestock increased compared to the previous year. As a result of the rapid recovery of the pig population, they have seen the largest increase in the average number of animals kept on one farm: in sows - by 87.1% (up to 270) and in total pigs - by 73.1% (up to 805.2). The average number of goats on a farm increased by 24.5% (up to 34.3), and that of she goats - by 23.5% (to 29.1). Followed by sheep in total with a growth of 21.7% (up to 84.5) and ewes - by 19.4% (up to 72.1). The average number of cattle increased by 18% (up to 30.6) and buffaloes by 3% (up to 41.8).

Table II.14. Milk production for the period 01.11.2022 - 31.10.2023 by planning regions, thousand liters

Regions	Total milk	Including:			
		Cow milk	Buffalo milk	Sheep milk	Goat milk
Northwestern	105,142	85,781	7,191	8,136	4,034
North-central	131,180	120,680	1,015	5,438	4,047
Northeastern	136,825	127,887	799	5,385	2,754
Southeastern	160,841	144,030	3,480	10,494	2,837
Southwestern	63,912	52,943	686	7,268	3,015
South-central	193,857	174,297	3,183	13,534	2,843
Total for the country	791,757	705,618	16,354	50,255	19,530
Change 2023/2022	-6.1%	- 5.7%	10.5%	-8.2%	-22.5%

Source: MAF, Agrostistics Department

The total production of dairy raw material in 2023 amounted to 791,757 thousand liters - 6.1% below the level of the previous year, mainly due to the reduced number of milk animals. Most significant decline compared to 2022 was accounted for in the production of goat's milk - with 22.5%. The decrease in sheep's and cow's milk is less pronounced, by 8.2% and 5.7%, respectively. Only buffalo milk produced is more, at 10.5%.

Traditionally, the largest share in the total production of raw milk belongs to the cow's milk - 89.1%. Sheep milk accounts for 6.3%, goat's for 2.5% and buffalo's for 2.1%.

The South Central region, with 24.5% of the total volume remained the leading region in the milk production, followed by the Southeastern region with 20.3%. With a share of 8.1%, the Southwest region recorded the lowest yield.

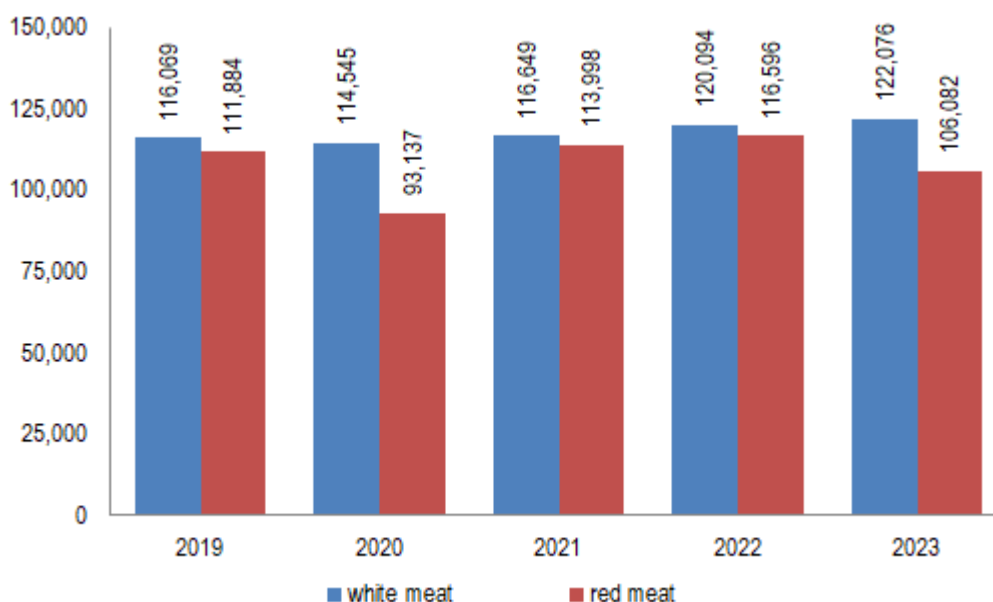
Table II.15. Animal production in 2022 - 2023

Product	2022	2023	Change 2023/2022
1. Milk - total (thousand liters), including:	843,027	791,757	-6.1%
Cow milk	748,278	705,618	-5.7%
Buffalo milk	14,804	16,354	10.5%
Sheep milk	54,742	50,255	-8.2%
Goat milk	25,203	19,530	-22.5%
2. Meat - total carcass weight (tons), including:	236,690	228,158	-3.6%
Red meat	116,596	106,082	-9.0%
White meat	120,094	122,076	1.7%
3. Eggs (thousand pieces)	1,401,830	1,397,098	-0.3%
4. Bee honey (tons)	11,944	11,189	-6.3%

Source: MAF, Agrostatistics Department

In 2023 the total yield of meat in the country is 228,158 tons of carcass weight, which is 3.6% less compared to the previous year. Red meat production fell by 9% year-on-year to 106,082 tons, with slaughterhouse production down 3.5% and farm production down 29.6%. The produced white meat amounted to a total of 122,076 tons - 1.7% more compared to 2022, with an increase in industrial production (by 1.4%) and in the production on farms (43.4%).

Figure II.3. Meat production in the period 2019 - 2023, tons



Source: MAF, Agrostatistics Department

Honey produced in the country in 2023 decreased by 6.3% compared to the previous year, to 11,189 tons, with an average yield per bee family of 17 kg.

The total production of bird eggs during the year amounted to 1,397,098 thousand - by the insignificant 0.3% less on an annual basis, of which 1,382,642 thousand (99%) are hens.

Expected data for 2024

In 2024, the total number of livestock by individual species and categories is expected to be around the levels of the previous year.

In the period January - June 2024, a total of 122,618 tons of meat were produced in the country's slaughterhouses - by 5.2% more on an annual basis, including 51,778 tons of red meat and 70,840 tons of white meat.

Compared to the same period in 2023, industrial production of red meat increased by 10.2%, mainly due to the reported growth of 11.5% in pork, to 46,302 tonnes, accounting for over 89% of total production of red meat in slaughterhouses. Within the period, the industrial yield of beef also increased - by 7.4% (up to 4,173 tons), while the meat produced from wild boar, buffaloes and equids decreased by 17.1%.

For the first seven months of 2024 the total yield of white meat in slaughterhouses increased by 1.8% on an annual basis and amounted to 70,840 tons. This mainly includes meat from broiler chickens of the hen variety - 53,741 tonnes, 2.6% above the level of a year ago. Industrial production of duck meat was 14,481 tons, up 1.8% year-on-year.

Given the data for the period January - July, the production of red and white meat for the entire 2024 can be expected to be above the level of the previous year.

In the first eight months of 2024 a total of 480.5 million liters of milk were processed in milk processing enterprises, incl. 451.6 million cow's milk, which is respectively 3.9% and 3.3 % less compared to the same period in 2023. The quantities of buffalo and mixed milk (by 16.6%), sheep (by 14.9%) and goat's milk (by 3.2%) also decreased.

The total yield of dairy raw material for the entire 2024 is predicted to be below that reported for the previous year.

In the production of eggs and honey in 2024 some year-on-year reduction is also expected.

2.3.1. Cattle breeding and buffalo breeding

Cattle breeding is a sub-sector of livestock breeding of great economic importance, providing the main share of materials required for the dairy production in the country.

As of 01.11.2023, a total of 553,363 cattle heads were bred in the country - 1.1% less than a year earlier. The total number of cows decreased by 1.6% year-on-year, to 355,565, due to the registered decrease in dairy cows by 5.5% (to 187,096), while the number of cows for meat production increased by 3.1% (to 168,469). The process of specialization of production in cattle breeding continues, which is characterized by the transition from dairy to meat production. Thus, the share of cows for meat in the total number of cows reached 47.4%, compared to 45.2% in 2022.

Table II.16. Distribution of cattle by regions in 2022 and 2023

Regions	01.11.2022				01.11.2023			
	Cattle		Cows		Cattle		Cows	
	thousand heads	share	thousand heads	share	thousand heads	share	thousand heads	share
Northwestern	55.0	9.8%	36.3	10.0%	58.5	10.6%	37.4	10.5%
North-central	65.3	11.7%	36.5	10.1%	61.2	11.1%	35.7	10.0%
Northeastern	63.5	11.4%	34.3	9.5%	61.2	11.1%	33.7	9.5%
Southeastern	106.3	19.0%	66.8	18.5%	106.1	19.1%	68.2	19.2%
Southwestern	90.3	16.1%	64.3	17.8%	86.9	15.7%	56.7	15.9%
South-central	179.1	32.0%	123.3	34.1%	179.5	32.4%	123.9	34.8%
Total for the country	559.5	100%	361.5	100%	553.4	100%	355.6	100.0%

Source: MAF, Agrostistics Department

Cattle breeding is concentrated in Southern Bulgaria, where 67.3% of the country's total number of cattle is reared in 2023. Over one third of cows are reared in the South-central region, including 27.1% of dairy cows and 43.4% of beef cows.

As of November 1, 2023 farms breeding dairy cows are 9,231, 25.8% below the level of a year ago. With the exception of large farms with 100 and more animals, which increased by 0.9%, all other categories reported a decrease. The biggest decrease is in small farms with 1 - 2 and 3 - 9 animals, by 35.9% and 19.1% respectively, where dairy cows also decreased by 35.8% and 20% respectively. The decrease of farms with from 10 to 99 animals was more moderate - within 6% - 8.3% for the different categories, and the animals in these farms decreased by between 3.6% and 9.9%. In 2023, 41% of all dairy cows in the country are kept by the large farms with 100 or more animals.

Table II.17. Distribution of dairy cows by number of farm animals on a farm as of 01.11.2023

Number of animals on a farm	Farms		Dairy cows	
	heads	Change 2023/2022	thousand heads	Change 2023/2022
1 - 2	4,842.0	-35.9%	5.8	-35.8%
3 - 9	1,239.0	-19.1%	7.6	-20.0%
10 -19	748.0	-8.3%	10.0	-9.9%
20 -49	1,505.0	-6.0%	48.3	-3.6%
50 - 99	564.0	-6.8%	38.7	-6.6%
100 and more	333.0	0.9%	76.7	0.0%
Total	9,231.0	-25.8%	187.1	-12.9%

Source: MAF, Agrostistics Department

The production of cow milk in 2023 amounted to 705,618 thousand liters - 5.7% less than the reported for the previous year, due to the reduction in the number of dairy cows.

Traditionally, the South-central region accounted for the largest share of total cow milk production - 24.5%, followed by the Southeastern region with 20.3%. The share of cow milk produced in the Southwestern region is the smallest - 8%.

Table II.18. Distribution of buffaloes by regions in 2022 and 2023

Regions	01.11.2022				01.11.2023			
	Buffaloes total		Female buffaloes		Buffaloes total		Female buffaloes	
	thousand heads	share	thousand heads	share	thousand heads	share	thousand heads	share
Northwestern	6.2	30.6%	4.7	31.9%	6.7	31.9%	4.9	32.3%
North-central	2.0	9.7%	1.2	8.1%	1.8	8.8%	1.1	7.0%
Northeastern	1.4	7.0%	0.8	5.8%	1.4	6.6%	0.9	5.8%
Southeastern	5.0	24.8%	3.7	25.0%	5.2	24.8%	4.1	26.5%
Southwestern	1.1	5.5%	0.8	5.3%	1.4	6.6%	0.9	6.0%
South-central	4.6	22.5%	3.6	23.9%	4.4	21.4%	3.4	22.4%
Total for the country	20.3	100%	14.8	100%	20.9	100%	15.3	100%

Source: MAF, Agrostistics Department

Farms rearing female buffaloes by the end of 2023 went down by 5.4% year-on-year to 384, while the number of female buffaloes in them increased by 3.2%, to 15.3 thousand. A significant decrease was registered for small farms with 1 - 2 heads animals - by 46.7%, as well as for the female buffaloes in them - by 40%. Farms with 3-9 animals and with 100 and more animals also decreased, by 25.4% and 13.5%, respectively, where the number of farmed buffaloes decreased by 33.8% and 9.4%, respectively. For farms raising from 10 to 19 animals and from 20 to 99 animals, an increase of 22.2% and 6.2% was recorded, respectively, compared to a year earlier, with female buffaloes growing in them by 24.8% and 14.3%, respectively. Around 89% of the female buffaloes in the country are kept on farms with 20 or more animals.

Leaders in buffalo breeding in 2023 remain the Northwestern, Southeastern and South-central regions, where about 78% of the livestock are concentrated.

In 2023 the total production of buffalo milk increased by 10.5% on an annual basis, up to 16,354 thousand litres, as a result of the increased number of female buffaloes. The leader in the production of buffalo milk during the year is the Northwest region, representing 44% of the total volume for the country. This was followed by the Southeastern and South-central regions with shares of 21.3% and 19.5%, respectively.

Table II.19. Beef production in 2022 and 2023 (tons of carcass weight)

Categories of animals	In slaughterhouses			In farms			Total production		
	2022	2023	Change 2023/2022	2022	2023	Change 2023/2022	2022	2023	Change 2023/2022
Calves and young cattle	586	491	-16.3%	8,015	4,318	-46.1%	8,601	4,809	-44.1%
Other cattle	6,459	6,536	1.2%	5,669	4,848	-14.5%	12,128	11,384	-6.1%
Total for the country	7,045	7,027	-0.3%	13,684	9,166	-33.0%	20,729	16,193	-21.9%

Source: MAF, Agrostatistics Department

The total production of beef in the country in 2023 is in the amount of 16,193 tons. This is 21.9% less than the previous year, mainly due to a 33% drop in farm yield to 9,166 tonnes. Slaughterhouse production shrank by a negligible 0.3% to 7,027 tonnes. Beef accounts for about 15% of the total red meat produced during the year.

Within 2023 a total of 14,167 cattle aged over 8 months were classified on the Union scale for classification, which is 8.2% more than in 2022. There are ten slaughterhouses classifying cattle carcasses during the year, unchanged from 2022. The largest share of cows category "D" - 64.2%, followed by cattle category "A" - young bull (18.1%), "E" - heifer (9.2%), "B" - bull (6.7%), "Z" - animal aged 8 to 12 months (1.8%). Once again there are no cattle classified as category "C" for the year. The main part of the classified beef was from dairy animals, whose carcasses have a low yield and poorly developed conformation. Therefore, the largest was the share of classified carcasses of cattle with conformation class P (poor) - 66.1%, followed by O (fair) - 22.3%, class R (good) - 11.3% and U (very good) - 0.3%. When determining the classes by fat cover, the largest is the number of carcasses class 1 (slight) - 42.8%, class 2 (low) - 37.1%, class 3 (average) - 18.9% and class 4 (high) - 1.2%.

2.3.2. Sheep and goat breeding

The development of sheep breeding in the country is favored by the suitable environmental and climatic conditions and long-standing traditions. It is widespread in the plains as well as in the mountainous and semi-mountainous areas, providing livelihood for a large part of the population in rural areas.

As of 1 November 2023, the total number of sheep in the country amounted to 1,072,768 - 2.2% below the level reported a year earlier. The total number of ewes raised is 3% less, as a result of the reported decrease of 5.3% in the dairy sector, while in the meat sector there is a growth of 7.6%.

Traditionally, sheep breeding is concentrated mainly in southern Bulgaria, where 65.6% of the total population was raised in 2023. Over a quarter of ewes are reared in the South-central region.

By the end of 2023, the number of farms raising sheep and ewes decreased by 19.1% and 18.3%, respectively, compared to the previous year.

Table II.20. Distribution of sheep by regions in 2022 and 2023 (thousand heads)

Regions	Sheep in general			Including ewes		
	01.11.2022	01.11.2023	Share (2023)	01.11.2022	01.11.2023	Share (2023)
Northwestern	132.6	125.3	11.7%	113.9	107.6	11.9%
North-central	106.1	107.6	10.0%	86.5	87.7	9.7%
Northeastern	131.9	135.8	12.7%	109.9	106.2	11.8%
Southeastern	217.9	219.3	20.4%	187.4	186.5	20.7%
Southwestern	202.5	200.5	18.7%	171.9	164.0	18.2%
South-central	305.3	284.3	26.5%	259.2	249.1	27.7%
Total for the country	1,096.4	1,072.8	100.0%	928.8	901.2	100.0%

Source: MAF, Agrostatistics Department

The number of farms with inseminated sheep and one-year-old sheep decreased by 18.4% on an annual basis, 12,544, and the number of animals in them - by 2.5%. The largest decrease was recorded in small farms with 1-9 animals (by 38.9%) and in those with 20-49 animals (by 21%). For farms with 50 - 99 animals and large farms with 100 to 299 animals and 300 and more animals, a certain increase was observed, respectively by 4%, 0.6% and 0.2%.

Table II.21. Distribution of goats by regions in 2022 and 2023 (thousand heads)

Regions	Goats total			Including does		
	01.11.2022	01.11.2023	Share (2023)	01.11.2022	01.11.2023	Share (2023)
Northwestern	28.8	27.6	15.8%	25.2	23.8	16.4%
North-central	26.8	24.4	13.9%	21.9	19.8	13.6%
Northeastern	20.3	20.2	11.6%	17.6	15.6	10.7%
Southeastern	30.4	29.1	16.6%	26.9	25.8	17.9%
Southwestern	45.2	40.4	23.1%	36.5	30.6	21.0%
South-central	32.5	33.3	19.0%	28.2	29.6	20.4%
Total for the country	184.0	175.0	100%	156.3	145.3	100%

Source: MAF, Agrostistics Department

By the end of 2023, the total number of goats decreased by 4.9% on an annual basis, and that of female goats by 7.1%. Young does inseminated for the first time were 1.2% less, while bucks were 8.7% less. The number of goatlings increased by 18.6% compared to the previous year, reaching 16,266.

There was a significant decrease in goat farms - by 23.9% in total goat farms and by 24.2% in those with female goats.

In 2023, the number of farms with pregnant goats decreased by 25.6% on an annual basis, and the number of animals in them - by 6.8%. The biggest decrease was registered for small farms with 10 - 19 animals - by 35.4% and with 1 - 9 animals by 29.5%, as well as for the goats in them - by 32.8% and 23.1%. Farms with 20 - 49 pregnant goats decreased by 21.4%, and the animals in them decreased by 24.9%. Farms with 50 - 99 animals increased slightly - by 2.8%. Around 60% of the inseminated goats in the country are kept on farms with 100 or more animals. Despite the decrease in the number of farms of this category by 2.2%, the inseminated goats raised in them increased by 0.7%.

About 60% of the goat herds in 2023 was bred in the southern regions of the country. The Southwestern region with a share of 23.1% of the total number of goats and 21.1% of mother goats remains the leading region.

In 2023, 69,785 liters of raw milk from small ruminants were produced in the country, including: 50,255 thousand liters of sheep milk and 19,530 thousand liters of goat milk. Compared to a year prior, both types of milk reported a decrease by 8.2% and 22.5%, respectively. The relative share of sheep milk in the total volume of raw milk produced during the year was 6.3%, and the one of goat milk - 2.5%.

The meat produced from small ruminants in 2023 amounted to 9,362 tons (about 9% of total red meat production during the year) - 9.7% less on an annual basis, due to decrease in the production of sheep (with 9.3%) and goat milk (with 12%). Of the total output, 2,032 tons was in slaughterhouses (5.4% above the 2022 level) and 7,330 tons - in farms (12.8% less).

In 2023, the classification of light and heavy carcasses of sheep (lambs) is applied in five slaughterhouses - the same as the year prior. A total of 12,169 carcasses of sheep (lambs) were classified, which was 147% more than in 2022. The classified light carcasses (up to 13 kg) were 11,054, with about 89.3% being classified as first quality, while 10.7% were second quality. The largest share was the one of light carcasses weighing from 7.1 kg to 10 kg - category B - by 50.5%. They are followed by those weighing 10.1 kg to 13 kg - category C - 43.1%, and lambs weighing up to 7 kg, classified in category A, are 6.4%. The classified carcasses of sheep aged under 12 months and over 13 kg were 1,115.

2.3.3. Pig breeding

The pig breeding sector in the country is well structured and specialized, which is a prerequisite for its sustainability and relatively easy overcoming of the consequences of various negative factors in recent years, such as the war in Ukraine and established outbreaks of African swine fever.

After the reported serious reduction in the number of pigs in 2022, within 2023 a gradual recovery of the livestock population is observed, which is contributed by the decrease in the prices of fodder crops during the year. The trend of concentrating production in fewer but larger holdings continues.

As of November 1, 2023 farms raising pigs in general are 18.2% less on an annual basis, and those with primary sows - by 33.3%. At the same time, the total number of pigs increased by 20.4% to 724,745. The total number of breeding sows increased by 33% (to 79,577), while the number of main sows - by 8.5% (to 53,969).

About 82% of all pigs during the year were kept in three planning regions - Southeastern (33.8%), North Central (25.3%) and Northeastern (22.6%). The same regions also reared the largest number of main sows - 21.2%, 24.2% and 35.9%, respectively. The fewest pigs were kept in the Southwestern region - 1.4%, while the fewest sows were in the Northwestern-6.7% of the total.

Table II.22. Distribution of pigs by regions in 2022 and 2023 (thousand heads)

Regions	Pigs total			Incl. primary sows		
	01.11.2022	01.11.2023	Share (2023)	01.11.2022	01.11.2023	Share (2023)
Northwestern	19.0	46.9	6.5%	1.8	3.6	6.7%
North-central	140.8	183.3	25.3%	12.7	13.1	24.2%
Northeastern	148.8	163.8	22.6%	10.3	19.4	35.9%
Southeastern	244.8	244.8	33.8%	18.1	11.4	21.2%
Southwestern	8.8	10.3	1.4%	2.3	1.2	2.2%
South-central	39.5	75.6	10.4%	4.5	5.3	9.8%
Total for the	601.7	724.7	100.0%	49.7	54.0	100.0%

Source: MAF, Agrostistics Department

By the end of 2023, the total number of farms raising breeding sows (over 50 kg) decreased by 19.6% compared to a year earlier, and the number of animals in them increased by 33.1%. Farms with 3 - 10 sows fell by almost half (by 48.8%), and the number of animals in them - by 25%. Significantly less (with 17.9%) are the small farms with 1-2 pigs, keeping the same number of pigs raised in them. In 2023 there was an increase only in the number of farms with 50 - 199 animals - by 8.3%, as well as in the number of female pigs for breeding in them - by 22.7%. Large pig farms with 200 or more animals decreased by 4.9%, but female pigs in them increased by a significant 34.8%. About 95% of breeding sows in the country are raised in these farms.

Table II.23. Distribution of breeding sows over 50 kg according to the number of animals bred on a farm as of 01.11.2023

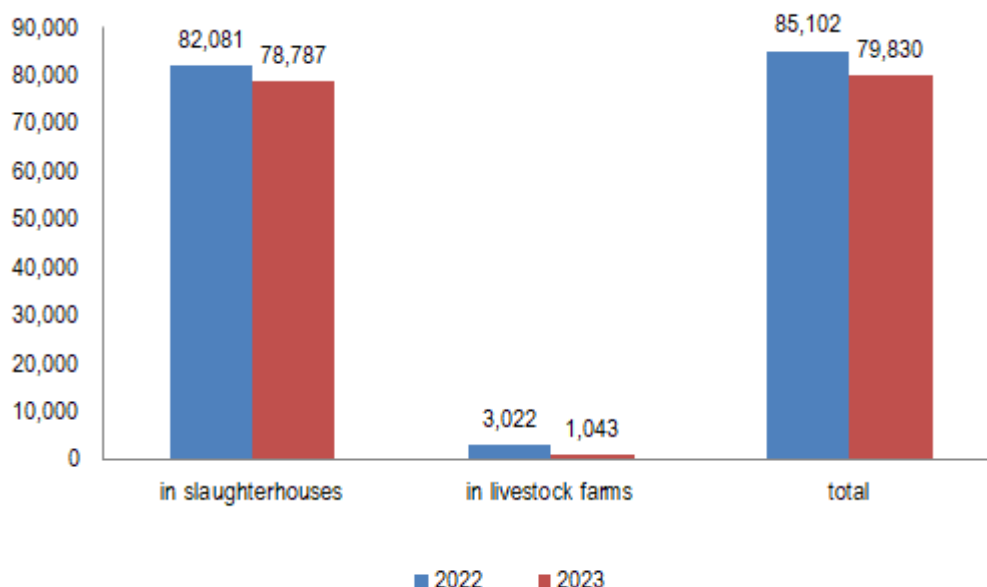
Number of animals on a farm	Farms		Breeding sows over 50 kg	
	Heads	Change 2023/2022	Thousand heads	Change 2023/2022
1-2	69	-17.9%	0.1	0.0%
3-9	41	-48.8%	0.3	-25.0%
10-49	55	-3.5%	1.0	-9.1%
50-199	26	8.3%	2.7	22.7%
200 and more	39	-4.9%	75.5	34.8%
Total	230	-19.6%	79.6	33.1%

Source: MAF, Agrostistics Department

In 2023, the state aid scheme for implementation of the five-year voluntary commitments on swine welfare will continue to apply. Subsidies are granted annually and cover the additional costs or lost income related to these commitments.

The total production of pork in 2023 decreased by 6.2% on an annual basis to 79,830 tons, representing over 75% of the total number of red meat in the country. A decrease of 4% was recorded in slaughterhouses, and a 65.5% drop in livestock production (which is generally limited).

Figure II.4. Pork production in 2022 and 2023, tons



Source: MAF, Agrostistics Department

In 2023, a total of 133,810 heads were classified as per the scale of the Classification Union for pig carcasses, which was 84% more compared to 2022. One slaughterhouse carried out classification during the year, one less than last year.

Table II.24. Classified pig carcasses by lean meat content

Year	S 60% and more	E From 55 to 60%	U From 50 to 55%	R From 45 to 50 %	O From 40 to 45%	P 40% less	Total (heads)
2017	240	70,525	20,967	82	17	0	97,831
2018	318	70,422	18,888	134	0	0	89,762
2019	151	37,081	9,491	35	0	0	46,758
2020	161	33,079	7,050	31	0	0	40,321
2021	218	61,580	6,130	80	0	0	68,008
2022	2,370	57,240	13,182	11	0	0	72,803
2023	4,355	110,141	19,297	17	0	0	133,810

Source: MAF, Animal Husbandry Directorate

Over 82.3% of the pigs classified in 2023 were of class E, with lean meat content of 55% to 60% of the carcass weight, and 14.4% were of conformation class U - from 50% to 55% content of lean meat.

According to the regression equation applied in Bulgaria, only steam processed fattened pig carcasses were classified. The slaughterhouse carrying out classification during the year classified nearly 90% of all fattened pigs slaughtered and steam-processed and only 11.8% of all fattened pigs slaughtered in industrial conditions in the country.

2.3.4. Horse breeding

According to expert estimates, in 2023 the number of equidae (including horses) in Bulgaria remained at about 116 thousand. Their main purpose is as draught power in agriculture.

Kabiyuk stud is the only state-owned enterprise operating in the sector, which breeds Bulgarian and foreign tribal horse breeds, such as Karakachan horse, East Bulgarian horse, Pleven horse, Thoroughbred English horse, Thoroughbred Arabian horse, Arabian Shagia and others. The remaining horses are bred in the private sector.

The work related to the conservation and development of genetic resources in horse breeding continued in 2023.

2.3.5. Poultry farming

Poultry farming is one of the most intensive sectors in livestock breeding, characterized by widespread mechanization and automation of production processes, which ensures highly efficient industrial production.

As of 31.12.2023, a total of 14,522 thousand heads were bred in the country - 6.4% less than a year earlier including: 6,583 thousand hens and laying hens, 5,947 thousand chickens for meat (of hen variety), 15 thousand turkeys, 1,919 thousand ducks, 9 thousand geese and 49 thousand other poultry.

The decrease in the total number of birds is mainly related to a decline in chickens (making up more than 86% of the total number), as a result of the outbreaks of the bird flu disease established in the country. Laying hens and growing hens are 7.8% less on an annual basis, and broiler chickens are 10.9%. An increase was reported for the other species: turkeys - with 87.5%, geese - with 80% and ducks - with 18%. Birds from the other category (quails, ostriches and guinea fowls), which are not of great economic importance, decreased by 10.9%.

Table II.25. Number of birds at the end of the year, thousand

Type of poultry	2021	2022	2023	Change 2023/2022
Adult and young laying hens	6,659	7,139	6,583	-7.8%
Chickens for meat	5,517	6,673	5,947	-10.9%
Turkeys	16	8	15	87.5%
Ducks	1,889	1,627	1,919	17.9%
Geese	4	5	9	80.0%
Other poultry (quail, ostriches and guinea fowl)	83	55	49	-10.9%
Total	14,168	15,507	14,522	-6.4%

Source: MAF, Agrostistics Department

By the end of 2023, about 55% of the poultry were raised in the north-central and northeastern regions of the country and only 2% in the Southwestern region.

Table II.26. Number of poultry by species and regions in 2023, thousand heads

Region	Adult and young laying hens	Chickens for meat	Hens and chickens total	Turkeys	Ducks	Other poultry	Poultry, total	Change 2023/2022 Poultry, total
Northwestern	c	c	1,341	1.4	336	2.1	1,680	2.3%
North-central	1,964	2,645	4,608	0	215	0.8	4,825	-13.6%
Northeastern	1,606	1,427	3,033	0	83	1.1	3,118	-11.3%
Southeastern	c	c	2,205	2.9	371	11.4	2,591	9.3%
Southwestern	c	c	288	1.5	4	35	328	-3.6%
South-central	c	c	1,055	8.4	910	7.3	1,980	-1.7%
Total for the country	6,583	5,947	12,530	15	1,919	58	14,522	-6.4%
Change 2023/2022	-7.8%	-10.9%	-9.3%	87.5%	17.9%	-4.0%	-6.4%	

Source: MAF, Agrostistics Department, c - confidential data

In 2023 farms raising adult and young laying hens decreased by 15.9% on an annual basis. The most significant decline was observed in poultry farms with between 100 and 9,999 birds. - by 18%, but the birds raised in them grew by 2.8%. Small poultry farms (with 1 to 99 birds) decreased by 15.9%, and the birds raised in them - by 10.6%. Industrial poultry farms with 100,000 or more laying and growing hens are 10% less compared to the previous year, and the birds in them - 10.7% less. The number of farms raising between 10,000 - 99,999 birds remains unchanged compared to 2022, with the number of laying hens in them increasing by 0.9%.

The number of farms raising chickens for meat at the end of 2023 decreased by 13% compared to a year earlier, and the number of birds in them by 10.9%. All categories of farms saw a decline of between 6.3% and 21.4%. In the large poultry farms (10,000 - 99,999 birds) and (100,000 and more birds), the number of birds shrank by 14.6% and 8.5%, respectively. In farms with 200 - 9,999 birds, the number of reared birds increased by 6.3%, and in small farms (1 - 199 birds) - it remained unchanged on an annual basis.

In 2023 the total production of eggs is in the amount of 1,397,098 thousand, insignificant 0.3% less compared to the previous year. Of these, 1,382,642 thousand (99%) were hen eggs, including 198,878 thousand for breeding and 1,183,764 thousand for consumption. Eggs for consumption were 0.8% more on an annual basis, and breeding eggs decreased by 6.5%.

By planning regions, in 2023 the leader in egg production is the North Central region with a share of 28.4% of the total volume for the country. This was followed by the Northeastern, South-central and Southeastern regions with shares of 27.1%, 18.4% and 15.5%, respectively.

Table II.27. Egg production in 2023 by planning regions, thousand pieces

Region	Eggs from hens	Other eggs	Total eggs	Change, total eggs, 2023/2022
Northwestern	81,242	281	81,523	9.8%
North-central	395,211	1,403	396,614	-5.4%
Northeastern	378,631	44	378,675	-2.5%
Southeastern	210,324	5,876	216,200	5.2%
Southwestern	63,102	4,145	67,247	7.1%
South-central	254,132	2,707	256,839	2.1%
Total for the country	1,382,642	14,456	1,397,098	-0.3%

Source: MAF, Agrostistics Department

The total production of poultry meat and by-products in the country in 2023 increased by 1.7% on an annual basis, to 122,076 tons. Industrial production grew by 1.4%, forming 99% of total output. The meat produced in farms recorded a growth of 43.4%, but remained insignificant in terms of quantity. Over 75% of the meat produced in the country in 2023 was of the chicken species.

Table II.28. Production of poultry meat and by-products in the period 2022 - 2023

	Slaughtered poultry - thousand heads			Total meat and by-products - tons		
	2022	2023	Change 2023/2022	2022	2023	Change 2023/2022
In slaughterhouses	59,792	61,145	2.3%	119,262	120,883	1.4%
In farms	434	558	28.6%	832	1,193	43.4%
Total	60,226	61,703	2.5%	120,094	122,076	1.7%

Source: MAF, Agrostistics Department

The development of poultry farming in recent years has been contributed by the scheme of state aid for the implementation of voluntarily undertaken commitments for the humane treatment of birds (for fattening and for egg production) for a period of five years, the implementation of which continues in 2023.

2.3.6. Beekeeping

The development of beekeeping in Bulgaria is favored by the appropriate natural, climatic and ecological conditions in the country, as well as by long-standing traditions. Given the irreplaceable medicinal properties of bee honey and bee products, there is increased interest and demand from consumers, and the good quality parameters of Bulgarian honey make it largely export-oriented.

Beekeeping is an alternative employment for the population in underdeveloped rural areas, providing additional income.

Table II.29. Number bee farms and bee colonies as of October 1

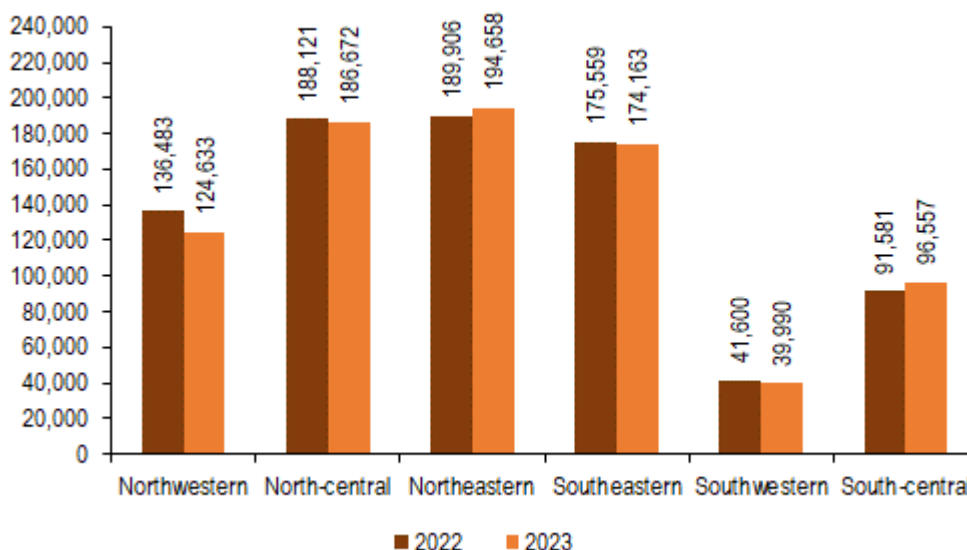
Number of bee colonies on a farm	Number of farms			Number of bee colonies			Average number of bee colonies		
	2022	2023	Change 2023/2022	2022	2023	Change 2023/2022	2022	2023	Change 2023/2022
from 1 to 9	1,238	949	-23.3%	5,882	4,108	-30.2%	4.8	4.3	-10.4%
from 10 to 49	3,455	3,136	-9.2%	79,340	73,792	-7.0%	23.0	23.5	2.2%
from 50 to 149	3,383	3,112	-8.0%	298,194	277,730	-6.9%	88.1	89.2	1.2%
150 and more	2,148	2,236	4.1%	439,834	461,043	4.8%	204.8	206.2	0.7%
Total	10,224	9,433	-7.7%	823,250	816,673	-0.8%	80.5	86.6	7.6%

Source: MAF, Agrostistics Department

As of Sunday, October 1, 2023, there were 9,433 bee farms in the country, which raised 816,673 bee colonies - respectively 7.7% and 0.8% less on an annual basis. The average number of bee colonies in a holding increased by 7.5%, reaching 86.6 units (at 80.5 units in 2022).

The sector is more widespread in Northern and Southeastern Bulgaria, where around 83% of bee colonies were raised in 2023. The largest number of bee colonies were registered in the Northeastern and North-central regions, followed by the Southeastern and Northwestern regions.

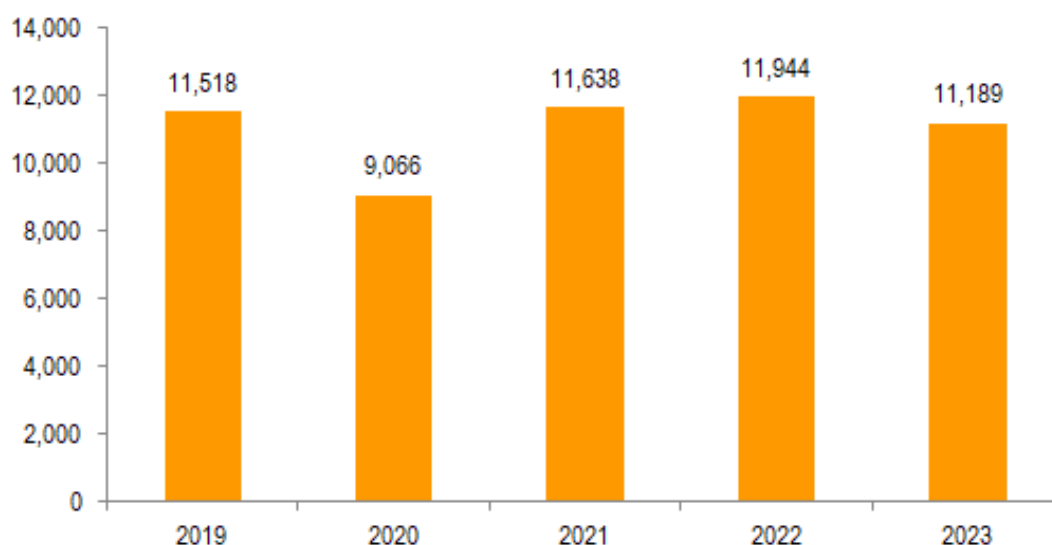
Figure II.5. Number of bee colonies by regions in 2022 and 2023



Source: MAF, Agrostistics Department

In 2023 the number of bee colonies from which honey was extracted was 659,002 - 2% less than the previous year. Coupled with a drop in average colony yield to 17kg (4.5% below the 2022 level), this results in honey production shrinking by 6.3% from 2022 to 11,189 tonnes.

Figure II.6. Production of honey in the period 2019 - 2023, tons



Source: MAF, Agrostatistics Department

The sales of honey and the average selling prices (excluding VAT) in 2023 were as follows:

- Direct sales to the end user - 2,392 tons - 8.96 BGN /kg;
- Direct sales to retailers - 483 tons - 7.44 BGN /kg;
- Sales to processing enterprises - 4,870 tons - 4.69 BGN/kg;
- Sales for industry - 870 tons - 4.36 BGN /kg;
- For own consumption and nutrition of bees - 1,431 tons.

The total realized amount of honey in 2023 grew by 14.3% on an annual basis, with the largest increase recorded in sales to industry - by 70.6%. Direct sales to end users increased by 12.5%, sales to processing companies by 9.7%, and direct sales to retailers by 4.8%. Only in the quantities of bee honey intended for own consumption and feeding bees, a decrease is reported compared to 2022, by the insignificant 0.4%.

As a result of poisoning, diseases, famine and other causes, a total of 40,695 bee colonies were destroyed in 2023 - 8.9% less compared to a year prior, including: 7,270 - from poisoning, 6,968 - from disease, 4,690 - from hunger and 21,767 - from other causes.

Varroasis is a common disease in Europe, including Bulgaria. Its invasion significantly affects the yields, and the treatment measures against it affect the quality of honey. In 2023, 804,160 bee colonies were treated (98.5% of their total number), with an average price of BGN 6.54 per treatment.

The nutrition of bee colonies during the year includes: autumn - 543,072, winter - 494,963 and spring feeding - 566,773 bee colonies.

In 2023, the number of farms practicing in mobile beekeeping were 265 - 12.3% more compared to a year prior, but the number of bee colonies in them went down by 18.2% to 21,407. The value of transport costs and veterinary certificates during the year was BGN 14.18/bee - 6.9% lower than in 2022.

After the completion of the last fifth three-year National Beekeeping Program 2020 - 2022, the sector is supported through the interventions of the Strategic Plan for the Development of Agriculture and Rural Areas of Bulgaria for the period 2023 - 2027, in which are set new activities and changes of implemented activities, which concern the method of determining and paying the costs for them. Beekeeping interventions have been developed with the broad participation of branch beekeeping organizations.

Due to difficulties associated with the transition to fully electronic submission of applications, in the 2023 submission period about 42% fewer applications for assistance to beekeepers were submitted compared to the previous year, and after carrying out the relevant administrative checks, 1,241 contracts were signed with the applicants. As a result, from the total budget in the amount of BGN 10,091,365 (40% from EAGF and 60% from NB) for 2023, only BGN 337,205 were paid for individual interventions to 113 beneficiaries.

2.3.7. Rabbit breeding

Despite the good natural and climatic conditions and the presence of traditions in breeding, in recent years the development of rabbit breeding was poorly represented in the country being more of a hobby. According to expert estimates, the total number of rabbits in 2023 was about 115 thousand.

The main difficulties for the development of the sector are: poor professional training of rabbit breeders; obsolete equipment; high production costs; lack of stable export markets and partners; strong dependence of the export of rabbit meat on the conjuncture of foreign markets; lack of direct subsidies for rabbit farmers; insufficiently developed scientific potential for securing the sector; insufficient marketing and management of the Bulgarian market.

2.4. State of organic production in Bulgaria in 2023

Thanks to its positive impact on the environment and climate in terms of improving carbon sequestration and soil health, protecting biodiversity and animal welfare, as well as the additional ecosystem services that organic production provides, organic agriculture contributes to achieving the objectives of the European Green Deal, the EU Farm to Fork Strategy and the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030.

Organic production is a sustainable management system that preserves elements of the natural landscape and uses energy and natural resources responsibly.

The current rate of increase in organic farming areas, combined with agro-ecological measures, leads to high and multi-aspect benefits both for achieving the goals of biodiversity protection and for mitigating the impact of climate change and improving the water and soil quality and soil biodiversity, due to the non-use of mineral fertilizers and chemical pesticides. The application of organic production practices has an indirect effect on improving or maintaining the good condition of natural habitats and the Natura 2000 species.

The development of organic production in Bulgaria is favored by the availability of high-quality land resources, climatic conditions, traditions in the agricultural sector. Defining the organic farming sector is the specific method of production that maintains ecological balances and produces production covering the principles of ecological cycles for the continuous movement in nature by converting substances such as water, minerals, nitrogen, oxygen and carbon into different forms between living beings, water, air and soil.

The information on the state of organic production in Bulgaria in 2023 is based on the data from the annual reports of a total of 15 controllers of organic production, approved by the Minister of Agriculture and Food.

2.4.1. Control System Operators

The collection of information from the organic production control system is done within the calendar year.

At the end of 2023, the total number of organic operators registered with the MAF was 5,026 - 163 more than a year earlier, of which 4,438 were agricultural producers. The number of operators with the main and/or additional activity of processing is 383, with the activity of trade - 700, with the activity of import - 105 and with the activity of export - 96. In 2023, the number of organic operators in a control system represents 6.4% of the total registered farmers under Regulation No. 3 of January 29, 1999 on the establishment and maintenance of a register of farmers, an increase of about half a percent compared to the previous year.

2.4.2. Organic plant growing

The total areas on which organic production methods are applied (areas in conversion and organic areas) in 2023 increased by 34% on an annual basis, to 147,798.2 ha, representing 2.95% of the utilized agricultural area in the country. The areas targeted for organic production of cereals and legumes increased by

23% compared to the previous year, and those with pastures and meadows more than doubled. There are also more areas in a control system with fresh vegetables, melons, strawberries, cultivated mushrooms (greenhouse and field production) - by nearly 30%, as well as those with technical crops - by 10%.

Table II.30. Areas under a control system, including "in transition" and "organic" (ha)

Type of crops	2022	2023
Cereals, incl. rice	18,802.5	18,439.2
Cereals, protein crops for grain production	6,382.6	7,839.9
Root crops	362.5	226.2
Industrial crops - total	17,088.6	18,753.9
Green/Forage crops from arable land	1,905.3	1,171.0
Fresh vegetables, melons, strawberries, cultivated mushrooms (greenhouse and field production)	1,342.0	1,726.4
Perennials	22,592.6	22,503.6
Permanent meadows and pastures	29,855.7	69,894.7
Fallow land	12,108.9	7,243.3
Total areas in a control system	110,440.7	147,798.2

Source: MAF, according to data from the controlling persons, entered in the register under Art. 16a, para. 1, item 1 of the Act on the Implementation of the General Organization of the Markets of Agricultural Products of the European Union.

Table II.31. Areas of organically grown crops and areas in transition (ha)

Type of crops	Areas in transition		Areas that have passed the transition period		Total area	
	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023
Cereals, incl. rice	10,265.4	8,087.9	8,537.1	10,351.3	18,802.5	18,439.2
Cereals, protein crops for grain production	1,675.7	3,911.6	4,706.9	3,928.3	6,382.6	7,839.9
Root crops	19.9	50.8	342.7	175.4	362.5	226.2
Industrial Crops	4,082.2	6,240.1	13,006.4	12,513.8	17,088.6	18,753.9
Fresh vegetables, melons, and strawberries	254.0	622.2	1,087.9	1,104.1	1,342.0	1,726.4
Perennials	4,910.6	5,639.5	17,682.0	16,864.1	22,592.6	22,503.6
Permanent meadows and pastures	18,132.0	57,038.6	11,723.8	12,856.1	29,855.7	69,894.7
Fodder crops from arable land (green crops)	116.1	448.3	1,789.2	722.7	1,905.3	1,171.0
Fallow land	10,525.4	5,523.4	1,583.5	1,719.9	12,108.9	7,243.3

Source: MAF, according to data from the controlling persons, entered in the register under Art. 16a, para. 1, item 1 of the Act on the Implementation of the General Organization of the Markets of Agricultural Products of the European Union.

2.4.3. Organic Livestock Breeding

In 2023 there is a positive development in the organic livestock sector. The total number of cattle and buffalo in control system is more than twice that reported for the previous year, and that of sheep - by 52%. Goats and bee colonies are also growing, albeit more moderately.

Table II.32. Livestock in a control system

	Number of organically raised animals		Total number of animals as of 1 November 2023	Share of organically raised animals from the total number of animals as of 1 November 2023
	2022	2023		
Cattle and buffaloes	13,724	30,494	574,304	5.3%
Sheep	25,995	39,497	1,072,768	3.7%
Goats	7,333	7,951	174,952	4.5%
Bee colonies	214,183	233,920	816,673	28.6%

Source: MAF, according to data from the controlling persons, entered in the register under Art. 16a, para. 1, item 1 of the Act on the Implementation of the General Organization of the Markets of Agricultural Products of the European Union.

In 2023, 12,685.8 tons of raw milk, around 365 thousand eggs, 2,976.2 tons of honey and bee products were produced by organic means.

2.4.4. Organic products market

Organic food produced in the country is largely intended for export, mainly to the European market. A substantial export of certified wild dried berries and herbs is realized every year. Frozen fruits (strawberries, raspberries and blueberries), honey, essential rose oil, lavender, mint, white cheese, yellow cheese, and jams are exported and are very well received on the international markets. In 2023, the number of specialized stores for the sale of bio food continues to increase, as well as the commercial establishments that are included in the distribution of organic food. The Ministry of Agriculture and Food carries out effective supervision and control in the field of organic farming, which makes Bulgarian organic products legitimate on the EU common market. The development of the sector is encouraged through information and awareness-raising activities on the benefits and advantages of organic farming.

2.5. Viticulture and wine production

2.5.1. Grapes production

Areas

In 2023, the areas with vine plantations in the agricultural holdings, including the fruiting ones (incl. the abandoned ones with the possibility of restoration) and the young orchards that have not started fruiting amounted to 32,178 ha. Of these, about 2% were young orchards that have not started fruiting.

The newly planted vineyards were about 253 ha.

The total harvested areas with vines in 2023 were 28,402 ha with no significant change compared to a year prior (- 0.2%).

Table II.33. Distribution of harvested vineyards in 2022 - 2023 by statistical regions

Regions	Red wine varieties (ha)		White wine varieties (ha)		Table varieties (ha)		Total vineyards (ha)	
	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023
Northwestern	1,506	1,280	731	743	56	43	2,293	2,066
North-central	527	424	757	615	88	67	1,372	1,106
Northeastern	640	615	1,675	1,687	82	80	2,397	2,382
Southeastern	4,186	4,312	5,094	5,353	624	647	9,904	10,312
Southwestern	1,740	1,717	202	169	125	127	2,067	2,013
South-central	7,421	7,728	1,770	1,574	1,242	1,221	10,433	10,523
Total	16,020	16,076	10,229	10,141	2,217	2,185	28,466	28,402

Source: MAF, Agrostistics Department

The total harvested area of red wine varieties showed a slight increase of 0.3% compared to 2022, as a result of the recorded increase in the South Central region - by 4.1% and in the Southeastern region - by 3%. In all other planning regions, there was a decrease in harvested areas with red wine varieties, most significantly in the North Central and North West regions, by 19.5% and 15%, respectively.

In the case of white wine grape varieties, the total harvested area is 0.9% less compared to 2022, with the most significant decrease being recorded in the North Central region - by 18.8%, followed by the Southwest and South Central regions, respectively 16.6% and 11.1%. At the same time, the harvested areas of white wine varieties in the North-East, North-West and South-East regions increased by between 0.7% and 5.1%.

The total harvested areas with table grape varieties were 1.4% below the level in 2022. A decrease in these areas was recorded in the North Central, North Western, North Eastern and South Central areas - by between 1.7% and 23.9%, while in the Southwestern and Southeastern regions there was an increase by 1.6% and 3.7%, respectively.

Due to bad weather conditions, out of 1,084 ha of fruit-bearing vineyards, no produce was harvested.

Of the total harvested vineyard area in 2023, 56.6% were with red wine varieties, 35.7% with white wine varieties and 7.7% with table varieties.

Average yields

In 2023 there was a decrease in the average yields from vineyards compared to the previous year both in wine varieties - by 8.4%, up to 5,165 kg/ha, and in table varieties - by 8.5%, up to 5,628 kg/ha.

The highest average yields were recorded in the Southeastern region - 6,082 kg/ha for the wine varieties and 6,543 kg/ha for the table varieties.

Table II.34. Average yields of grapes from vineyards - 2023 harvest

Regions	Average yields from vineyards (kg/ha)	
	Wine varieties	Table varieties
Northwestern	3,436	3,884
North-central	4,293	4,612
Northeastern	5,694	4,363
Southeastern	6,082	6,543
Southwestern	3,363	3,488
South-central	4,920	5,567
Bulgaria	5,165	5,628

Source: MAF, Agrostistics Department

Production:

The total production of grapes in the country in 2023 amounted to 147,804 tons, which was 8.6% less on an annual basis. The grape harvested from vineyards amounted to 147,707 tons - 8.6% below the level of the previous year, in the ratio of wine variety - 92% and table variety - 8%. Compared to 2022, the harvested produce of wine grapes decreased by 10.2% to 135,409 tons, while table grapes saw an increase by 2.5%. The production of grapes from vine-arbors decreased by 24.8% to 97 tons.

Traditionally, the largest production of vineyards was reported in the southeastern and south-central regions, where about 79% of all production is concentrated.

Almost all regions in the country saw a decrease in grape production from vineyards compared to the previous year 2022, ranging from 8.1% in the Northwestern to 36% in the Southwestern region. An exception is the North-East region, where a slight increase in the production of grapes from vineyards by 0.2% was reported.

Table II.35. Grape production - 2023 harvest

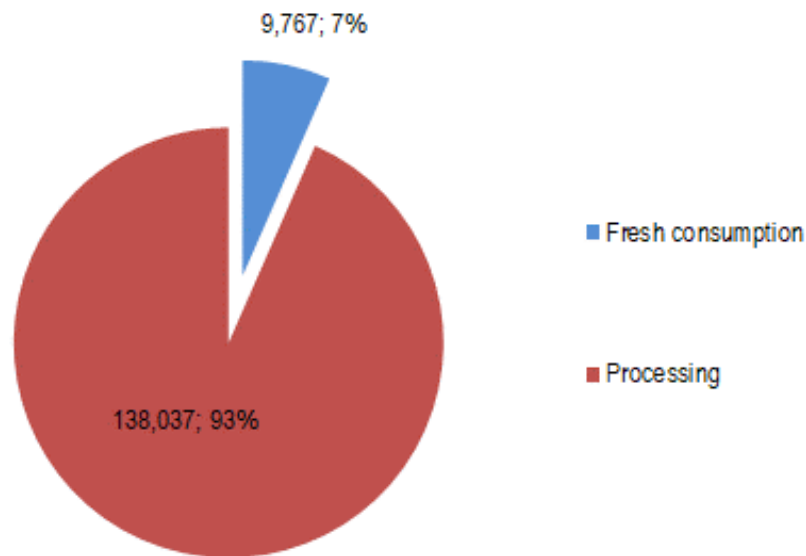
Regions	Grapes from the vineyards			Grapes from arbors (tons)	Total grapes produced (tons)
	Wine grape (tons)	Table grape (tons)	Total grapes produced from vineyards (tons)		
Northwestern	6,952	167	7,119	-	-
North-central	4,460	309	4,769	-	-
Northeastern	13,108	349	13,457	-	-
Southeastern	58,778	4,233	63,011	-	-
Southwestern	6,342	443	6,785	-	-
South-central	45,769	6,797	52,566	-	-
Total	135,409	12,298	147,707	97	147,804

Source: MAF, Agrostatistics Department

Out of the total grape produced during the year, 93% were destined for processing and 7% - for fresh consumption.

According to the data of the Executive Agency for Vine and Wine, in 2023 the quantity of wine grapes purchased and processed by wine enterprises amounted to 100,803 tons, which is 14,143 tons less than the previous year.

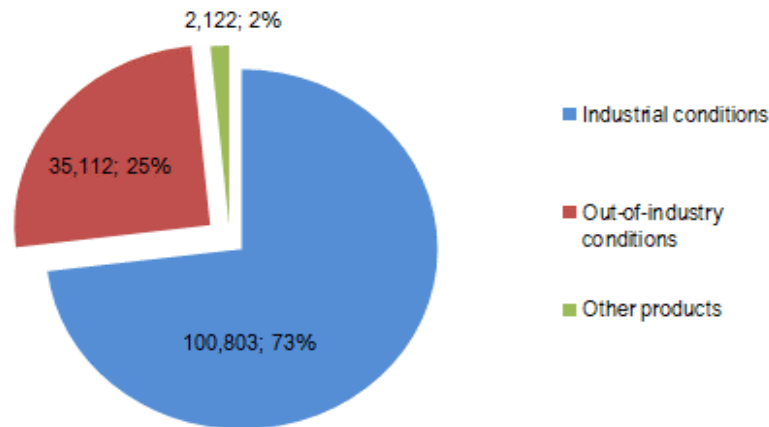
Figure II.7. Distribution of grapes produced - 2023 harvest, tons and percentage



Source: MAF, Agrostatistics Department

Grapes intended for processing in non-industrial conditions amounted to 35,112 tons and 2,122 tons of processed grapes were used for products other than wine and grape must.

Figure II.8. Distribution of grapes - harvest 2023, intended for processing, tons and percentage



Source: MAF, Agrostistics Department

2.5.2. Wine production

The total production of wine from the 2023 harvest, declared by the registered wine producers, amounted to 675,740 hectoliters, 9.5% less compared to the previous year. The production of red and rosé wines fell by 23.6% year-on-year, to 270,496 hectoliters, while that of white wines increased by 3.2%, to 405,246 hectoliters.

Table wines (wines without protected designation of origin or protected geographical indication) had the highest share in industrial wine production from the 2023 harvest - 59.6%, followed by regional wines (wines with a protected geographical indication) with 40.2%. The share of wines with a protected designation of origin is only 0.2%.

The leader in wine production in 2023 was the Southeastern region with 62.4% of total industrial production, followed by the South-central region with 17.9%. The share of wine produced in the Northwestern region was the smallest - 2%.

Table II.36. Quantity of wine and grape must produced by wine-producing enterprises, 2023 harvest

Region	Quantity of wine and grape must produced, hectoliters								
	PDO* wines (quality)		PGI** wines (regional)		Other wines (including table wines)		Must	Total wine	
	white	red and rosé	white	red and rosé	white	red and rosé		white	red and rosé
Northwestern region	0	0	6,502	4,301	1,088	1,805	9,163	7,590	6,106
North-central region	0	0	12,359	10,992	19,669	9,830	0	32,028	20,822
Northeastern region	101	0	22,963	6,901	13,823	4,309	0	36,887	11,210
Southeastern region	152	899	70,282	54,338	205,108	90,931	8,515	275,542	146,168
Southwestern region	9	53	5,863	8,864	1,958	1,801	0	7,830	10,718
South-central region	0	0	23,121	45,093	22,248	30,377	17,781	45,369	75,470
TOTAL WINE:	262	952	141,092	130,490	263,892	139,052	35,459	405,246	270,494

Source: Executive Agency on Vine and Wine

*PDO- Protected designation of origin; **PGI - Protected geographical indication

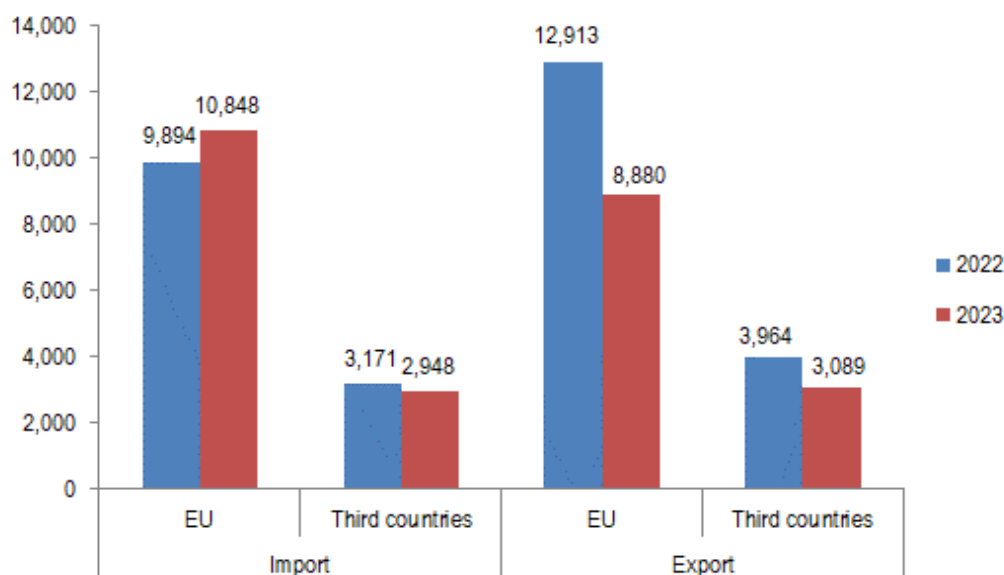
168,695 hectoliters of wine were produced in non-industrial conditions in 2023, compared to 141,837 hectoliters for the previous year.

Thus, the total production of wine from the 2023 harvest amounted to 844,435 hectoliters, 5% less than the 2022 harvest.

2.5.3. Export and Import of Wine

In recent years, there has been a trend of decreasing wine exports from Bulgaria, which will deepen in 2023. Combined with an increase in imports, this makes Bulgaria a net importer of wine in 2023.

Figure II.9. Foreign trade in wine during the period 2022 - 2023, thousand liters



Source: NSI

Export

According to NSI data, in 2023 the export of wine amounted to 11,969 thousand wine, 29.1% below the level of the previous year. In terms of value, exports decreased more moderately - by 18.7% to EUR 22,659 thousand, as a result of the 14.7% higher average export price of EUR 1.89 per liter.

The total amount of wine directed towards the EU went down 31.2% on an annual basis to 8,880 thousand liters (74.2% of all exports). The leading destination remains Poland, although shipments there will see a 45.7% drop compared to 2022 (up to 3,621 thousand liters). Among the other more important partners within the EU, a decrease in exports compared to the previous year is also reported, ranging from 8.3% (Sweden) to 78% (France). The realized quantities are higher in Denmark (by 1.5%), Germany (by 13.6%), Cyprus (by 82.7%), Luxembourg (by more than two times) and Italy (almost four times).

In the export of wine to third countries in 2023, a decrease of 98% on an annual basis is reported, to 3,089 thousand liters. Volumes destined for major markets such as the United Kingdom (by 42.9%), the Russian Federation (by 30.6%), the United States (by 33.8%) and Japan (by 25.7%) are seriously decreasing. In 2023 no wine shipments were made to Algeria, but those to the United Arab Emirates, Ivory Coast, Switzerland, etc. are significantly less compared to the previous year. This was only partially offset by expanding sales in Nigeria, Mongolia, Kazakhstan and Norway.

Table II.37. Wine Exports in 2022 and 2023, liters

Countries	2022	2023.	Change 2023/2022	
			liters	%
EU, including:	12,913,037	8,880,005	-4,033,031	-31.2%
Poland	6,672,779	3,620,856	-3,051,923	-45.7%
Sweden	3,424,620	3,138,775	-285,845	-8.3%
Czech Republic	1,378,219	1,042,302	-335,917	-24.4%

Countries	2022	2023.	Change 2023/2022	
			liters	%
Belgium	565,991	428,602	-137,389	-24.3%
The Netherlands	343,140	183,611	-159,529	-46.5%
Germany	120,106	136,457	16,352	13.6%
Italy	30,077	117,315	87,239	290.1%
Denmark	59,967	60,888	921	1.5%
Lithuania	76,176	24,764	-51,413	-67.5%
France	111,327	24,538	-86,789	-78.0%
Cyprus	10,475	19,135	8,660	82.7%
Luxembourg	8,397	18,940	10,543	125.6%
Romania	19,385	13,981	-5,404	-27.9%
Slovakia	10,412	12,129	1,717	16.5%
Greece	19,449	6,649	-12,801	-65.8%
Malta	21,593	5,985	-15,609	-72.3%
Other	40,926	25,081	-15,845	-38.7%
Third countries, including:	3,963,787	3,089,119	-874,668	-22.1%
Russian Federation	947,690	658,013	-289,677	-30.6%
United Kingdom	928,230	530,041	-398,188	-42.9%
USA	619,845	410,588	-209,257	-33.8%
Japan	500,253	371,561	-128,692	-25.7%
Nigeria	129,416	325,148	195,732	151.2%
Norway	19,817	135,677	115,861	584.7%
Benin	136,940	126,252	-10,688	-7.8%
Lebanon	68,234	91,778	23,544	34.5%
Cote d'Ivoire	102,299	61,479	-40,820	-39.9%
China	61,001	57,956	-3,046	-5.0%
Kazakhstan	7,364	48,047	40,682	552.4%
Brazil	41,502	42,523	1,021	2.5%
Switzerland	62,534	25,839	-36,695	-58.7%
Mongolia	8,208	21,276	13,068	159.2%
Georgia	27,519	12,958	-14,561	-52.9%
Canada	24,111	12,398	-11,714	-48.6%
Hong Kong	20,787	9,432	-11,355	-54.6%
Armenia	27,360	5,301	-22,059	-80.6%
United Arab Emirates	69,805	1,620	-68,185	-97.7%
Algeria	83,520	0	-83,520	-100.0%
Other	77,355	141,234	63,879	82.6%
Total	16,876,824	11,969,125	-4,907,699	-29.1%

Source: NSI

Import

The total import of wine in 2023 is in the amount of 13,796 thousand liters, 5.6% more than the previous year. With a 12.8% higher average import price of EUR 2.93/liter, the total value of imports increased by 19.1% year-on-year to 40,397 thousand euro.

Table II.38. Wine imports in 2022 and 2023, liters

Countries	2022	2023.	Change 2023/2022	
			liters	%
EU, including:	9,893,540	10,848,258	954,718	9.6%
Italy	3,229,157	3,380,658	151,501	4.7%
Spain	2,250,133	2,145,898	-104,235	-4.6%
France	1,963,888	1,898,509	-65,378	-3.3%
Germany	1,272,413	1,478,461	206,048	16.2%
Romania	227,672	820,034	592,362	260.2%
Hungary	506,851	615,260	108,409	21.4%
Sweden	8,484	154,749	146,265	1,724.0%
Czech Republic	89,958	103,814	13,856	15.4%
Greece	78,933	76,803	-2,131	-2.7%
Austria	13,719	50,282	36,564	266.5%
Portugal	27,845	44,754	16,909	60.7%
The Netherlands	33,869	39,927	6,059	17.9%
Belgium	34,941	27,380	-7,561	-21.6%
Denmark	32,400	7,200	-25,200	-77.8%
Lithuania	65,146	2,146	-63,000	-96.7%
Poland	54,980	0	-54,980	-100.0%
Other	3,155	2,383	-771	-24.4%
Third countries, including:	3,170,648	2,947,819	-222,830	-7.0%
Northern Macedonia	1,656,652	1,060,204	-596,449	-36.0%
New Zealand	522,506	877,928	355,423	68.0%
South Africa	623,206	296,811	-326,395	-52.4%
Moldova	24,786	197,761	172,975	697.9%
Chile	156,041	173,849	17,809	11.4%
Kosovo	0	150,000	150,000	-
Argentina	70,496	49,850	-20,646	-29.3%
Georgia	32,139	40,751	8,612	26.8%
United Kingdom	48,092	33,042	-15,050	-31.3%
Australia	9,821	30,966	21,145	215.3%
Other	26,912	36,659	9,748	36.2%
Total	13,064,189	13,796,077	731,888	5.6%

Source: NSI

Wine supplies from European Union member states increased by 9.6% compared to 2022, to 10,848 thousand liters (78.6% of total imports). Traditionally, the most significant quantities were imported Italy, Spain, France and Germany. Compared to a year prior, imports from Italian and German wines increased by 4.7% and 16.2%, respectively, while those of French and Spanish wines increased by 3.3% and 4.6%, respectively. The quantities delivered from Romania and Austria grew more than three and a half times on an annual basis, and that from Sweden - about eighteen times. In 2023, no wine was imported from Poland (at nearly 55,000 liters in 2022).

Imports of wine from third countries in 2023 shrinks by 7% on an annual basis, to 2,948 thousand litres, mostly due to smaller quantities coming from North Macedonia (by 36%) and South Africa (by 52.4%). At the same time, imports from New Zealand increased by 68%, from Australia - more than three times, and from Moldova - almost eight times. Within 2023 import of 150 thousand liters of wine from Kosovo was reported, in the absence of such in the previous year.

III. TRADE IN AGRICULTURAL GOODS

1. Key trading indicators

In 2023 the agrarian trade of Bulgaria amounts to 14,142.2 million EUR, 5.3% below the 2022 level. The export of agricultural goods decreased by 4% compared to the previous year, to 7,941.1 million EUR, and imports - by 7%, up to 6,201.1 million EUR. Thus, in 2023 there was a positive trade balance for Bulgaria amounting to EUR 1,740 million, 8.7% more on an annual basis.

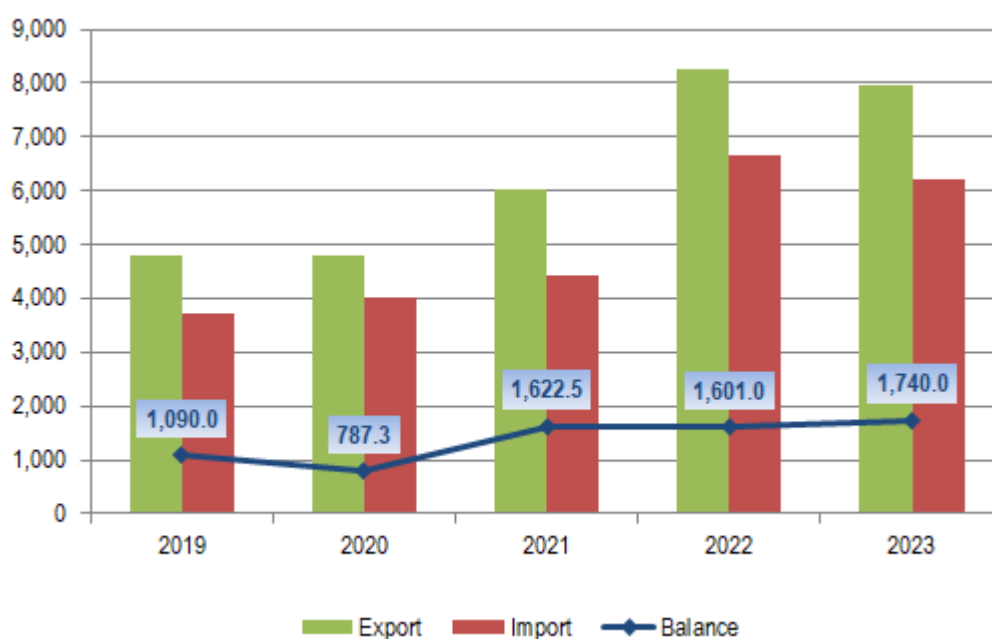
In 2023, the agricultural sector retained its importance in the country's foreign trade, forming 15.0% of total trade for the year, including 17.9% of total exports and 12.5% of total imports.

Table III.1. Agricultural trade in Bulgaria in the period 2019 - 2023 (EUR thousand)

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Change 2023/2022 (%)
Agricultural export	4,793,025	4,786,052	6,041,007	8,269,923	7,941,122	-4.0%
Share of total exports	16.0%	17.1%	17.3%	17.4%	17.9%	
Agricultural imports	3,702,996	3,998,783	4,418,463	6,668,884	6,201,085	-7.0%
Share of total imports	11.1%	13.0%	11.3%	12.1%	12.5%	
Balance	1,090,029	787,269	1,622,544	1,601,039	1,740,037	8.7%
Commodity exchange	8,496,021	8,784,835	10,459,470	14,938,807	14,142,207	-5.3%

Source: NSI and MAF calculations.

Figure III.1. Agricultural trade of Bulgaria (million EUR)

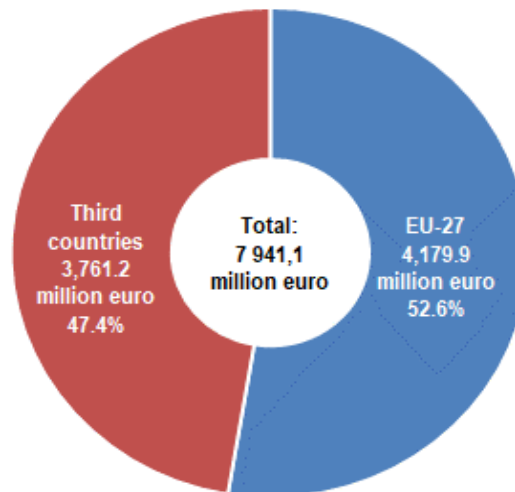


Source: NSI and MAF calculations

2. Structure of Bulgaria's agricultural trade by country

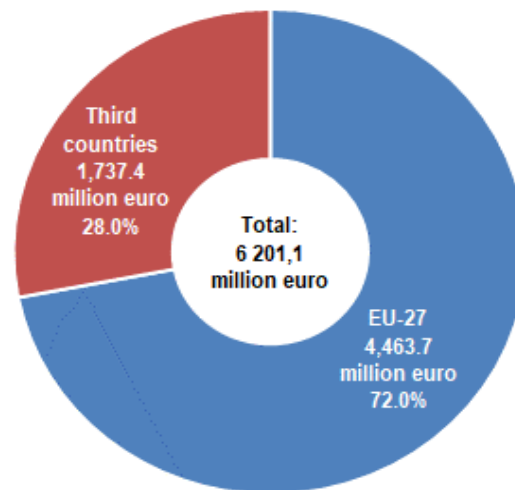
Trade in agricultural goods with the countries of the European Union confirms its leading role in 2023 as well. Trade with the Union represents 52.6% of Bulgaria's total agricultural exports and 72% of total agricultural imports, compared to 59.9% and 62.8% respectively in the previous year.

Figure III.2. Structure of Bulgaria's agricultural exports in 2023 by country



Source: NSI and MAF calculations

Figure III.3. Structure of Bulgaria's agricultural imports in 2023 by country



Source: NSI and MAF calculations

Reported unusually low EU share of total agricultural imports in 2022 is mainly due to the sharp increase in the supply of certain products from Ukraine (mainly sunflower oil and crude sunflower oil) following the measures taken at the European and international level to facilitate Ukrainian exports in connection with Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Subsequently, as a result of the introduced restrictions on the import of grain and oil crops from Ukraine (ban on the import of wheat, corn, sunflower and rapeseed from Ukraine to the territory of Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia from the beginning of May to the middle in September 2023, and then a licensing regime for the export of the same crops from Ukraine to the five countries), in 2023 there is a significant decrease in supplies from there and a corresponding restoration of the EU's relative weight in total agricultural imports.

2.1. Exports by country

The leading destinations of Bulgarian exports of agricultural goods in 2023 remain neighboring Greece and Romania, together forming nearly a quarter of the total agricultural exports for the year. They are followed by Spain, Turkey, China, Germany, Algeria, etc.

With almost all the most important partners within the EU, a decrease in exports compared to the previous year is reported, ranging from 1.8% (Germany) to 40.3% (Belgium), which leads to a contraction of the total value of shipments to the Union with 15.6%.

At the same time, exports to third countries grew by 13.4%, with the value of shipments to Morocco, South Korea, Indonesia and Thailand recording multiple increases. mainly due to higher exports of sunflower oil to Morocco and of wheat to the other three countries. Realization in Turkey and China is also expanding seriously - respectively by 46.3% and 93.9% in terms of value.

Table III.2. Export of agricultural goods by country (EUR thousand)

	2021	2022	2023	Share in total agricultural exports (2023)	Change 2023/2022	
					EUR thousand	%
TOTAL, including:	6,041,007	8,269,923	7,941,122	100.0%	-328,801	-4.0%
EU-27 total	3,754,932	4,953,404	4,179,895	52.6%	-773,509	-15.6%
Greece	744,863	1,003,727	855,590	10.8%	-148,137	-14.8%
Romania	679,769	813,944	669,176	8.4%	-144,768	-17.8%
Spain	438,192	616,227	565,037	7.1%	-51,190	-8.3%
Germany	371,305	476,626	468,007	5.9%	-8,619	-1.8%
The Netherlands	294,807	398,557	289,373	3.6%	-109,184	-27.4%
Italy	341,849	395,915	292,816	3.7%	-103,099	-26.0%
France	184,599	333,333	224,718	2.8%	-108,615	-32.6%
Poland	156,285	203,751	191,186	2.4%	-12,565	-6.2%
Belgium	97,678	140,621	83,973	1.1%	-56,648	-40.3%
Czech Republic	43,085	55,721	73,599	0.9%	17,878	32.1%
Hungary	67,373	84,052	69,996	0.9%	-14,056	-16.7%
Other	335,126	430,931	396,424	5.0%	-34,507	-8.0%
Third countries total	2,286,039	3,316,519	3,761,227	47.4%	444,708	13.4%
Turkey	357,824	346,887	507,604	6.4%	160,717	46.3%
China	161,498	247,710	480,339	6.0%	232,629	93.9%
Algeria	22,264	456,666	456,942	5.8%	276	0.1%
Indonesia	55,185	63,383	249,510	3.1%	186,127	293.7%
United Kingdom	159,220	198,080	172,405	2.2%	-25,675	-13.0%
USA	156,207	182,175	176,893	2.2%	-5,282	-2.9%
South Korea	148,881	35,405	136,047	1.7%	100,642	284.3%
Egypt	22,157	94,939	134,939	1.7%	40,000	42.1%
Morocco	47,021	37,787	132,217	1.7%	94,430	249.9%
Iraq	13,837	140,547	99,383	1.3%	-41,164	-29.3%

	2021	2022	2023	Share in total agricultural exports (2023)	Change 2023/2022	
					EUR thousand	%
Thailand	18,525	7,508	97,219	1.2%	89,711	1194.9%
South Africa	49,783	181,956	97,469	1.2%	-84,487	-46.4%
Tunisia	93,392	163,034	94,518	1.2%	-68,516	-42.0%
Serbia	55,076	72,443	82,030	1.0%	9,587	13.2%
India	27,693	217,090	72,664	0.9%	-144,426	-66.5%
Other	897,476	870,910	771,048	9.7%	-99,862	-11.5%

Source: NSI and MAF calculations.

2.2. Import by country

In 2023 the most significant is the import of agricultural goods from Romania, Germany and Greece, followed by Ukraine, Poland, Italy, the Netherlands, Turkey, etc.

Total agricultural imports from third countries are 30% below the level of the previous year, mainly due to a 60.7% drop in supplies from Ukraine, affected by the restriction measures on cereals and oilseeds of Ukrainian origin. Among other more important partners outside the EU, a decrease was registered in imports from Serbia (by 6.8%), Moldova (by 42.2%) and China (by 43.8%), and an increase - by the United Kingdom (by 20.3%), Turkey (with 23.6%) and Ivory Coast (with 89%).

The value of EU agricultural goods in 2023 grows by 6.6% year-on-year. Most Member States saw an increase in supply ranging from 2.6% (Greece) up to 59% (Slovakia). Arrivals from Austria (by 5.7%) and Romania (by 9%) decrease.

Table III.3. Imports of agricultural goods by country (EUR thousand)

	2021	2022	2023	Share in total agricultural imports (2023)	Change 2023/2022	
					EUR thousand	%
TOTAL, including:	4,418,463	6,668,884	6,201,085	100.0%	-467,799	-7.0%
EU-27 total	3,355,558	4,186,910	4,463,674	72.0%	276,764	6.6%
Romania	685,924	875,101	796,589	12.8%	-78,512	-9.0%
Germany	453,460	546,208	584,919	9.4%	38,711	7.1%
Greece	468,252	530,169	543,793	8.8%	13,624	2.6%
Poland	309,143	378,135	401,888	6.5%	23,753	6.3%
Italy	233,491	320,584	369,570	6.0%	48,986	15.3%
The Netherlands	262,181	321,940	353,611	5.7%	31,671	9.8%
Spain	162,054	217,332	284,675	4.6%	67,343	31.0%
Hungary	190,768	231,492	258,078	4.2%	26,586	11.5%
Belgium	88,301	124,319	174,266	2.8%	49,947	40.2%
France	146,909	157,603	170,504	2.7%	12,901	8.2%
Austria	79,160	112,640	106,244	1.7%	-6,396	-5.7%
Czech Republic	63,158	91,755	101,803	1.6%	10,048	11.0%
Denmark	37,693	53,625	64,904	1.0%	11,279	21.0%
Lithuania	40,364	40,822	48,355	0.8%	7,533	18.5%
Ireland	26,783	39,501	46,864	0.8%	7,363	18.6%

	2021	2022	2023	Share in total agricultural imports (2023)	Change 2023/2022	
					EUR thousand	%
Slovakia	26,939	29,015	46,134	0.7%	17,119	59.0%
Other	80,977	116,669	111,477	1.8%	-5,192	-4.5%
Third countries total	1,062,905	2,482,000	1,737,411	28.0%	-744,589	-30.0%
Ukraine	95,626	1,106,200	434,345	7.0%	-671,855	-60.7%
Turkey	261,181	278,878	344,775	5.6%	65,897	23.6%
Serbia	140,927	151,898	141,556	2.3%	-10,342	-6.8%
China	62,368	202,132	113,606	1.8%	-88,526	-43.8%
Ivory Coast	35,701	39,898	75,414	1.2%	35,516	89.0%
Moldova	38,158	121,489	70,234	1.1%	-51,255	-42.2%
United Kingdom	51,024	48,072	57,828	0.9%	9,756	20.3%
Northern Macedonia	34,494	43,562	43,690	0.7%	128	0.3%
Brazil	19,825	54,223	36,720	0.6%	-17,503	-32.3%
USA	21,659	27,589	33,102	0.5%	5,513	20.0%
Vietnam	21,886	28,590	25,990	0.4%	-2,600	-9.1%
Ecuador	23,021	27,926	25,287	0.4%	-2,639	-9.4%
Cambodia	*	*	21,508	0.3%	-	-
Myanmar	3,102	22,001	20,956	0.3%	-1,045	-4.7%
Other	253,933	329,542	292,400	4.7%	-37,142	-11.3%

Source: NSI and MAF calculations.

3. Structure of Bulgaria's agricultural trade by products

3.1. Export by products

The leading groups of products in the structure of Bulgarian agricultural exports in 2023 are cereals (26.9% share of the total value of agricultural goods sold outside the country), fats of vegetable or animal origin (11.1%) and oilseeds (10.6%). Exports of cereal plants increased by 13.6% compared to the previous year, while those of the other two groups decreased by 49.6% and 8.2% respectively. The realization abroad of residues from the food industry and animal feed, food products prepared on the basis of cereal plants; cocoa products, milk and dairy products, meat and offal, soft drinks and others also remains relatively high.

Table III.4. Agricultural exports from Bulgaria by product groups in the period 2022 - 2023 (EUR thousand)

		2022		2023		Change 2023/2022 (%)
		EUR, thousand	share of the total agricultural exports %	EUR thousand	share of the total agricultural exports %	
	Total agricultural goods, including:	8,269,923	100%	7,941,122	100.0%	-4.0%
1	Live animals	64,625	0.8%	210,974	2.7%	226.5%
2	Meat and edible offal	244,939	3.0%	285,962	3.6%	16.7%
3	Fish and crustaceans, mollusks and other aquatic invertebrates	50,573	0.6%	50,942	0.6%	0.7%

		2022		2023		Change 2023/2022 (%)
		EUR, thousand	share of the total agricultural exports %	EUR thousand	share of the total agricultural exports %	
4	Milk and milk products; poultry eggs; natural honey; edible products of animal origin, not elsewhere specified	271,945	3.3%	278,712	3.5%	2.5%
5	Other products of animal origin, not elsewhere specified	18,519	0.2%	21,459	0.3%	15.9%
6	Live plants and flower products	9,566	0.1%	7,396	0.1%	-22.7%
7	Edible vegetables, plants, roots and tubers	166,677	2.0%	170,197	2.1%	2.1%
8	Edible fruit; citrus or melon peels	150,862	1.8%	155,513	2.0%	3.1%
9	Coffee, tea, maté and spices	117,609	1.4%	113,275	1.4%	-3.7%
10	Wheat plants	1,880,871	22.7%	2,135,774	26.9%	13.6%
11	Milling products; malt and starch; inulin; wheat gluten	115,082	1.4%	82,101	1.0%	-28.7%
12	Oilseeds and oleaginous fruits; seeds for sowing and fruits; industrial or medicinal plants; straw and feed	918,236	11.1%	842,643	10.6%	-8.2%
13	Natural varnishes, glues, resins and other plant juices and extracts	2,763	0.0%	3,066	0.0%	11.0%
14	Weaving materials and other products of vegetable origin, not elsewhere specified or included	1,341	0.0%	521	0.0%	-61.1%
15	Fats and oils of animal or vegetable origin; processed fats for food purposes; waxes of animal or vegetable origin	1,748,158	21.1%	880,390	11.1%	-49.6%
16	Products of meat, fish or crustacean products, mollusks or other aquatic invertebrates	127,577	1.5%	133,328	1.7%	4.5%
17	Sugar and sugar confectionery	213,956	2.6%	291,204	3.7%	36.1%
18	Cocoa and cocoa products	340,246	4.1%	404,097	5.1%	18.8%
19	Food prepared from cereals, flour, starch, farina or milk; pastry confectionery	375,439	4.5%	424,604	5.3%	13.1%
20	Food products from vegetables, fruit or other parts of plants	189,637	2.3%	202,492	2.5%	6.8%
21	Various types of food products	199,330	2.4%	214,902	2.7%	7.8%
22	Non-alcoholic and alcoholic beverages and vinegars	251,346	3.0%	245,968	3.1%	-2.1%
23	Residues and waste from the food industry; prepared animal feed	618,820	7.5%	555,482	7.0%	-10.2%
24	Tobacco and processed tobacco substitutes	191,806	2.3%	230,121	2.9%	20.0%

Source: NSI and MAF calculations.

The decline in total agricultural exports in 2023 is mostly related to the significant drop in sunflower oil (by EUR 783.1 million or by 49.5%). This was somewhat offset by growth in the export of other products, such as wheat (with EUR 182.1 million or by 13.2%), live cattle (with EUR 130.2 million or more than three times), bakery, pastry, confectionery or biscuit products (by 47.8 million euros or by 14.9%), chocolate and other food products containing cocoa (by 46 million EUR or by 18.9%) and corn (by EUR 40.3 million or by 12.9%).

Table III.5. Leading products in agricultural exports from Bulgaria (EUR thousand)

	2022		2023		Change 2023/2022	
	Quantity (tons)	Value (EUR thousand)	Quantity (tons)	Value (EUR thousand)	Quantity	Value
Wheat and a wheat and rye mix	4,051,292	1,382,364	6,422,378	1,564,501	58.5%	13.2%
Sunflower oil, cottonseed oil or safflower oil	910,012	1,581,751	783,361	798,608	-13.9%	-49.5%
Sunflower seeds, even crushed	660,346	689,553	874,490	695,191	32.4%	0.8%
Bakery, pastry or biscuit products	103,866	319,706	105,284	367,469	1.4%	14.9%
Corn	963,503	312,915	1,364,853	353,248	41.7%	12.9%
Chocolate and other food products containing cocoa	51,709	243,630	53,256	289,608	3.0%	18.9%
Oil cakes and other solid residues	931,961	316,945	843,159	254,847	-9.5%	-19.6%
Poultry meat and offal	37,560	204,524	34,384	209,059	-8.5%	2.2%
Preparations used in animal feeding	111,411	204,898	137,427	213,152	23.4%	4.0%
Food preparations not elsewhere specified or included	45,154	172,657	43,493	189,356	-3.7%	9.7%
Live bovine animals	14,435	48,987	43,666	179,167	202.5%	265.7%
Sugars, including lactose, maltose, glucose and fructose	211,121	126,078	192,586	158,442	-8.8%	25.7%
Cheese and curd	23,517	111,656	22,190	123,897	-5.6%	11.0%
Fruit, nuts and other parts of plants fit for consumption, prepared or preserved	38,896	104,790	39,914	120,973	2.6%	15.4%
Raw or unprocessed tobacco; tobacco waste	23,658	108,292	21,721	115,451	-8.2%	6.6%

Source: NSI and MAF calculations.

3.2. Import by products

In the first place in the structure of the total import of agricultural goods in 2023 is ranked the group of meats and offal suitable for consumption, with a share of 10.4% (at 7.8% in 2022) and a growth of 23.8% on an annual basis in value terms. The significantly lower import of fats and oils of animal or vegetable origin and of oil-bearing seeds and fruits compared to the previous year leads to a decrease in the relative weight of these two groups in the total agricultural import to 7.9% and 7.7%, respectively. This is followed by non-alcoholic and alcoholic beverages and vinegar, tobacco and processed tobacco substitutes, cocoa and cocoa products, milk and milk products, etc.

Table III.6. Agricultural imports from Bulgaria by product groups in the period 2022 - 2023 (EUR thousand)

		2022		2023		Change 2023/2022 %
		EUR, thousand	Share of the total agricultural import %		Share of the total agricultural import %	
	Total agricultural goods, including:	6,668,884	100%	6,201,085	100%	-7.0%
1	Live animals	28,459	0.4%	38,935	0.6%	36.8%
2	Meat and edible offal	520,014	7.8%	643,741	10.4%	23.8%
3	Fish and crustaceans, mollusks and other aquatic invertebrates	128,060	1.9%	128,179	2.1%	0.1%
4	Milk and milk products; poultry eggs; natural honey; edible products of animal origin, not elsewhere specified	403,163	6.0%	413,118	6.7%	2.5%
5	Other products of animal origin, not elsewhere specified	28,930	0.4%	27,629	0.4%	-4.5%
6	Live plants and flower products	38,800	0.6%	45,290	0.7%	16.7%

		2022		2023		Change 2023/2022 %
		EUR, thousand	Share of the total agricultural import %		Share of the total agricultural import %	
7	Edible vegetables, plants, roots and tubers	251,698	3.8%	298,981	4.8%	18.8%
8	Edible fruit; citrus or melon peels	303,871	4.6%	350,909	5.7%	15.5%
9	Coffee, tea, maté and spices	185,840	2.8%	184,758	3.0%	-0.6%
10	Wheat plants	190,286	2.9%	159,988	2.6%	-15.9%
11	Milling products; malt and starch; inulin; wheat gluten	35,705	0.5%	35,818	0.6%	0.3%
12	Oilseeds and oleaginous fruits; seeds for sowing and fruits; industrial or medicinal plants; straw and feed	1,080,412	16.2%	475,734	7.7%	-56.0%
13	Natural varnishes, glues, resins and other plant juices and extracts	31,301	0.5%	16,806	0.3%	-46.3%
14	Weaving materials and other products of vegetable origin, not elsewhere specified or included	2,330	0.0%	2,021	0.0%	-13.3%
15	Fats and oils of animal or vegetable origin; processed fats for food purposes; waxes of animal or vegetable origin	878,109	13.2%	491,579	7.9%	-44.0%
16	Products of meat, fish or crustacean products, mollusks or other aquatic invertebrates	91,734	1.4%	109,870	1.8%	19.8%
17	Sugar and sugar confectionery	238,510	3.6%	249,972	4.0%	4.8%
18	Cocoa and cocoa products	336,041	5.0%	419,635	6.8%	24.9%
19	Food prepared from cereals, flour, starch, farina or milk; pastry confectionery	304,805	4.6%	368,511	5.9%	20.9%
20	Food products from vegetables, fruit or other parts of plants	203,994	3.1%	220,826	3.6%	8.3%
21	Various types of food products	332,458	5.0%	374,054	6.0%	12.5%
22	Non-alcoholic and alcoholic beverages and vinegars	413,132	6.2%	465,233	7.5%	12.6%
23	Residues and waste from the food industry; prepared animal feed	261,984	3.9%	255,301	4.1%	-2.6%
24	Tobacco and processed tobacco substitutes	379,249	5.7%	424,197	6.8%	11.9%

Source: NSI and MAF calculations.

In 2023 a significant drop in the value of imported sunflowers was recorded - by 605.6 million EUR or by 62.9% and sunflower oil - by 208.8 million EUR or by 47.6%. Among the leading goods in total agricultural imports, a more significant increase on an annual basis was observed in pork (by 33.3%), bakery, pastry, confectionery or biscuit products (by 23%), ethyl alcohol (by 22%), tobacco products (by 16.5%), chocolate products (by 15.1%) and poultry (by 14.8%).

Table III.7. Leading products in agricultural imports in Bulgaria (EUR thousand)

	2022		2023		Change 2023/2022	
	Quantity (tons)	Value (EUR thousand)	Quantity (tons)	Value (EUR thousand)	Quantity	Value
Pork	131,971	280,955	126,995	374,459	-3.8%	33.3%
Sunflower seeds, even crushed	1,337,262	962,725	656,768	357,109	-50.9%	-62.9%
Chocolate and other food products containing cocoa	47,210	226,264	46,947	260,494	-0.6%	15.1%
Bakery, pastry or biscuit products	73,117	205,454	77,357	252,700	5.8%	23.0%
Sunflower oil, cottonseed oil or safflower oil	308,935	438,648	257,783	229,838	-16.6%	-47.6%
Cigars (including those with cut ends), cigarillos and cigarettes of tobacco or of	15,453	188,522	16,571	219,547	7.2%	16.5%

	2022		2023		Change 2023/2022	
	Quantity (tons)	Value (EUR thousand)	Quantity (tons)	Value (EUR thousand)	Quantity	Value
tobacco substitutes						
Food preparations not elsewhere specified or included	29,793	182,115	28,776	203,650	-3.4%	11.8%
Cane or beet sugar and chemically pure sucrose, in solid form	304,633	178,508	233,885	176,223	-23.2%	-1.3%
Waters, including mineral waters and aerated waters, and other non-alcoholic beverages	213,644	154,073	221,069	176,092	3.5%	14.3%
Undenatured ethyl alcohol of an alcoholic strength by volume of less than 80% vol; distillates, liqueurs and other spirituous beverages (excluding alcoholic preparations for making beverages)	23,612	139,086	25,132	169,709	6.4%	22.0%
Poultry meat and offal	93,592	141,207	103,223	162,131	10.3%	14.8%
Cheese and curd	35,072	146,395	37,586	160,186	7.2%	9.4%
Coffee, whether or not roasted or decaffeinated; coffee shells and husks; coffee substitutes containing coffee	35,944	161,039	34,073	159,306	-5.2%	-1.1%
Preparations used in animal feeding	99,375	125,974	98,547	139,431	-0.8%	10.7%
Products containing tobacco, reconstituted tobacco, nicotine or tobacco or nicotine substitutes intended for inhalation without burning the products; other products containing nicotine	1,882	92,834	2,331	110,204	23.8%	18.7%

Source: NSI and MAF calculations.

4. Development of foreign trade in agricultural goods in 2024

According to preliminary data from the NSI, in the first six months of 2024, exports of agricultural goods amounted to 3,059.7 million EUR - 22.5% less compared to the same period in 2023, mainly due to a decrease in the value of wheat sold outside the country (by 46.9%), corn (by 47.9%), sunflower (by 36.4%) and sunflower oil (by 32.4%). At the same time, exports of cocoa products (by 12.0%), coffee (by 13.2%), food products used in the food industry (by 6.0%), food products prepared based on cereals (by 11.8%), etc. are increasing.

The leading product groups in the structure of the country's agricultural exports during the period January - June 2024 are cereals and fats of vegetable or animal origin, followed by oilseeds; cocoa products, residues and waste from the food industry and prepared animal feeds; food products prepared on the basis of cereals; meat and offal, dairy products, eggs and honey; food products used for the food industry, live animals, etc.

Imports of agricultural goods for the six months of 2024 reported a slight increase on an annual basis - by 5.0% to EUR 3,088.5 million.

Thus, for the first half of 2024, a negative trade balance for Bulgaria was formed in the amount of EUR 28.8 million, compared to a positive balance of just over EUR 1 billion for the same period of the previous year, 2023.

Main partners in the country's agricultural trade remain the EU countries. In the first six months of 2024, the exchange of agricultural goods with the EU decreased by 8% on an annual basis, forming 54% of total agricultural exports and 70.7% of total agricultural imports.

5. Activities to support the export of agricultural products

In order to provide export support, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food collects and provides information on potential markets for domestically produced agricultural products. Market analyses and studies on the

opportunity of exporting various agricultural products to trading partners from both the EU and third countries are being conducted. During negotiations between EU and third countries, MAF followed the process related to Free Trade Agreements, aiming to ease administrative burdens in trade and commodity exchange. The subject of consideration are the trade and economic relations in the agricultural sector between Bulgaria and the respective countries, with which trade agreements are to be concluded.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food traditionally organizes the country's participation in various international events and exhibitions for the food industry in order to promote and build a recognizable image of Bulgarian agricultural products, support exports and develop international contacts between business operators in the sector.

In 2024, national stands of the Republic of Bulgaria with the participation of producers of honey, wine, dairy and meat products, organic products, essential oils and other attended the Green Week International Exhibition in agriculture, food industry and gardening in Berlin, Federal Republic of Germany, BIOFACH 2024 International Exhibition of Organic Food in Nuremberg, Federal Republic of Germany, and the PROWINE 2024 International Exhibition of wine and alcoholic beverages in Dusseldorf, Federal Republic of Germany, and the AGRA 2024 International Exhibition of Agriculture and Food in Gornja Radgona, Republic of Slovenia.

IV. SUPPORT OF THE AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY

1. Support under the First Pillar of CAP

1.1. Area-Based Direct Payments, Transitional National Aid and Coupled Support

Financial support under the schemes and interventions for direct payments is provided by the EAGF and the NB. In the calendar year 2023 in the form of direct payments, funds totaling BGN 1,461,967,724 have been authorized for support applications submitted for Campaign `2022 and Campaign `2023.

2022 campaign

Table IV.1. Authorized funds for the 2023 campaign in 2022

Scheme	Number of valid applications submitted	Number of applications with authorized payments	Percentage distribution of budget (%)		Authorized amount (BGN)
			EAGF	NB	
SAPS	54,465	80	100	-	75,655,930
GDP	54,465	52,588	100	-	465,762,454
SRP	54,383	52,508	100	-	107,837,867
YFS	3,221	3,203	100	-	2,405,873
SSF	1,847	1,846	100	-	2,020,608
SDC	2,932	3	100	-	52,193
SMKH	4,552	15	100	-	72,582
SSCc-meat	515	6	100	-	44,374
SMR	1,792	2	100	-	3,893
SSC	2,079	1	100	-	16,344
SMLK-milk	895	1	100	-	16,296
SDC-MA	340	0	100	-	0
Buffaloes	256	1	100	-	17,172
SF (main)	5,776	5,683	100	-	33,200,288
SF (other)	3,404	3,329	100	-	7,579,470
CV-TCGE	1,552	1,522	100	-	4,753,563
CV-CCWM	2,710	2,667	100	-	5,146,350
SV (main)	2,439	2,407	100	-	15,755,697
SV-P	1,096	1,076	100	-	4,070,779
SVg	1,114	1,101	100	-	8,530,717
SPC	15,477	15,361	100	-	31,120,758
Cotton	56	56	100	-	1,960,062
TMSA1	3,464	12	-	100	110,343

Scheme	Number of valid applications submitted	Number of applications with authorized payments	Percentage distribution of budget (%)		Authorized amount (BGN)
			EAGF	NB	
TMSA3	5,105	11	-	100	155,450
TNT	38,218	38,208	-	100	69,993,202
Financial discipline	35,565	35,565	100	-	21,991,499
TOTAL					858,273,764

Source: SFA-PA

For Campaign `2022, a total of 96,643 support applications were accepted under all schemes and measures. For convenience of farmers, the SFA-RA Electronic Services System (ESS), which contains both public and individual information about the submitted applications for support has been in operation. Part of the ESS is the reference for declared cadastral properties, which publishes information about the properties from the map of the restored property or the cadastral map, falling within the registered agricultural plots for the last four campaigns.

2023 campaign

For Campaign `2023, farmers are supported by the following interventions for direct payments, included in the Strategic Plan for the Development of Agriculture and Rural Areas for the period 2023-2027, financed with European and national funds:

- Basic income support for sustainability;
- Additional redistributive income support for sustainability;
- Payments for small farmers;
- Additional income support for young farmers;
- Organic farming (livestock) eco scheme;
- Eco scheme for maintenance and improvement of biodiversity and ecological infrastructure;
- Eco scheme for preservation and restoration of soil potential - promoting green manuring and organic fertilization;
- Eco scheme to reduce pesticide use;
- Eco scheme for ecological maintenance of perennials;
- Eco scheme for extensive maintenance of permanent grasslands;
- Eco scheme for maintenance and improvement of biodiversity in forest ecosystems;
- Eco scheme for diversification of cultivated crops;
- Coupled with production support for dairy cows;
- Coupled with production support of dairy cows included in breeding programs;
- Coupled with production support for meat cows;
- Coupled with production support of meat cows included in breeding programs;
- Coupled with production support of cows of endangered breeds;
- Coupled with production support of cattle in mountain regions;
- Coupled with production support for buffaloes;
- Coupled with production support of ewes and goats included in breeding programs;
- Coupled with production support of ewes and goats of endangered breeds;
- Coupled with production support of ewes and goats in mountain regions;
- Coupled support for fruits;

- Coupled support for fruit crops until fruiting;
- Coupled support for vegetables (tomatoes, cucumbers, gherkins and eggplant);
- Coupled support for vegetables (pepper);
- Coupled support for vegetables (carrots, cabbage, watermelons and melons);
- Coupled support for vegetables (starch potatoes, onions and garlic);
- Coupled support for greenhouse production;
- Coupled support for fruits and vegetables in mountain regions;
- Coupled support for protein crops;
- Specific support for cotton;
- Transitional national aid for cattle, decoupled with production;
- Transitional national aid for ewes and/or does, coupled with production;
- Transitional national aid scheme for tobacco, decoupled with production.

In total, 64,941 applications for assistance were received for all interventions. Payments for the campaign started in October 2022 with the authorization of funds under the transitional national support intervention in the Livestock sector. Through the month of december 2023 the subsidies under the intervention for transitional national aid for ewes and/or ewes and under the intervention for basic income support for sustainability have been disbursed.

Table IV.2. Authorized funds for the 2023 campaign in 2022

Intervention	Number of valid applications submitted	Number of applications with authorized payments	Distribution of budget (%)		Authorized amount (BGN)
			EAGF	NB	
BISS	48,306	46,990	100	-	550,620,390
TMSA1	6,060	6,017	-	100	31,366,432
TMSA3	4,984	4,972	-	100	21,707,138
TOTAL					603,693,960

Source: SFA-PA

Area support interventions

Basic Income Support for Sustainability

During Campaign `2023, the intervention "Basic income support for sustainability" is implemented, which is a natural continuation of the main scheme for the previous program period - Scheme for a single payment per area. The minimum size of an eligible for support farm is 0.5 ha and of a parcel - 0.1 ha.

As a tool to overcome the structural imbalance, the reduction of payments introduced by the `2015 Campaign is applied. With the aim of a more balanced distribution and targeting of support in accordance with the prioritized needs in the 2023-2027 SPARD, an upper limit has been set for the amount of basic income support for sustainability, which is granted to a farmer for a given calendar year. The reduction is 100% for the amount exceeding 100,000 euros per BISS. Before applying the reduction, from the amount of direct payments for the relevant calendar year, the costs of salaries and insurance for each employed person in the farm are deducted, in the amount of no more than 2.5 times the average gross monthly salary, determined by the National Statistical Institute for Economic activity "Agriculture, forestry and fisheries" for the year of application.

48,306 applications for support with a total declared area of 3,836,920 ha have been submitted for the 2023 Campaign under the BISS. As of 30.06.2024, the total amount of authorized funds is BGN 736,973,219, with payment per unit area of BGN 754,346,977. The amount of aid per unit area set was 198.18 BGN/ha.

Additional Redistributive Income Support for Sustainability

The intervention aims to promote economically more vulnerable small and medium-sized farms. Support is provided as additional financial support for the first 30 hectares of agricultural holdings with a maximum size of up to 600 hectares.

For Campaign `2023, the intervention has an indicative budget of BGN 180,267,186. In the the amount foreseen to be generated by the imposition of reductions in payments under BISS (payment ceiling) pursuant to Article 57(2) of the Farmers Support Act, which for the campaign amounts to 8,958,864 BGN. 46,799 farmers applied for funding declarig an area of 726,597 ha. As of 30.06.2024, the total amount of authorized funds amounted to BGN 164,165,751, with payment per unit area of BGN 230.76/ha.

Payments for small farmers

The aim of the intervention is to support the sustainability and increase the development potential of small farms. The support is provided in the form of a one-time sum in the amount of 1,000 to 1,250 EUR, under reduced administrative conditions. The subsidy is paid on an annual basis to small farmers who have submitted an application under the basic intervention (BISS). In order to benefit from targeted support, applicants must meet the minimum requirements for receiving direct payments.

5,124 farmers submitted applications for support under the intervention for the 2023 campaign. As of June 30, 2024, the authorized funds amounted to BGN 9,820,072 with an annual budget of 9,857,232 BGN.

Additional income support for young farmers

Under the intervention, support is provided to farmers who are no more than 40 years old in 2023, have started farming in the last 5 years and have professional skills and competences in the field of agriculture. The eligible age of applicants and the period of establishment of the holding are basic requirements that ensure effective targeting of funding to the target group of beneficiaries, contribute to the attraction and retention of young farmers in agriculture and the renewal of generations in the sector. The requirement for professional skills and competences in the field of agriculture and/or veterinary medicine and/or economic education with an agricultural focus also contributes in a qualitative way to the correct targeting of support.

The indicative budget for the 2023 campaign amounts to BGN 23,642,297. Applications for support were submitted by 2,039 young farmers. As of June 30, 2024, BGN 14,716,469 BGN were authorized under the intervention. The set payment amount per unit area was BGN 244.47/ha.

Climate, environment and animal welfare schemes (Eco schemes)

With the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy from 2023 the previous "green" direct payments are replaced by climate, environment and animal welfare schemes (Eco schemes). According to Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 02.12.2021 establishing support rules for the strategic plans to be drawn up by the Member States under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP strategic plans) and financed by the EAGF and the EAFRD, and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1305/2013 and (EU) No 1307/2013, within the framework of direct payments Member States should establish voluntary eco-schemes for farmers. Eco-schemes should aim to improve the environmental and climate performance of the CAP and go beyond the mandatory requirements already provided for under the ex ante conditionality system.

During Campaign `2023, the following eco schemes are implemented:

Organic farming (livestock) eco scheme

The eco-scheme supports farmers who raise farm animals (organic and in transition) of the following species - cattle, buffaloes, sheep and/or goats, pigs for grazing (Eastern Balkan pig, according to the applicable national legislation) and farm permanently grassed areas and/or areas occupied by fodder crops (organic and in transition).

111 farmers applied for support for the 2023 campaign. The intervention has an annual indicative allocation of financial resources in the amount of BGN 13,026,923.

Eco scheme for maintenance and improvement of biodiversity and ecological infrastructure

The action of the intervention is aimed at creating conditions for achieving the goals of the "Green Deal" and, above all, at the goal: "Returning at least 10% of agricultural land to high diversity landscape features by 2030".

6,027 farmers submitted applications for support under the eco scheme for the 2023 campaign. The determined annual indicative budget amounts to BGN 67,250,414.

Eco scheme for preservation and restoration of soil potential - promoting green manuring and organic fertilization

The financial support under the eco scheme encourages the reduction of the use of artificial fertilizers and their replacement with natural nutrients formed as a result of the introduction of external natural organic matter into the soil.

The indicative budget of the intervention for the 2023 campaign was BGN 54,517,520. 3,686 subsidy applications with a total declared area of 1,162,439 ha were submitted. As of 30.06.2024, the total amount of authorized funds amounted to BGN 107,673 038, with payment per unit area of BGN of 104.56/ha.

Eco scheme to reduce pesticide use

The intervention includes requirements leading to a reduction in the quantities of plant protection products used when growing crop production. The implementation of the eco-scheme will contribute to the fulfillment of the objectives of the "Green Deal" and, above all, to the goal: "Reduce pesticide use and risk by 50% and reduce the use of more dangerous pesticides by 2030."

For the '2023 Campaign, 14,510 applications for assistance were submitted, with a total area of 2,572,789 ha. The annual indicative budget amounts to BGN 67,967,145. As of the end of June 2024, payments in the amount of BGN 200,776 were authorized. The set payment for a unit area was BGN 102.14/ha for arable land, 193.20 for permanent crops and BGN 9.20/ha for permanently grassed areas.

Eco scheme for ecological maintenance of perennials

The intervention supports farmers growing perennial crops. It aims to improve the nutritional balance and reduce the amount of nutrients added with fertilization. Practices are encouraged to maintain inter-row nitrogen-fixing crops and to create a natural barrier to the runoff of PPP residues off-plot by maintaining strips of natural vegetation along the edges of perennials.

The determined indicative budget for Campaign '2023 amounts to BGN 14,636,816. There were 2,863 submitted applications for intervention support, with 27,305 ha of requested areas.

Eco scheme for extensive maintenance of permanent grasslands

The intervention introduces an extensive management regime of the grassland ecosystem, which leads to an upgrade in the quality aspect of the condition of the permanently grassed areas. The support contributes to preventing the loss of grasslands by reducing the processes of trampling and erosion, ruderalisation and the development of atypical species, as well as to significantly improving the capacity of grassland systems to absorb carbon and mitigate climate change.

For the 2023 Campaign under the intervention, which has an indicative budget of BGN 42,928,871, 1,457 farmers with a declared total area of 73,993 ha applied for participation.

Eco scheme for maintenance and improvement of biodiversity in forest ecosystems

The intervention is directed to maintenance and improvement of biodiversity in forest ecosystems. The introduction of mature crops, which are favorable for feeding wild animals, is encouraged in the practice of bordering agricultural lands. The plants are not treated with plant protection products, which reduces the chemical pressure on the agricultural area. Agricultural crops are not used for production, but are left to feed wild animals and birds.

The indicative budget determined for the Campaign '2023 under the eco scheme amounts to BGN 8,540,294. Applications for support were submitted by 142 farmers.

Eco scheme for diversification of cultivated crops

The fulfillment of the requirements under the eco scheme ensures a greater number of crops grown in the farm. This contributes to minimizing the risks to the farm due to climate change, increasing the content of humus and nutrients in the soil and protecting against erosion. Natural corridors and a food base for protected species, including birds, are created.

The intervention has an annual indicative budget of BGN 125,091,826. For Campaign `2023, 19,552 applications were submitted with a total area of 2,618,064 ha declared for support. The determined rate per unit area amounts to BGN 75.10/ha for agricultural holdings up to 10 hectares, BGN 57.89/ha for agricultural holdings between 10 and 30 hectares and BGN 31.29/ha for agricultural holdings over 30 hectares. The authorized funds as of 30.06.2024 amounted to BGN 80,432,866.

Coupled support interventions

Coupled with production support for dairy cows

The intervention with an annual Indicative budget of BGN 22,129,142 is aimed at supporting farms in the dairy sector to maintain the level of milk produced.

2,694 farmers applied for support for the 2023 campaign, declaring a total of 75,908 animals. The set rate per animal was BGN 328.26 a head for the first 150 eligible animals and BGN 262.61 a head for the animals over the 150th eligible one. As of June 30, 2024, BGN 20,679,265 were authorized under the intervention.

Coupled with production support of dairy cows included in breeding programs

For Campaign `2023 under the intervention, which has an indicative budget of BGN 33,732,387, 741 farmers applied, claiming a total of 77,838 animals. The set aid per animal was BGN 483.65 a head for the first 150 eligible animals and BGN 386.92 a head for the animals over the 150th eligible one. As of the end of June 2024, payments in the amount of BGN 32,517,047 were authorized.

Coupled with production support for meat cows

The annual indicative budget set for the intervention amounted to BGN 27,661,429. For Campaign `2023, 3,939 applications were submitted, covering a total of 111,212 animals. The rate per animal was BGN 262.17 a head for the first 150 eligible animals and BGN 209.74 a head for the animals over the 150th eligible one. As of June 30, 2024, BGN 26,192,106 were authorized under the intervention.

Coupled with production support of meat cows included in breeding programs

The indicative budget of the intervention for the 2023 campaign was BGN 4,352,064 195 subsidy applications were submitted with a total of 11,499 animals claimed. At a rate of 393.78 BGN/head for the first 150 eligible animals and 315.02 BGN/head for animals above the 150th eligible animal, as of June 30, 2024, funds in the amount of 4,266,525 BGN have been authorized.

Coupled with production support of cows of endangered breeds

The intervention has an annual indicative budget of BGN 4,303,138 454 farmers applied for Campaign `2023, with a total of 23,069 animals declared. The payment per animal was BGN 198.47 a head for the first 150 eligible animals and BGN 158.77 a head for the animals over the 150th eligible one. The authorized funds as of June 30, 2024. amount to BGN 4,221,650.

Coupled with production support of cattle in mountain regions

An indicative budget of BGN 966,382 has been determined for the 2023 Campaign under the intervention. Applications were submitted by 514 farmers. The aid for one animal amounted to BGN 277.29/head. As of the end of June 2024, payments in the amount of BGN 924,485 were authorized.

Coupled with production support for buffaloes

Support for buffalo breeding, as a vulnerable sector, is provided through a separate direct payment intervention. The support is aimed at farmers who breed 10 or more buffaloes.

The indicative budget of the intervention for the 2023 campaign was BGN 4,487,300 249 farmers applied, with a total of 12,907 animals declared for assistance. The rate per animal was BGN 406.67 a head for

the first 150 eligible animals and BGN 325.33 a head for the animals over the 150th eligible one. The authorized funds as of June 30, 2024, amount to BGN 3,838,145.

Coupled with production support of ewes and goats included in breeding programs

The intervention with an indicative annual budget of BGN 16,535,385 is aimed at farmers who raise 50 or more ewes of the same breed included in breeding programs and/or 20 or more female goats of the same breed included in breeding programs.

1,218 farmers have applied for the 2023 Campaign, and a total of 207,040 animals were declared for support. The payment per animal was BGN 87.70 a head for the first 300 eligible animals and BGN 70.15 a head for the animals over the 300th eligible one. As of June 30, 2024 funds in the amount of BGN 15,492,793 were authorized under the intervention.

Coupled with production support of ewes and goats in mountain regions

The support is directed to farmers who raise from 10 to 49 ewes and/or does are funded, in order for the level of production in this category of farms to be kept the same.

For the Campaign `2023 intervention, which has an indicative budget of BGN 2,010,771, 1,513 farmers applied, claiming a total of 41,049 ewes and/or goats. The rate for one animal amounted to BGN 49.97/head per eligible animal. The authorized payments as of 30.06.2024 Amount to BGN 1,956,026.

Coupled with production support of ewes and goats of endangered breeds

The tentatively allocated financial resources under the intervention for Campaign `2023 amount to BGN 6,761,682. 850 farmers applied for support, with a total of 132,997 animals declared. The determined rate is BGN 53.75/head for the first 300 eligible animals and BGN 42.99/head for every animal over 300. As of the end of the first six months of 2024, payments in the amount of BGN 6,468,472 were authorized.

Coupled support for fruits

For Campaign `2023, 7,510 farmers submitted an application for intervention support for areas with a total size of 28,654 ha. The specified indicative budget is BGN 41,429,111. For the crops of plums and dessert grapes, the support is BGN 1,033.01/ha, and for the other eligible crops under the intervention - BGN 2,066.03/ha. By the end of June 2024, BGN 38,948,223 were authorized under it.

Coupled support for fruit crops until fruiting

The authorized until 30.06.2024. funds for the intervention amount to 2,285,488 BGN, with an annual indicative budget of 2,576,177 BGN, For the `2023 Campaign, 1,875 support applications were submitted, covering a total area of 2,752 ha. The rate per unit area set was BGN 985.14/ha.

Coupled support for vegetables (tomatoes, cucumbers, gherkins and eggplant)

For Campaign `2023, an application for assistance under the intervention was submitted by 1,492 farmers who declared a total area of 2,690 ha. The set indicative budget amounted to BGN 4,845,769, and the rate per unit of area was BGN 2,031.64/ha for areas up to 30 ha and BGN 1,354.44/ha for areas over 30 ha. As of June 30, 2024, the authorized funds amounted to BGN 4,543,138.

Coupled support for vegetables (pepper)

For the Campaign `2023 under the intervention with an indicative budget of BGN 5,573,418, 1,061 farmers have applied, with a total area of 2,007 ha. The payment for a unit area was BGN 2,852.96/ha for the first up to 30 ha of the farm and BGN 1,901.98/ha for the areas over 30 ha. As of the end of June 2024, authorized funds amounted to BGN 5,182,151.

Coupled support for vegetables (carrots, cabbage, watermelons and melons)

The indicative intervention budget for Campaign `2023 is BGN 9,249,192, and the determined rate per unit area is BGN 1,251.24/ha for the first up to 30 hectares of the farm and BGN 834.15/ha for areas above the 30th hectare. For the `2023 Campaign, 2,709 farmers submitted applications, with a total of 7,748 ha of areas requested for support. Up to June 30, 2024 payments with a total value of BGN 8,666,318 were authorized.

Coupled support for vegetables (starch potatoes, onions and garlic)

The authorized funds for the intervention until the end of June 2024 amount to 4,249,143 BGN, with an annual indicative budget of 4,483,584 BGN. 728 farmers have applied for Campaign `2023, declaring an area of 3,444 ha. The set rate for a unit area was BGN 1,625.09/ha for the first 30 ha of the farm and BGN 1,083.40/ha for areas over 30 ha.

Coupled support for vegetables - Greenhouse Production

Due to the specific nature of greenhouse production, areas with a minimum farm size of 0.5 ha are eligible for funding, which can be combined with field production.

For Campaign `2023, 1,215 farmers applied for the intervention, with a total area of 905 ha declared for support. The annual approximate distributed funds amount to BGN 13,324,266. As of June 30, 2024 under the intervention, payments in the amount of BGN 12,380,526 were authorized at a set rate per unit area of BGN 18,552.26/ha.

Coupled support for fruits and vegetables in mountain regions

The intervention is aimed at the smallest farmers with farms in mountainous areas, with the size of agricultural areas up to 1.5 ha. 159 farmers applied for support for the 2023 campaign. As of 30 June 2024, out of the annual indicative budget amounting to BGN 430,470, BGN 412,316 were authorized with a rate of BGN 2,753.18/ha.

Coupled support for protein crops

This Intervention is aimed to indirectly support livestock farmers by supporting the production of protein crops for feed. The indicative budget for the 2023 campaign amounts to BGN 31,515,795. An application for support was submitted by 14,191 farmers, with a total declared area of 111,852 ha. As of the end of June 2024, funds in the amount of BGN 31,077,749 were authorized with rate of 284.90 BGN/ha.

Special payment for cotton

For Campaign `2023, the amount of the special payment per unit of area with cotton, meeting the conditions for support, amounts to BGN 1,492.96/ha. Financial resources in the amount of BGN 5,002,584 have been allocated to Bulgaria under the intervention. Applications for support for the campaign were submitted by 39 farmers, with a declared total area of 1,310 ha.

Transitional national aid

In 2023, following the consistency in the policy for supporting the Livestock and Tobacco sectors with national funds, Bulgaria takes advantage of the opportunity to continue support through the implementation of transitional national aid interventions for cattle, buffaloes, ewes, goats and tobacco, under the conditions of the national payment schemes applied in 2013.

Transitional national aid for cattle, decoupled with production

The annual budget for the intervention amounted to BGN 32,064,363. For Campaign `2023, 6,060 farmers applied for support, claiming a total of 416,746 animals. As of June 30, 2024, funds in the amount of BGN 31,366,432 have been authorized, at a set rate for cattle of BGN 73.75/head and for buffaloes - BGN 129.06/head.

Transitional national aid for ewes and/or she-goats, coupled

An application for aid under the intervention with an annual budget of BGN 22,556,055 was submitted by 4,984 farmers, with a total of 548,680 ewes and/or goats declared. The support rate per animal was BGN 41.07/head. The amount authorized up to 30.06.2024 is BGN 21,707,138.

Transitional national aid scheme for tobacco, decoupled with production

For the 2021 campaign, 8,110 farmers applied for support for tobacco delivered during the reference years. Towards the end of m. June 2024 authorized payments amount to BGN 69,768,665, with an annual budget of BGN 70,700,159.

Table IV.3. Amount of assistance under direct payment interventions and transitional national assistance for the 2023 campaign

Intervention	Annual indicative budget (BGN)*	Submitted valid applications (no.)	Declared areas (ha)/ Declared number of animals	Rate, BGN/1 head		Authorized payments (BGN)**
				Up to ha (unit)	Over ha (unit)	
BISS	754,346,977	48,306	3 836 920	198.18		736,973,219
AR-BISS	180,267,186	46,799	726,597	230.76		164,165,751
SSF	9,857,232	5,124	7,715	1 955.80		9,820,072
YFS	23,642,297	2,039	97,527	244.47		14,716,469
Eco-OF	13,026,923	111	12,194	-		-
Eco-BEI	67,250,414	6,027	7,333	-		-
Eco-PRSP	54,517,520	3,686	1 162 439	104.56		107,673,038
Eco-RPU	67,967,145	14,510	2 572 789	102,14 / 193,20 / 9,20		200,776,380
Eco-MP	14,636,816	2,863	27,305			-
Eco-MPG	42,928,871	1,457	73,993			-
Eco-FE	8,540,294	142	2,600	-		-
Eco-DCC	125,091,826	19,552	2 618 064	75,10 / 57,89 / 31,29		80,432,866
DaC	22,129,142	2,694	75,908	328.26	262.61	20,679,265
DaC-BP	33,732,387	741	77,838	483.65	386.92	32,517,047
MeC	27,661,429	3,939	111,212	262.17	209.74	26,192,106
MeC-BP	4,352,064	195	11,499	393.78	315.02	4,266,525
C-EB	4,303,138	454	23,069	198.47	158.7	4,221,650
C-mr	966,382	514	3,610	277.29		924,485
SMR – BP	16,535,385	1,218	207,040	87.7	70.15	15,492,793
SMR	2,010,771	1,513	41,049	49.97		1,956,026
SMR-EB	6,761,682	850	132,997	53.75	42.99	6,468,472
Buffaloes	4,487,300	249	12,907	406.67	325.33	3,838,145
SF	41,429,111	7,510	28,654	1,033.01	2,066.03	38,948,223
SF-C	2,576,177	1,875	2,752	985.14		2,285,488
CV-TCGE	4,845,769	1,492	2,690	2,031.64	1,354.44	4,543,138
SV-P	5,573,418	1,061	2,007	2,852.96	1,901.98	5,182,151
SV-CCWM	9,249,192	2,709	7,748	1,251.24	834.15	8,666,318
SV-POG	4,483,584	728	3,444	1,625.09	1,083.40	4,249,143
SVF-mr	430,470	159	159	2,753.18		412,316
SVg	13,324,266	1,215	905	18,552.26		12,380,526
SPC	31,515,795	14,191	111,852	284.9		31,077,749
Cotton	5,002,584	39	1,310	1,492.96		-
TMSA1	32,064,363	6,060	416,746	73,75 / 129,06		31,366,432
TMSA3	22,556,055	4,984	548,680	41.07		21,707,138
TNT	70,700,159	8,110	25 473 648	5,50 / 4,13 / 4,00 / 4,00 / 3,00		69,768,665

Source: SFA-PA

Note:

* According to Art. 101, paragraph 3 of Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 December 2021, the designated indicative financial means for direct payment interventions may be used for other direct payment interventions, without requiring an amendment of SPARD 2023-2027

** Data as of 30.06.2024

1.2. Market support mechanisms

1.2.1. Contractual relations in the milk sector

After the abolition of the quota regime for the production of raw cow milk in 2015, mandatory contractual relations between producers of raw milk of all types (cow, goat, sheep and buffalo) and the first buyer the milk is delivered/supplied, were introduced in the country. The aim is to ensure viable development of production in the branch. The application of mandatory contractual obligations improves the negotiating positions of milk producers, which is a prerequisite for a fairer distribution of added value along the supply chain.

Following the introduction of the regulatory regime, changes have been made in the legislation concerning the scheme in order to alleviate the administrative burden respectively decrease the administrative capacity for registration and control procedures. From 2020 SFA-RA provides a service for electronic registration of contracts from the first buyer.

For 2023 on the basis of risk analysis, 216 checks were assigned to purchasers and 149 to producers of raw cow, sheep, goat and buffalo milk. Checks were also carried out on 7 producers and 9 buyers based on established non-conformities. 21 CEAVs were issued, the criminal proceedings on which resulted in the issuance of 4 penal rulings and one motivated resolution for the termination of the proceedings. On 15 CEAV, offers were made to the offenders to conclude an agreement and pay the imposed property sanctions and fines in a reduced amount. The amounts imposed are property sanctions for BGN 28,600 and fines for the amount of BGN 1,050. By the end of m. December 2023 property sanctions worth BGN 12,900 and fines worth BGN 1,050 were voluntarily paid. BGN 4,000 was collected through the National Revenue Agency for imposed property sanctions and fines for 2023 and BGN 6,954 for those from previous years.

More than 1,304 applications were accepted and processed for the first half of 2023 under the scheme for contractual relations in the dairy sector, relating to 7,900 contracts/annexes/terminations between producers and first buyers of raw cow, sheep, goat and buffalo milk. 88 applications for the registration of contracts have been received electronically in the ESS of SFA.

1.2.2. Operational programs

In the month of September 2023 in SG, no. 78, Ordinance No. 13 of 01.09.2023 was published on the terms and conditions for implementing interventions from the Strategic Plan for the Development of Agriculture and Rural Areas for the period 2023-2027. in the "Milk and milk products" and "Fruits and vegetables" sectors. According to the transitional and final provisions of the Ordinance, the period for submitting operational programs in both sectors for the calendar year 2023 is October 2 - 13.

In order to ease the procedures, the ESS of the SFA-RA has developed functionality for submitting an application for approval of an operational program for interventions in the "Milk and dairy products" sector and in the "Fruits and vegetables" sector. In ISAK, a module has been built to ensure the administrative processing of the submitted applications, the work procedure and the related documents have been approved.

Operational programs in the Milk and Dairy products sector

The Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Development for the 2023- 2027 plans for interventions through operational programs of recognized producer organizations and producer organization associations in the Milk and Dairy Products sector.

For the sector, producer groups are also eligible for support and alongside their operational program they must submit a plan for recognition. Groups should be recognized as organizations within four years of the start of their approved operational program and no later than 31 December 2027.

The EU financial aid for operational programs in the Milk and Dairy products sector shall not exceed the lesser of 50% of the actually incurred expenses by the operational program or 6% of the value of the organization's marketed production. The operational fund shall only pay for expenditure and activities under the operational program. It is funded through financial contributions from the group/organization and/or its members and financial support from the EAGF. Contributions to the operational fund shall be determined by decision of the General Assembly of the group/organization.

In 2023 there are no submitted and approved programs in the "Milk and milk products" sector.

Table IV.4. Planned amount of financial aid for implementation of operational programs in the Milk and Dairy products sector under SPARD 2023- 2027, BGN

	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Total for the period 2024-2028
Operational programs in the Milk and Dairy products sector	360,000	360,000	360,000	360,000	360,000	1,800,000

Source: SFA-PA

Operational programs in the Fruit and Vegetables sector

The financial support is aimed at increasing the competitiveness and market orientation of producer organizations and associations of producer organizations in the "Fruits and vegetables" sector, reducing fluctuations in the income of farmers during crises, increasing the consumption of fruits and vegetables and increasing the use of ecological techniques in production.

Organizations of fruit and vegetable producers that are recognized by the Minister of Agriculture and Food can apply for support. They must have an operational fund established and submit operational program(s) for approval. The financing of the operational program is carried out only from the operational fund, which is formed by financial contributions from the organization and/or from its members and financial assistance from EAGF. Contributions to the operational fund shall be determined by decision of the General Assembly of the organization. The operational fund pays for all expenditures and activities under the operational program.

The EU financial aid is the lesser of 50% of the actually incurred expenses by the operational program or 4.1% of the value of the organization's marketed production.

Producer organizations in regions where the degree of organization in the fruit and vegetable sector is significantly below the Union average may, in addition to the EU financial support, receive national financial support, defined as the lower value between 80% of the actually paid contributions to the operational fund or 10% of the value of the producer organization's marketable output.

In 2023 in the "Fruits and vegetables" sector, two approved operational programs are implemented, each of which lasts for 3 years. Financial assistance amounting to BGN 395,679 was paid, BGN 115 115 - from the EAGF and BGN 280,623.7 - from the NB.

Table IV.5. Planned amount of financial aid for implementation of operational programs in the Fruit and Vegetables sector under SPARD 2023- 2027, BGN

	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Total for the period 2024-2028
Operational programs in the Fruit and Vegetables sector	553,500	738,000	738,000	738,000	0.00	2,767,500

Source: SFA-PA

State Fund "Agriculture" - RA carries out checks for compliance with statutory and contractual obligations after payments under the scheme have been made. In 2023 three organizations of fruit and vegetable producers that have completed the implementation of their operational programs were checked. In the course of carrying out the inspections, it was established that the organizations comply with the obligations assumed by them.

Schemes for producer groups in the fruit and vegetables sector;

In 2023 under the scheme, 6 checks were carried out by the SFA-RA for compliance with statutory and contractual obligations under implemented plans for recognition of groups of fruit and vegetable producers after payment. The inspections did not establish non-compliance with obligations by the producer groups.

1.2.3. Producer organizations and groups

As of the end of 2023, the number of recognized organizations and groups of producers of agricultural products was 38, of which: in the "Cereals and oilseeds" sector - 1 OP, in the "Cereals" sector - 2 GPs, in the

"Fruits and vegetables" sector - 6 OPs, in the "Fruits" sector - 1 GP and 5 OPs, in "Vegetables" sector - 3 OPs, in the "Potatoes" sector - 1 GP, in the "Medicinal and essential oil crops" sector - 2 GPs, in the "Milk and dairy products" sector - 2 OPs, in the "Milk" sector - 10 GPs, in the "Meat" sector - 2 GPs, in the "Honey and bee products" sector - 3 OPs.

The largest number of associations was set up in the Fruit and vegetable sector - 14 OPs and 1 GP and the Milk and dairy products 2 OPs and 10 GPs. The "Milk and dairy products" sector stands out with the highest degree of association based on the number of farmers represented, with 235 farmers, followed by the "Fruits and vegetables" sector with 102 producers.

1.2.4. Scheme to supply fruits, vegetables, milk and dairy products to kindergartens and schools in Bulgaria (School Fruit Scheme and School Milk Scheme)

The scheme aims to create healthy eating habits for children and students by making regular deliveries of fruits, vegetables, milk and dairy products to institutions in the preschool and school education system. The aid is aimed at children from I to IV group in kindergartens and students from preparatory class to IV class inclusive throughout the country. Deliveries are made on school days only. Financial aid is provided for supply of products accompanying educational measures and monitoring, evaluation and publicity.

2022/2023 academic year

Under the "School fruit" scheme, deliveries were made by 95 approved applicants. Fruits and vegetables under the scheme were received by 422,671 children in 3,347 institutions in the preschool and school education system. The total budget under the scheme for the school year, which also covers costs for accompanying measures and information activities, amounted to BGN 12,781,093, of which BGN 4,196,807 - from the EU and BGN 8,584,286 from NB. 118.1% of the determined annual budget was used (funds in the amount of BGN 15,088,418 were paid). Apples account for the highest share in deliveries (1,526 t, including 267 t organic production), followed by pears (815 t, including 44 t organically grown).

Under the School Milk scheme, supplies of milk and milk products were made by 86 approved applicants. Products were received by 426,133 children in 3,336 institutions in the preschool and school education system. The total annual budget under the scheme amounts to BGN 15,616,782, of which BGN 2,015,143 from the EU and BGN 13,601,639 from the NB. Funds in the amount of BGN 13,144,666 or 135.3% of the annual budget were paid. Yoghurt milk (2,007 tons, including 444 tons from organic production) and fresh milk (1,138 tons, including 209 tons from organic production) have the highest share in the supply of milk and milk products.

2023/2024 academic year

From the 2023/2024 academic year, a new program period for both schemes began. A new National Strategy has been developed, based on which the schemes will be implemented until the 2028/2029 academic year. The terms and conditions for the implementation of the school schemes are regulated by the Ordinance on the terms and conditions for the implementation of schemes for the provision of fruit and vegetables and milk and milk products in educational institutions - Scheme "School fruit" and Scheme "School milk".

Under the School Fruit scheme, deliveries of were made by 85 approved applicants. Fruits and vegetables under the scheme were received by 423,353 children in 3,385 institutions in the preschool and school education system. The total budget for the school year, which also covers costs for accompanying measures and information activities, amounted to BGN 25,245,420, of which BGN 4,273,924 - from the EU and BGN 20,971,496 from NB. As of the end of June 2024, funds to the amount of BGN 14,725,264 (58% of the annual budget) were paid under the scheme.

Under the "School Milk" scheme, supplies were received from 91 approved applicants. Milk and milk products under the scheme were received by 425,424 children in 3,392 institutions in the preschool and school education system. The total annual budget under the scheme amounts to BGN 24,624,913, of which BGN 3,520,616 from the EU and BGN 21,104,297 from the NB. Funds in the amount of BGN 20,946,399 or 85% of the annual budget were paid.

From the 2024/2025 school year, the number of deliveries of organically produced products has been increased to 9 (by the 2023/2024 school year, these deliveries are between 4 and 6), six of which should include

products produced by Bulgarian farmers. The number of deliveries of fruits and vegetables produced by Bulgarian farmers has also increased - from 25 to 26 (from a total of 50 for the entire school year). At the same time, the range of fruits and vegetables allowed for distribution in educational institutions has been expanded to include raspberries and blueberries.

Beekeeping sector

After the completion of the implementation of the fifth three-year National Beekeeping Program (2020-2022), the sector is supported by implementing the interventions under Art. 55 of Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the CAP strategic plans laid down in the approved Strategic Plan for the Development of Agriculture and Rural Areas in the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2023-2027.

In 2023 farmers submit support applications entirely electronically for the first time. This created some difficulties and 1,365 applications were submitted within the framework of the admission, which is about 42% less compared to those received in the previous year. After the administrative checks were carried out, 1,241 contracts for the provision of financial assistance were signed. From the total budget in the amount of BGN 10,091,365 (40% from EAGF and 60% from NB), in 2023 a total of BGN 337,205 was paid to 113 beneficiaries under the implemented interventions.

Table IV.6. Budget and paid financial aid under the intervention in the Bee sector for 2023, BGN

	Annual budget	Number of valid application s submitted	Value of financial aid requested	Number of signed contracts	Amount of approved financial assistance	Number of applications with payments at the end of the reporting period	Amount of financial assistance paid
Interventions in the beekeeping sector	10,091,365	1,365	4,522,493	1,243	4,384,257	113	337,205

Source: SFA-PA

1.2.5. Wine sector

Within the framework of the National Program to Support the Viticulture Sector 2019-2023 in 2023 admissions were held under two of the applied measures:

- Measure "Harvest Insurance", with a budget of BGN 1,879,524;
- Measure "Green Harvesting", with a budget of BGN 6,000,000;

According to Regulation 2021/2117 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 02.12.2021 amending Regulations (EU) No 1308/2013 establishing a common organization of the markets in agricultural products, (EU) No 1151/2012 on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs, (EU) No 251/2014 for the definition, description, presentation, labeling and legal protection of geographical indications of aromatized wine products and (EU) No 228/2013 determining specific measures for agriculture in the outermost regions of the Union, admissions for the other measures of the Program were not held, as the year is transitional between two periods of implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy of the EU.

2023 continues the provision of financial assistance for all measures for which contracts were concluded in previous years, the implementation of which has not been completed. The total value of funds paid under the Program is BGN 28,734,440.

Measure "Restructuring and conversion of vineyards" has payments amounting to BGN 10,721,945.

Measure "Investments in enterprises" has payments amounting to BGN 16,664,393.

Under the measure "Information in the Member States", payments in the amount of BGN 108,627 were made.

Within the scope of the 2023 admission under the "Harvest Insurance" measure, 52 support contracts were concluded, maintaining the increased amount of support under the measure - up to 80% of the costs of insurance premiums. Funds were disbursed to the amount of BGN 367,020.

Under the "Green Harvesting" measure, which is of a crisis nature, 10 contracts for financial assistance were concluded. In 2023 Bulgaria continued the implementation of the measure in order to improve the liquidity of agricultural producers affected by the aggravated economic situation in the sector, resulting from the slowly fading effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the subsequent inflationary risk to the economy, in particular the effect on purchasing power of citizens of the European Union. The good harvest of wine grapes in 2022 in the EU countries is also a prerequisite for the worsening of the situation, since the wine produced is in quantities that hardly find market realization, and the accumulated stocks from the previous years further complicate the operators in the sector. The measure is aimed at grape producers who cannot find a market for their products and consists of full removal of bunches while they are still green so that the yield from the area is reduced to zero. Measure has payments amounting to BGN 872,455.

No payments were made in 2023 under measures "Crisis storage of wine" and "Promotion in third countries".

In October 2023 the implementation of the interventions in the viticultural sector for the new program period, included in the 2023-2027 SPARD, was launched. For the sector, the following seven interventions are foreseen:

- Restructuring and conversion of vineyards;
- Investments in the wine sector;
- Green Harvesting;
- Crop insurance;
- Information in Member States;
- Promotion in third countries;
- Investments in environmental facilities.

In essence, these interventions do not differ from the measures set out in the National Program to Support the Viticulture Sector. Also included is an entirely new intervention - "Investments in green facilities" aimed at wine-producing enterprises, which corresponds to the EU's environmental ambition to improve the environmental impact and reduce the ecological footprint. Eligible for support are costs for the purchase of equipment, including computer software, related to the use of renewable energy sources on the territory of the enterprise, as well as the construction, upgrading, extension and/or reconstruction of buildings intended for waste water treatment and other waste products from the production process, installations for composting and processing of other waste products.

In the period October 16 - November 30, 2023 the first call under the "Restructuring and conversion of vineyards" intervention was held, in the period 1 - 15 December 2023 - under interventions "Information in the Member States" and "Promotion in third countries", in the period 15 January - 15 February 2024 - under interventions "Investments in the viticulture sector" and "Investments in environmental facilities", and in the period May 15 - June 15, 2024 - under the "Crop Insurance" intervention.

In the second half of 2024 a second call is planned for interventions "Investments in the viticulture sector", "Investments in environmental facilities" and "Restructuring and conversion of vineyards".

1.2.6. Public Intervention and Private Storage

In the event of the regulatory market conditions, public intervention for regular and durum wheat, barley, corn and paddy rice, beef and veal, butter and skim powdered milk, meat, as well as private storage of products, may be opened by means of implementing acts of the European Commission.

In 2023, there were no conditions for opening a public intervention and private storage of products.

1.2.7. Sugar sector

On the basis of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2017/1185 of 20.04.2017 laying down rules for the application of Regulations (EU) No 1307/2013 and (EU) No 1308/2013 of the European Parliament and of

the Council with regard to notifications to the Commission regarding information and documents and amending and repealing several Commission Regulations and Art. 10a of the Law on the Implementation of the Common Organization of the Markets of Agricultural Products of the European Union, sugar refineries submit to the Ministry of Agriculture notifications about prices and stocks of sugar, and isoglucose producers - notifications about the production of isoglucose.

In 2023, one enterprise for the production of isoglucose and one sugar refinery operate on the territory of Bulgaria.

1.2.8. Promotional programs

Promotional programs cover activities aimed at providing information about the presented product and facilitating its market offering. The programs may include organization of trainings, conferences with the participation of journalists and doctors, promotions in supermarkets and shops, tastings, advertising, organization of competitions, publications in the specialized press and the Internet, participation in exhibitions, fairs, national and international exhibitions.

The implementation of promotional programs contributes to increasing the market share and the demand of the products in the target countries, improves the image of products compared to other similar products, and at the same time increases the consumption of promoted products.

The rules for implementing promotional programs after the 2015 reform are established by Regulation (EU) No. 1144/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22.10.2014 on information and promotion measures relating to agricultural products applied in the internal market and in third countries and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 3/2008 and Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2015/1831 of 7 October 2015 to determine rules for the implementation of Regulation (EU) No. 1144/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council on information and promotion measures related to agricultural products applied in the internal market and in third countries. According to European legislation, the selection of the 2023 programs for which financial support is provided is carried out by the European Research Executive Agency - EREA. For the 2023 campaign, Bulgaria has no approved promotional program.

1.2.9. Quality Policy

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food actively supports groups of producers - applicants for products with PDO/PGI/FTST with consultations and expert advice already at the stage of preparation for application, and after submission of applications provides active assistance in the preparation and design of the necessary documentation, the refinement of the texts of the application-specifications of the products, the search and selection of evidentiary and illustrative materials. Meetings, conferences and consultations are held both with current producers and with interested farmers wishing to apply for registration of traditional Bulgarian products under the schemes for quality.

In 2023 "Lukanka Troyanska / Troyanska lukanka" and "Sudzhuk Tarnovski / Tarnovski sudzhuk" are registered in the European register of HTSC, and in the European register of PDO and PGI - PDO "Bulgarian yogurt" and PDO "Bulgarian white brine cheese".

New producers of the products "File Elena", "Kaiserovan vrat Trakia", "Lukanka Panagyurska" and "Lukanka Troyanska" have been entered in the register of HTSC. New producers are also entered in the "mountain product" register.

Producers of PDO "Strandzhanski manov med"/"Manov med ot Strandzha" have been granted "de minimis" state aid to cover the costs of product certification in 2023 and 2024

In order to protect the interests of the Bulgarian producers, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food conducted successful negotiations with Romania in relation to the product "Sardeluță marinată" (pickled sprat), applying for registration as a HTSC from Romania.

In 2024 an application for registration of PDO "Strandzhanski bilkov chai" was published in the Official Journal of the EU to grant the right of reasoned objection by member states and third parties within three months from the date of publication.

At the end of m. May 2024 a joint mini-conference was held at the Ministry of Agriculture and Food with the participation of representatives of the European Commission, the Ministry of Economy and Industry and the Executive Agency for Vine and Wine on the topic: "News on European quality schemes and aspects of preparation of applications for registration of geographical indications". Within the framework of the conference, the EC gave presentations to manufacturers of products under the quality schemes and representatives of the administration.

Bulgaria sent a reasoned objection to the EC regarding the application submitted by Turkey for the registration of the PGI "Kayseri pastirmasi". The European Commission accepted the objection made by Bulgaria and informed both parties that it is necessary to start negotiations regarding this product.

1.2.10. Temporary Emergency Measures Scheme

Emergency measure in certain sectors

In 2023, as a result of the war between Russia and Ukraine and as a consequence of the liberalization of trade between the EU and Ukraine, there was a substantial increase in imports of Ukrainian grain and oilseeds to the member states close to the conflict. In order to overcome the negative consequences on farmers from increased imports, the EC approved the provision of emergency financial assistance under two regulations.

With Implementing Regulation (EU) 2023/739 of the Commission of 04.04.2023 in order to foresee an emergency measure to support the grain and oil crops sectors in Bulgaria, Poland and Romania, Bulgaria was provided with a financial resource from the EAGF in the amount of EUR 16,750,000 (BGN 32,759,650), which was supplemented with national funding in same size.

An analysis of the situation in the grain and oilseed sectors has identified a significant imbalance in the sunflower market in the country - in 2022, the import of Ukrainian sunflower sharply increased, which has a direct impact on the Bulgarian market and puts pressure on purchase prices. On this basis and after consultation with the interested parties, it was decided that the emergency financial assistance under Regulation (EU) 2023/739 (a total of BGN 65,519,300 from EAGF and NB) will be granted to all farmers growing sunflowers whose areas have been established as eligible under the SAPS for Campaign `2022. For the rest of the crops subject to the analysis, a limited or insignificant direct impact of imports from Ukraine was found.

11,550 applications were approved for financial assistance with a total subsidy value of BGN 65,517,995. The areas eligible for support amount to 824,022 ha.

In addition to the aid already granted, the EC allocated a second package of funds to support the cereals and oilseeds sectors, extending the scope to Member States. With Regulation (EU) 2023/1343 of the Commission on an emergency financial measure to support the grain and oilseed sectors in Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, Bulgaria was granted a financial resource from the EAGF in the amount of 9,770,000 euros (19 BGN 108,166).

After a re-analysis of the market situation and given the difficulties faced by sunflower producers in Bulgaria, an approach similar to that used under Regulation (EU) 2023/739 was applied to the allocation of funds. The aid was granted to farmers for their sunflower areas, which were eligible for support for Campaign `2022 under the SAPS. 11,335 applications were approved for financial assistance with a total of 812,536 ha of sunflower areas declared. Authorized funds amounted to BGN 19,108,166 of the EAGF.

Trade mechanisms

1.2.11. Export licensing

Scheme - Export licenses for dairy products to the USA and Canada for the calendar year 2023

According to the Agreement between the European Community and Canada, signed in 1995, in order for the traders to benefit from the reduction of customs duties on imports of cheese and yellow cheese in the USA and Canada, an export license issued within the quota is mandatory. USA and Canada's import quota system is a mechanism to protect domestic production and is a combination of two tools - quotas and import duties. The export license for both countries gives the right to a reduced duty when importing dairy products under code 0406, produced in a member state of the European Union. For Bulgaria, the agreement enters into force immediately after its accession to the EU.

In 2023, 62 licenses were issued for the export of milk and dairy products to the USA and Canada within a quota, including 25 licenses for the export of 105.4 tons of yellow cheese, 32 licenses for the export of 356.3 tons of cow's cheese and 5 licenses for the export of 42 tons of sheep's cheese.

For 01.01.2024 - 20.06.2024, a total of 31 licenses were issued for the export of dairy products to the USA and Canada.

1.2.12. Import licensing of agricultural products from third countries

c accordance to European legislation, the following products are subject to compulsory licensing when imported from third countries: rice; hemp seeds for sowing; hemp seeds not intended for sowing; unprocessed or melted hemp and ethyl alcohol of agricultural origin.

The application of the licensing regime for the import of agricultural products from third countries within the framework of tariff quotas and preferential regimes covers the following groups of agricultural products: cereals, rice, sugar, olive oil and table olives, fresh and processed fruits and vegetables (garlic and canned mushrooms), beef and veal, pork, milk and dairy, eggs and egg albumin, and poultry meat.

In 2023, 406 applications were submitted for issuance of licenses for the import of agricultural products from third countries, of which 23 were for license extracts. 379 licenses were issued, including 206 under tariff quotas and preferential regimes and 173 under general conditions.

The guarantees established in favor of the MAF for fulfillment of the import obligation under the licenses issued in 2023 amounted to BGN 97,272 414. Guarantees in the total amount of BGN 98,990,898 were reimbursed to importers.

In 2023, 10 new companies of importers of agricultural products were entered in the MAF register . As of 31.12.2023, the number of registered importers of agricultural products was 525.

2. Support under the Second Pillar of CAP

Rural Development Program 2014 - 2020

The program for the development of rural areas of Bulgaria for the program period 2014-2020 was approved by Commission Implementation Decision C (2015) 3480 of 26.05.2015.

The total budget of the RDP 2014-2020 is in the amount of BGN 7,418,583,184 of public funds (according to the Sixteenth Amendment to the Program, in force as of 31.12.2023), including a contribution from the EAFRD in the amount of BGN 6,119,785,771 and national co-financing - 1,298,797,413 BGN

The financial plan of the RDP 2014-2020 has been amended in connection with the adoption of Regulation (EU) 2020/2220 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23.12.2020 to determine certain transitional provisions in relation to support from the EAFRD and from the EAGF in 2021 and 2022 and amending Regulations (EU) No. 1305/2013, (EU) No. 1306/2013 and (EU) No. 1307/2013 regarding resources and implementation in 2021 and 2022 and Regulation (EU) No. 1308/2013 regarding the resources and distribution of this support for 2021 and 2022 With the change, funds in the amount of BGN 1,096,012,616 have been provided from the EAFRD for the called Transitional period (2021-2022).

The public funds disbursed as of 31.12.2023 (from the EAFRD and from the national budget) amount to BGN 5,190,293,654 - 70% of the total available budget of the Program. For the calendar year 2023, payments were made in the amount of BGN 704,486,246.

The agreed funds (excluding future and transitional commitments under the measures with a multi-year commitment from the RDP) amount to BGN 6,879,925,630 in public funds, representing 92.7% of the total RDP 2014- 2020 budget.

At the beginning of m. January 2023 the managing body of the RDP 2014-2020, together with the SFA-RA, identified a risk regarding payments (Article 38, paragraph 1 of Regulation (EU) No. 1306/2013), despite the fact that at the end of 2022 additional funds exceeding those planned by the EAFRD were disbursed. Given the assumption that without taking additional measures there is a probability of non-absorption of about 100-120 million EUR from the EAFRD (~196-235 million BGN), an action plan has been drawn up to reduce the risk of automatic deduction of funds. One part of the measures is directly related to the amendment of the 2014-2020

RDP, which includes the transfer of funds between measures and sub-measures and the introduction of the possibility of indexation of costs.

An amendment to the Program was prepared, sent for the first time for evaluation by the EC services on 10.05.2023. After an operational analysis and on the basis of the preliminary communication with the EC, part of the changes laid down in the sixteenth amendment have already been implemented. However, by the end of 2023 there was still a risk in terms of payments in the amount of the BGN equivalent of 41.9 million EUR from the EAFRD (~82 million BGN), according to the N+3 rule.

In accordance with the exceptions provided for in the provisions of Article 38, paragraphs 3 and 4 of Regulation (EU) No. 1306/2013, the MA of RDP and SFA-RA proposed to the EC, on the basis of the occurrence of force majeure, which prevents payments by SFA-RA in the calendar year 2023, to exclude from the calculations sums equal to the BGN equivalent of 53 million EUR from the EAFRD (~104 million BGN).

After completion of the negotiation process with the offices of the EC, in March 2024 The Directorate General "Agriculture" in the EC informed the Bulgarian authorities that in 2023 the 2020 budget commitments to be canceled amount to EUR 0.00. Additionally, DG Agriculture informs that funds in the amount of the BGN equivalent of 32 mln. EUR from the EAFRD (~ BGN 63 million), recognized as "force majeure", can be counted as effective payments until the end of the 2014-2020 RDP eligibility period (31.12.2025). Funds paid in such an amount will not necessarily be required as payments made until 31.12.2024.

In the calendar year 2023 two main amendments to the RDP 2014-2020 have been proposed and approved by the EC offices, which are decisive for its implementation in 2024 as well.

With the Fifteenth Amendment to the Program, approved by the EC on 21.03.2023, the MA of the RDP 2014-2020 developed a sub-measure aimed at supporting SMEs particularly affected by the crisis in Ukraine (Sub-measure 22.2 "Extraordinary temporary support for SMEs affected by the consequences of the Russian invasion in Ukraine" of Measure 22 "Extraordinary temporary support for farmers and SMEs who are particularly affected by the consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine"). The amendment also extends the scope of Sub-Measure 22.1 "Extraordinary temporary support for farmers who are particularly affected by the consequences of the Russian invasion in Ukraine" by including in the scope of support sensitive sub-sectors in the sectors "Crop production" - for farmers growing greenhouses strawberries and raspberries and in the "Livestock" sector - for farmers raising bee families.

With the Sixteenth Amendment, which was sent for the first time for evaluation by the EC offices in May 2023 and approved by Commission Implementing Decision C (2023) 8650 of 06.12.2023, changes were proposed to the texts of several measures and sub-measures from the Program, with a view to their more effective implementation.

Measure 1 "Knowledge transfer and information actions"

Sub-measure 1.1. "Vocational training and acquisition of skills"

The support under Sub-measure 1.1. "Vocational training and skills acquisition" is aimed at increasing the knowledge and skills of farmers and foresters and employees on their farms by achieving an appropriate level of technical and economic training and increasing the capacity for access to knowledge and information in the field of agriculture and forestry.

As of 31.12.2023 there are 26 active contracts under the sub-measure, and 16 training organizations have started the implementation of the activities under the signed contracts for the provision of grants. In 2023, public funds were disbursed to the amount of BGN 54,792.

In January - May 2024, payments of the amount of BGN 467,531 were made.

Sub-measure 1.2 "Demonstration and awareness activities"

The financial support under the sub-measure is aimed at organizing and conducting demonstration activities in the field of agriculture and forestry, contributing to increasing the knowledge and improving the skills of agricultural and forestry owners and the persons employed in their farms.

In May 2023 with the Order of the Head of the MA of the RDP 2014-2020 changes have been made to the application guidelines under Submeasure 1.2 aimed at better regulating the conditions under which demonstrations are held and specifying the required documents related to the participation of farmers and employed persons in their farms.

As of 31.12.2023 13 contracts were concluded under the sub-measure, with grants in the amount of BGN 5,046,042. The approved beneficiaries will conduct demonstration activities in the fields of animal husbandry, viticulture, tobacco production, cereal and leguminous crops, cultivation of medicinal and aromatic plants, ecological fruit production, forestry, soil science, biodiversity enhancement and climate change adaptation. The activities will take place in the cities of Sofia, Pleven, Dobrich, Ruse, Varna, Stara Zagora, Plovdiv, Smolyan, Kyustendil, Markovo village, region Plovdiv, village Burzia, reg. Montana, village Yundola, region Pazardzhik and others. They are expected to involve over 8,000 participants, including over 6,390 employed in agriculture and over 1,610 in forestry.

By the end of 2023 the demonstration activities have not yet started, and the beneficiaries - contracting authorities under the PPA are in the process of preliminary coordination of documentation related to the provision of accommodation and food for the participants (when applicable).

Measure 2 "Consulting Services, Farm Management and Farm Replacement Services"

Sub-measure 2.1 "Assistance for Provision of Consultancy Services"

Sub-measure 2.1 of the RDP 2014-2020 is applied with two sub-measures (initially called operations) - Sub-measure 2.1.1 "Consultancy Services for Farmers and Forester Holders" and Sub-measure 2.1.2 "Consultancy Services for Small Farmers".

Sub-measure 2.1.1. "Consultancy services for farmers and forester holders"

Submeasure 2.1.1 aims to provide advisory services to farmers, young farmers and foresters for improvement of the economic and environmental performance, as well as climate resilience and climate change resilience on their farms.

During the first call of the sub-measure held in 2015 the National Agricultural Advisory Service was designated as the only beneficiary to provide consulting services to farmers, applicants under sub-measure 6.1 "Start-up Aid for Young Farmers" of the RDP 2014- 2020.

During the 2022 call, three project proposals were received and approved with a value of the requested subsidy of BGN 1,897,126.

Within the framework of the call under Sub-Measure 6.1 "Start-up aid for young farmers", held in the period 01.11.2022. - 31.01.2023, the beneficiaries under Submeasure 2.1.1. have provided consulting services to candidates - young farmers.

In 2023, BGN 1,592 were paid under the submeasure. In the period 01.01-31.05.2024 funds in the amount of BGN 422,505 were paid.

Sub-measure 2.1.2 "Consultancy services for small farmers".

The support under submeasure 2.1.2 creates the possibility for quick and easy access of small farms to quality consultancy services to improve their qualification and management skills, viability, awareness, knowledge of environmental protection, climate change adaptation and risk management improvement.

Since 2016 NAAS provides six basic completely free consulting packages for small farms. The consultations contribute to the economic development and strengthening of this category of farms through their modernization and technological renewal, as well as to the improvement of environmental protection and the fight against climate change.

In 2023 public funds in the amount of BGN 2,862,616 were paid under the sub-measure, and in the first five months of 2024 - BGN 580,896.

Sub-measure 2.2 "Establishment of Consultancy Services"

The implementation of the sub-measure started in 2021. The only beneficiary under the grant was the National Agricultural Advisory Service for the implementation of the activity "Creation of mobile municipal centers (offices) for advisory services".

The following activities were carried out in 2023 under the approved project:

- Joint information seminars were held to present RDP activities in each of the six planning regions, in which a total of 321 persons participated;
- 25,763 consultations were provided to 6,016 persons;
- 86 information events were organized for small farms in various settlements with the participation of 3,489 persons;
- 1,665 visits to small agricultural holdings were carried out to explain the conditions for applying under the Thematic Subprogramme and other measures financed through the EAFRD, and to provide other advice and consultations directly related to agricultural activity.

The funds paid in 2023 under the submeasure amounted to BGN 2,752,010. In January - May 2024, payments of the amount of BGN 135,279 were made.

Measure 4 "Investments in tangible assets"

Sub-measure 4.1 "Investment in agricultural holdings"

The purpose of Sub-Measure 4.1 is to increase the competitiveness of agriculture by restructuring and developing the available material capacities in farms, promoting the introduction of new technologies in production and modernization of physical capital, protection of environmental components, etc.

For the period 2015-2023, four calls for applications for financial assistance were held under the sub-measure, with a total of 8,802 project proposals received. 2,935 contracts have been made with total value of the subsidy BGN 1,222,106,059. The support provided has contributed to the creation of additional employment by creating 5,579 new jobs.

In the calendar 2023, a total of 1,254 new contracts were concluded with a grant value of BGN 496,799,232.

In 2023, payments in the amount of BGN 151,929,187 were made under sub-measure 4.1. Payments for the first five months of 2024 amount to BGN 37,273,070.

Sub-measure 4.1.2: "Investments in agricultural holdings under a Thematic sub-program for development of small farms"

The support under the sub-measure is aimed at improving the economic sustainability and results of small farms, through restructuring and development of the available material capacities, promoting the introduction of new processes and technologies to increase the quality of the produced products, protecting the components of the environment, complying with the standards of The European Union and the improvement of production conditions.

From the beginning of its implementation until the end of 2023. under Sub-Measure 4.1.2, 206 administrative contracts were concluded with a public expenditure value of BGN 5,416,294.

In 2023, 54 contracts were concluded with a total value of public expenses of BGN 1,396,660. Funds were disbursed to the amount of BGN 2,273,129.

In January - May 2024, payments in the amount of BGN 157,649 were made.

Sub-measure 4.2 "Investments in processing/marketing of agricultural products"

Submeasure 4.2 aims to improve the competitiveness, economic efficiency and overall activity of food processing industry.

For the period of application of the sub-measure until 31.12.2021, 865 contracts for financial assistance were concluded, with a total of approved public expenditures in the amount of BGN 452,305,633.

Data from the 330 projects that received interim/final payments by the end of 2023 show that the public support provided contributed to the creation of 3,296 new jobs. Within 107 completed projects in areas with natural restrictions, 863 jobs were created. 236 new jobs have been created with 35 projects implemented in the regions in the North-Western region of Bulgaria.

In 2023, 520 contracts were concluded with a total approved subsidy of BGN 487,595,419. Funds were disbursed to the amount of BGN 70,873,132.

In the period 01.01-31.05.2024 subsidies in the amount of BGN 29,365,211 were paid.

Sub-measure 4.3 "Support for investments in infrastructure related to the development, modernization or adaptation of agriculture and forestry"

Support under the sub-measure is aimed at the reconstruction/rehabilitation and modernization of off-farm hydro-ameliorative infrastructure used only for agricultural needs, with the aim of reducing water losses and adapting agriculture to the effects of climate change. The support will ensure more efficient use of water resources through the introduction of new technologies, leading to a real reduction in losses and water consumption in agriculture, increasing competitive advantages and reducing the pressure on water bodies.

In 2023, 24 contracts were signed under procedure BG06RDNP001-4.016 - Project proposals from "Irrigation Systems" EAD for the rehabilitation of existing hydro-ameliorative irrigation facilities with a total amount of the agreed subsidy of BGN 112,316,175. Funds were disbursed to the amount of BGN 48,733,478.

Measure 5 "Restoration of agricultural production potential and introduction of appropriate preventive measures"

The measure is applied with two sub-measures - submeasure 5.1 "Support for investments in preventive measures aimed at limiting the consequences of probable natural disasters, adverse climatic phenomena and catastrophic events" and sub-measure 5.2 "Investments to restore the potential of agricultural land and agricultural production potential disrupted by natural disasters, adverse climatic events and catastrophic events".

Sub-measure 5.1 "Support for investment in preventive measures aimed at mitigating the effects of likely natural disasters, adverse climatic events and catastrophic events"

Support under the sub-measure is aimed at the implementation of the following types of activities:

- Prevention and limitation of the possibilities for the spread of epizootics and mass infectious diseases among farm animals; prevention of dangerous meteorological phenomena - hail;
- Increasing the operational capacity of public entities to prevent epizootics, as well as to fight them, including by reducing the response time of the competent authorities;
- Activities in livestock facilities specializing in raising pigs, sheep, goats and poultry;
- Increasing the operational capacity of public entities to ensure reliable and effective protection from hail and other adverse climatic phenomena, covering agricultural areas throughout the country. Targeted support provides for the upgrade of the required weather radar network through the commissioning of new radar networks and their associated equipment and service vehicles.

For the period of implementation of the RDP 2014-2020 3 calls for the selection of project proposals are open for the sub-measure.

By the end of 2023, 53 financial assistance contracts had been concluded under the three procedures with a total amount of the agreed subsidy of BGN 27,032,165.

Funds disbursed under the sub-measure in 2023 amount to BGN 4,334,024, and in the first five months of 2024 payments were made in the amount of BGN 678,839.

Sub-measure 5.2 "Investments to restore the potential of agricultural land and agricultural production potential affected by natural disasters, adverse climatic events and catastrophic events"

The support is aimed at restoring production potential disrupted by acute infectious diseases in pigs, small ruminants (sheep and goats) and poultry.

The sub-measure started in 2020. One call was held, during which three project proposals were received with a requested grant amounting to BGN 1,903,600. In 2023, 2 support contracts with a total value of the agreed subsidy of BGN 1,202,748 were concluded. The contracts have been executed and the public funds approved under them have been paid in full.

Measure 6 "Development of farms and enterprises"

The measure is implemented with three sub-measures - Sub-measure 6.1 "Start-up aid for young farmers", Sub-measure 6.3 "Start-up aid for the development of small farms" and Sub-measure 6.4.1 "Investments in support of non-agricultural activities".

Sub-measure 6.1 "Start-up aid for young farmers"

The objectives of the sub-measure are to facilitate and support the process of creating viable and sustainable agricultural holdings or the taking over by young people of already existing holdings, as well as promoting employment.

For the period from the start of implementation of Submeasure 6.1 (2015) until the end of 2023 four calls of project proposals were held. 2,281 financial aid contracts at the value of BGN 1,171,922 were concluded.

In 2023 67 administrative contracts were concluded, with approved subsidy of BGN 3,275,965. Funds were disbursed to the amount of BGN 4,131,513.

In the period 01.01-31.05.2024 funds in the amount of BGN 8,743,970 were paid.

Sub-measure 6.3 "Starting Aid for Development of Small Farms"

The support aims at stimulating economic development and strengthening small farms as sustainable and viable units, accelerating their modernization and technological renewal, improving environmental protection and adaptation to climate change.

From the beginning of the implementation of the sub-measure until the end of 2023, 4,714 contracts for financial assistance were concluded, with a total amount of the approved subsidy of BGN 658,995,883.

In 2023 388 contracts for financial support were signed with approved public expenditures to the amount of BGN 11,382,756. Funds were disbursed to the amount of BGN 20,162,462.

For the period m. January - m. May 2024 funds in the amount of BGN 1,248,016 were disbursed.

Sub-measure 6.4.1 "Investments in support of non-agricultural activities"

The sub-measure is aimed at stimulating investments in non-agricultural activities, which are essential for increasing the competitiveness of rural areas, creating employment and accelerating the diversification of non-agricultural activities. The support provided contributes to the realization of the potential for the development of tourism, combining natural and cultural values, as well as to the implementation of technologies in the field of the "green economy", including energy from RES for own consumption.

For the period of its implementation until the end of 2023, 770 project proposals have been received under the sub-measure, with a value of the requested subsidy of BGN 211,423,008. 230 contract were concluded for assistance with the agreed financial aid amounting to BGN 62,352,079.

In 2023 under the sub-measure, 4 new administrative contracts were concluded with the value of the approved subsidy BGN 1,254,893. Funds were disbursed to the amount of BGN 13,137,052.

In the first five months of 2024 payments amounting to BGN 1,055,504 were made.

Measure 7 "Basic services and renewal of villages in rural areas"

Measure 7 "Main services and renovation of villages in the rural regions"

The provision of focused support under Sub-Measure 7.2 aims to promote economic development, social inclusion and poverty reduction in rural areas.

In the period 2016- 2023, under the sub-measure, 1,773 project proposals were made with total amount of the claimed subsidy of BGN 3,046,408,983. By the end of 2023, 823 contracts are active with approved public expenditures to the amount of BGN 1,351,292,931.

In 2023, 114 contracts were concluded with a total value of public expenses of BGN 263,904,351. Funds were disbursed to the amount of BGN 92,925,324.

In the period 01.01-31.05.2024 BGN 22,025,600 were paid.

Sub-measure 7. 6 "Surveys and investments for maintenance, restoration and improvement of the cultural and natural heritage of the villages"

The aim of the support is to increase the quality of life and preserve cultural identity and traditions in rural areas. For the period of its implementation, two calls of project proposals were held (in 2016 and 2020). 197 financial aid contracts were concluded with approved subsidy of BGN 111,085,471.

In 2023, 4 administrative contracts were concluded with a total value of public expenses of BGN 2,144,623. The paid funds amounted to BGN 14,503,477.

For the first five months of 2024 BGN 2,731,905 were paid.

Measure 8 "Investments in the development of forest regions and improvement of the forest viability"

Sub-measure 8.1 "Afforestation and maintenance"

The support under the sub-measure is targeted at increasing the forest cover in lowland areas, limiting erosion and preserving land quality, improving water balance, absorption and storage of carbon. Eligible for assistance are individuals and legal entities, local branches of religious denominations and municipalities - owners of agricultural and non-agricultural land.

For the period of its implementation until the end of 2023, under Sub-Measure 8.1, 2 contracts with a total value of BGN 168,232 were concluded, one of which, with a subsidy of BGN 25,567, was signed in 2023.

In 2023 and the first five months of 2024 payments under the sub-measure are not made.

Sub-measure 8.3 "Prevention of damage to forests by forest fires, natural disasters and catastrophic events"

The purpose of the sub-measure is to reduce the threat of forest fires and limit the danger of pests, diseases, natural disasters and catastrophic events in the forest territories by introducing new preventive activities and improving those already implemented. All owners of forest territories in the Republic of Bulgaria are eligible for assistance.

By the end of 2023, 21 financial assistance contracts (cumulative) with approved public expenditure worth BGN 31,925,352 had been concluded under the sub-measure.

In 2023 no administrative contracts have been concluded. Funds were disbursed to the amount of BGN 8,693,893.

Sub-measure 8.4 "Recovery from damage to forests from forest fires, natural disasters and catastrophic events"

The provision of financial assistance aims to restore forests damaged by forest fires, pests, diseases, natural disasters and catastrophic events.

For the period of implementation of the RDP 2014-2020 until the end of 2023 under the sub-measure, one call of project proposals was carried out - in 2018. 14 projects were received with a total amount of the requested subsidy of BGN 5,946,658.17.

The provision of financial assistance aims to restore forests damaged by forest fires, pests, diseases, natural disasters and catastrophic events.

For the period of implementation of the RDP 2014-2020 until the end of 2023 under the sub-measure, one call of project proposals was carried out - in 2018. 14 projects were received with a total amount of the requested subsidy of BGN 11,630,474.

As of 31.12.2023, 8 administrative contracts were concluded with a total value of public expenses of BGN 3,820,483

In 2023, payments were made in the amount of BGN 1,200,847.

Sub-measure 8.6 "Investments in forestry technologies and in processing, mobilization and trade in forest products"

The support under Sub-measure 8.6 aims to increase the competitiveness of forestry, logging and primary processing of wood and create new jobs. Investments in the processing and marketing of forest products are encouraged, as well as those that contribute to improving the condition of forests, their protection and sustainable management.

According to the sub-measure, one call was held in 2018. By the end of 2023 51 contracts for financial assistance worth BGN 21,147,765 were concluded.

In 2023 13 administrative contracts were concluded, with approved subsidy of BGN 5,442,135. The cumulative disbursed funds during the year amounted to BGN 5,433,141.

For the calendar year 2024, payments were made in the amount of BGN 1,098,490.

Measure 9 "Creating producer groups and organizations"

The aid under measure 9 is aimed at stimulating the processes for establishment of producer groups and organizations in the agricultural sector.

For the period from its implementation until 31.12.2023, 18 contracts were concluded under the measure with a total amount of the approved subsidy of BGN 11,584,602. A total of 339 registered members of producer groups and organizations were supported through the sub-measure.

In 2023 funds in the amount of BGN 1,438,662 were paid, and in the first five months of 2024 - BGN 267,945.

Measure 10 "Agri-Environment-Climate"

A total of 2,449 payment applications have been received for Campaign `2023, related to commitments ending in 2023 and 2024 in the following areas:

- Restoration and maintenance of permanent grasslands of high nature value;
- Traditional practices for seasonal grazing;
- Preservation of endangered local breeds with agricultural significance;
- Conservation of endangered local varieties with agricultural significance;

In 2023, payments in the amount of BGN 33,496,090 were made.

Measure 11 "Organic Farming"

The measure encompasses the application of two submeasures - Sub-measure 11.1 "Payments for transition to organic farming" and Sub-measure 11.2 "Payments for maintenance of organic farming", with support is targeting three areas - organic crop production, organic beekeeping, and organic livestock.

For Campaign `2023, a total of 730 applications for assistance were submitted under the measure, distributed by direction as follows:

- Organic plant growing - 426 applications, with a claimed area of 6,883.51 ha;
- Organic Livestock Breeding - 8 applications, with a claimed area of 450.39 ha;
- Organic beekeeping - 296 applications, with 52,507 bee families registered.

In 2023, payments in the amount of BGN 64,663,032 were made under measure 11.

Measure 12 "Natura 2000 Payments and the Water Framework Directive"

The rate of absorption of funds under the measure is even, as the number of beneficiaries managing agricultural lands in Natura 2000 protected areas who participate annually remains largely unchanged

During the 2023 Campaign Measure 12 is not applied, as calls have been announced under the intervention "Payments for agricultural lands in Natura 2000 areas", included in the 2023-2027 SPARD.

The funds paid in 2023 under the measure amounted to BGN 303,322.

Measure 13 "Payments for areas facing natural or other specific constraints"

Measure 13 was applied for the last time in Campaign `2022. In 2023 a call under the intervention "Payments for areas facing natural or other specific limitations" from the SPARD 2023-2027 has been announced.

In 2023, payments in the amount of BGN 33,496,090 were made.

Measure 14 "Animal Welfare"

The measure is applied in the 2017-2022 period with two sub-measures - sub-measure 14.1 "Animal Welfare in the large ruminant sector" and sub-measure 14.2 "Animal welfare in the small ruminant sector".

During the 2023 Campaign a call has been announced for a similar intervention, included in the 2023-2027 SPARD.

In 2023, total of 12,245,142 BGN were paid out under measure 14.

Measure 16 "Cooperation"

Sub-measure 16.1. "Support for establishment and functioning of operational groups within the EMI"

The support under sub-measure 16.1. "Support for establishment and functioning of operational groups within the EIP" is aimed at the functioning of task forces set up to implement a specific innovative project to achieve the objectives of the European Innovation Partnership on Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability.

In order to ease the conditions for the implementation of the projects of the approved operational groups and to update the allowable expenses for remuneration and business trips of the groups' team in accordance with the current, in accordance with Bulgarian legislation, values for the minimum wage in the country and business trip expenses, in 2023 changes have been made to the application guidelines under Submeasure 16.1. The deadline for submitting a request for final payment has been extended, in order to facilitate the beneficiaries in collecting the required documents, and some of them may be issued after the deadline for the implementation of the projects.

In 2023 12 contracts were concluded with beneficiaries who applied for the 2020 call. 69 farmers, 13 scientific institutes and higher schools in the field of agriculture, 2 SMEs in the field of food processing, 6 non-profit associations, one agricultural cooperative and 6 consulting organizations participate in the approved 12 operational groups. The approved projects with potential for innovation cover various fields in plant and animal husbandry. The objectives set in the projects are diverse and related to the use of probiotics in animal husbandry, yeast selection, limitation of harmful gases from animal husbandry based on the use of specific feeds, a pilot model for a small sustainable mountain farm, promotion of the qualities of donkey milk and its use, testing of new hybrid fruit varieties on the territory of the country, etc.

Funds paid out in 2023 amount to BGN 2,702,959, and for the period m. January - m. May 2024 payments worth BGN 885,316 were made.

Sub-measure 16.4 "Support For Horizontal And Vertical Cooperation Between Participants In The Supply Chain"

The support under the submeasure is provided for creation and development of short supply chains and of local markets. It covers only chains, which include no more than one intermediary between the farmer and the

consumer. Local markets are markets within a radius of 75 km from the farm of origin of the product, within which both the processing of the product and its sale to the final consumer must take place.

As of 31.12.2023 under Sub-Measure 16.4, 3 administrative contracts for grant-in-aid in the amount of BGN 540,559 are being implemented. No payments under the sub-measure have been made.

Measure 19 "Community-led local development "

Sub-measure 19.1 "Aid for preparatory activities"

The implementation of sub-measure 19.1 "Aid for preparatory activities" started in 2015. There were two calls and a total of 133 applications were received. 101 financial aid contracts at the value of BGN 5,136,460 were concluded. 180 municipalities, covering 2,309,619 inhabitants and a territory of 74,433 sq. km (78% of the territory of rural areas of the country) participate in the implementation of activities under the sub-measure.

About 1,200 public events (conferences, seminars, meetings, trainings, etc.) were organized and held by the beneficiaries through the activities implemented by the beneficiary.

In the second half of 2023 12 contracts with a total subsidy of BGN 1,564,514 are in the process of implementation. Activities are carried out to popularize the LAG, the CLLD approach and local identity, building repairs, specialized training, exhibitions, etc.

In May 2022, there was a call under the sub-measure 19.1 with a budget of BGN 6,845,300, within which 111 project proposals were received, with a value of the requested subsidy of BGN 5,223,309. 107 projects with a total value of BGN 4,951,561 have been approved and implemented.

In 2023 payments were made in the amount of BGN 4,233,639, and in the period m. January - m. May 2024 - in the amount of BGN 1,304,568.

Sub-measure 19.2 "Implementation of operations within community-led local development strategies"

The implementation of the sub-measure aims to expand the scope of the territories that will be supported by the CLLD approach by supporting as many local action groups as possible.

For the 2023 period, 731 contracts for financial aid were concluded, with a total amount of approved public expenditure of BGN 75,651,775. The paid funds amounted to BGN 40,622,877.

In the period 01.01-31.05.2024, payments to the amount of BGN 11,160,330 were made.

Sub-measure 19.3 "Preparation and implementation of LAG cooperation activities"

The sub-measure supports projects for preparation and implementation of internal and transnational cooperation. Local initiative groups are encouraged to contribute to the development of the respective rural areas through interaction and implementation of joint projects. According to Regulation (EU) 1305/2013, the application under the sub-measure is ongoing.

For the period 2018- 2023, under sub-measure 19.3, 71 project proposals were received with amount of the requested subsidy of BGN 13,375,708. 51 contract were concluded for agreed financial aid amounting to BGN 7,817,670

In 2023 under the sub-measure, payments worth BGN 2,039,833 were made, and for the first five months of 2024 BGN 376,085 were paid.

Sub-measure 19.4. "Running Costs and Popularization for strategy for Community-led local development"

Sub-measure 19.4 aims to provide the LAG with the necessary financial resources for the effective implementation of the strategies for local development and their promotion. This in turn aims to lead to the development of local groups as strong and efficient partnerships and operating structures.

The funds paid under the submeasure in 2023 amounted to BGN 8,770,755. In January - December 2024, payments of the amount of BGN 2,905,927 were made.

Measure 22 - "Extraordinary temporary support for farmers and SMEs particularly affected by the crisis caused by the Russian invasion in Ukraine"

The measure covers the implementation of two sub-measures - Sub-measure 22.1 "Extraordinary temporary support for farmers who are particularly affected by the consequences of the Russian invasion in Ukraine" and Sub-measure 22.2 "Extraordinary temporary support for SMEs affected by the consequences of the Russian invasion in Ukraine".

With the fifteenth amendment of the RDP 2014-2020 the Program's MA developed Submeasure 22.2 aimed at supporting SMEs, particularly affected by the crisis in Ukraine. With the same amendment, a change was made in Sub-Measure 22.1, which expands the range of farmers eligible for support and includes those who are engaged in raising and caring for bee colonies or growing raspberries or strawberries - greenhouse production.

Support under Sub-Measure 22.2 is provided in the form of one-off assistance to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, processors of agricultural products, including producer groups/organizations, in relation to the challenges faced by the processing industry as a result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The maximum allowable amount of financial assistance for one applicant cannot exceed BGN 100,000.

The call under the sub-measure was held in March 2023 with an initially announced budget of BGN 6,845,300. 68 projects were submitted, of which 49 were approved for financing, with a subsidy of BGN 4,021,719.

In March 2023 applications for support under Sub-Measure 22.1 were accepted for farmers growing strawberries or raspberries - greenhouse production and/or bee colonies, with a total budget of BGN 5,492,682 public funds.

In 2023, payments in the amount of BGN 16,812,442 were made under measure 22.

Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Development 2023-2027

By Decision No. 85/24.02.2022 The Council of Ministers approved the draft of the Strategic Plan for the Development of Agriculture and Rural Areas for the period 2023-2027, after which it was sent for consideration and approval by the EC.

The strategic plan was approved by the offices of the European Commission on 07.12.2022. with Implementing Decision C(2022) 8749.

In SPARD 2023-2027 a total of 99 interventions are foreseen, of which 56 under Pillar I (financed by the EAGF) and 43 under Pillar II (financed by the EAFRD).

Pillar II interventions are aimed at:

- agroecology and organic farming (15 interventions);
- investments (11 interventions intended for agricultural holdings, organizations of producers, processors, non-agricultural activities);
- advisory services, advisory capacity building, cooperation and professional training (4 interventions);
- supporting forest activities (7 interventions);
- support of basic services and small-scale infrastructure, incl. the preservation of the spiritual and cultural life of the population in rural areas (2 interventions);
- implementation of financial instruments (2 interventions);
- implementation of the LEADER/CLLD approach (1 intervention);
- provision of technical assistance (1 intervention).

In 2023 receptions were held for interventions in the field of rural areas under Art. 70 (Obligations in the field of environment and climate and other obligations in the field of management), Art. 71 (Natural or other restrictions specific to the area) and Art. 72 (Area-specific disadvantages arising from certain mandatory requirements) of Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 establishing support rules for the strategic plans to be drawn up by

the Member States under the common agricultural policy (strategic plans under CAP) and financed by the EAGF and the EAFRD, and for the repeal of Regulations (EU) No. 1305/2013 and (EU) No. 1307/2013. Farmers are more interested in the interventions, which are well known and the voluntary commitments are implemented in conditions similar to those of the implemented measures from the RDP 2014-2020.

No support applications were submitted for two of the interventions - "Supporting the cultivation of climate-resistant varieties through integrated production practices" and "Maintaining the habitats of the Red-breasted Goose (*Branta ruficollis*), Crested (Imperial) Eagle and Egyptian vulture in ornithologically important places in cultivated land".

The submitted applications for support during the 2023 Campaign and the requested areas and/or animals under the other interventions correspond to a significant extent to the predicted interest for the first year of implementation of the 2023-2027 SPARD.

Table IV.7. Declared data for the 2023 campaign

Name of the intervention	Number of valid applications submitted	Declared areas (ha)/ number of animals
Payments for mountain areas (LFA1)	17,692	402,560
Payments for areas, other than mountainous areas, with significant natural constraints (LFA2)	5,407	170,358
Payments for areas with specific restrictions (LFA3)	712	15,048
Payments for agricultural lands in areas of Natura 2000 (Natura 2000)	12,486	490,031
Organic crop production (OCP)	1,369	25,618
Organic crop production in transition (OCPT)	543	10,640
Animal welfare and antimicrobial resistance(AW-AMR)	1,184	169,938
Promotion of the use of climate-resilient crops and varieties (CRCV)	132	529
Conservation of endangered local varieties with agricultural significance (ELV)	148	425
Preservation of local breeds (autochthonous) with agricultural significance (PLB)	411	16,332
Traditional practices for seasonal grazing (pastoralism) AEI 7.1	332	15,423
Traditional practices for seasonal grazing (pastoralism) AEI 7.2	9	1,159
Organic beekeeping (OBK)	681	124,054
Organic beekeeping in transition (OBKT)	99	12,783
Promotion of natural pollination AEI 3.1	263	20,907
Promotion of natural pollination AEI 3.2	11	973
Restoration and maintenance of degraded pastures (PGL-degraded)	5	179

Source: SFA-PA

In 2024 calls for the following interventions are planned:

- Intervention "Support for operational groups within the framework of the European Partnership for Innovation" - opening a first step, which provides support for the study of the applicability of an innovative project in a specific geographical area and farm, analysis of specific production methods in connection with the introduction of the innovative proposal in practice and database creation. Within this step, it is permissible to support activities to stimulate interest in order to select suitable holdings for the implementation of the innovative proposal and possible expansion of the operational group. Support is limited to a maximum duration of one year;
- Intervention "Consulting services and increasing advisory capacity" - for approving beneficiaries (individual advisors or advisory organizations) for providing advisory package No. 12, which is related to the opportunities for supporting innovations within the EIP, including assistance to potential candidates in collecting

necessary documents, submitting applications for support to the ESS and preparing projects for operational groups in the first and second steps.

The interventions launched in 2023 will continue to apply - "Organic crop production", "Organic beekeeping", "Supporting the cultivation of varieties resistant to climate conditions through integrated production practices", "Promoting natural pollination", "Promoting the use of crops and varieties resistant to climate conditions", "Conservation of endangered local varieties important for agriculture", "Conservation of local breeds (autochthonous) important for agriculture", "Traditional practices for seasonal grazing (pastoralism)", "Maintenance of habitats of the red-breasted goose (*Branta ruficollis*), the imperial eagle and the Egyptian vulture in ornithologically important sites on arable land", "Restoration and maintenance of degraded pasture areas", "Animal welfare and antimicrobial resistance", "Payments for agricultural land in Natura 2000 areas" and "Payments for areas with natural or other specific constraints".

Until the end of the period of the implemented commitments undertaken under the RDP 2014-2020, financial support will be provided under Measure 10 "Agroecology and Climate" - areas "Restoration and maintenance of grasslands with high nature value (HNV)", "Conservation of endangered local varieties important for agriculture" and "Conservation of endangered local breeds important for agriculture" and under Measure 11 "Organic production" - areas "Organic livestock breeding", "Organic beekeeping" and "Organic crop production".

3. National Recovery and Resilience Plan

Based on Decree of the Council of Ministers No. 157 of 2022 on determining the bodies and structures responsible for the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Republic of Bulgaria and their main functions, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food has been designated as the Monitoring and Reporting Structure in relation to the implementation of investment K6.I1 "Fund for Promoting the Technological and Ecological Transition of Agriculture" of Component 6 "Sustainable Agriculture" of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan.

In the period September - December 2023, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development conducted procedures through the selection of proposals for the implementation of investments in two areas - procedure BG-RRP-6.004 "Investments in technological and environmental modernization" and procedure BG-RRP-6.006 "Centers for preparation for marketing and storage of fruits and vegetables". Significant interest has been registered from potential final recipients of financial assistance, significantly exceeding the planned budget.

Support under the "Investments in Technological and Environmental Modernization" direction is aimed at acquiring tangible and intangible assets related to activities contributing to environmental protection, adaptation of farms to climate change and improved use of resources. Investments in agricultural holdings will be stimulated to introduce digital solutions that improve the process of growing crops and animals, as well as automated and robotic systems for managing the individual phases of the production process.

According to data from the SFA-RA, within the framework of the announced procedure "Investments in Technological and Environmental Modernization", with a budget of BGN 381,657,839.6 (including BGN 318,048,200.3 from the EU Recovery and Resilience Mechanism and BGN 63,609,639.3 from the national budget for non-refundable VAT), 4,358 project proposals were submitted with a requested grant in the amount of BGN 912,193,337. 1,520 contracts for financial assistance were concluded with the grants amounting to 315,562,820 BGN.

The aim of the support under the direction "Investments in centers for preparation for marketing and storage of fruits and vegetables" is to stimulate the creation of short supply chains, the modernization and automation of the processes of collection, preparation for the market and storage of fresh fruits and vegetables. Recipients of the grant may be farmers, producer organizations, cooperatives, associations of farmers.

Under the procedure "Investments in centers for preparation for marketing and storage of fruits and vegetables", with a budget of BGN 18,000,000 (including BGN 15,000,000 from the RRM and BGN 3,000,000 from the national budget for non-refundable VAT), 41 project proposals were submitted with a requested subsidy in the amount of BGN 26,270,388. 23 contracts for financial assistance were concluded with the grants amounting to 13,603,245 BGN.

Regarding the third direction "Investments related to the efficient use of water in agricultural holdings", with a budget of BGN 119,683,579 (including BGN 99,736,316 from the Ministry of Agriculture and BGN 19,947,263 of national funding for non-refundable VAT), an objective impossibility to fulfill the initially set specific conditions for the admissibility of the activities in the period of application of NRRP. In this regard, and in order to prevent a possible loss of funds for the direction and for the entire investment, negotiations have been initiated with the EC offices to drop this direction. In connection with a procedure initiated by the Ministry of Finance to amend the National Recovery and Resilience Plan in July 2023, in accordance with Art. 18 of Regulation (EU) 2021/241, the Ministry of Health made a proposal to drop the fourth direction of the investment "Investments for construction/reconstruction and equipment of livestock facilities for breeding and evaluation of male breeding animals, including extraction of biological material from them" with a budget of BGN 5,510,306 (BGN 4,591,921 from RRM and BGN 918,385 BGN from the national budget for non-refundable VAT). The main reason for the requested change is the risks identified during the preparation for the implementation of the planned activities, which do not allow guaranteeing the achievement of the set goals. There are prerequisites for non-implementation of the planned activities, which could lead to financial damage for the funds from the other areas of investment K6.I1 "Fund for promoting the technological and ecological transition of agriculture".

The cancellation of the direction has been approved and is reflected in the first decision of the EC to amend the NRRP from m. December 2023

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food is the final recipient of funds under investment K6.I2 "Digitization of the processes from farm to fork" from the NRRP, with a budget of BGN 23,874,419 (BGN 19,949,345 from the RRM and BGN 3,925,074 from the national non-refundable VAT budget). The investment project envisages the construction of an Electronic Information System in agriculture for the exchange of data between the public administration and economic entities in the sector, which will ensure integration and compatibility of data from various information systems, registers and databases, in and outside the Agriculture sector.

The purpose of the EISA is digitization and unification of information resources in agriculture, creation of conditions for monitoring the progress of the implementation of the objectives of the green deal in the field of agriculture, optimization of the business environment and reduction of the administrative burden.

As elements of the EISA, a common platform for uniting the system modules and integrating data from other information systems, four modules and a communication network of field and water sensors will be developed.

The module on the use of plant protection products and fertilizers aims to reduce the use of plant protection products and fertilizers by digitizing the plant protection logs kept by farmers. Traders, importers, distributors, consultants and professional users of plant protection products will enter information into the module.

The information-analytical module for the control of the use of antimicrobial veterinary medicinal products will collect and summarize information from all entities related to the production, trade and application of these preparations. The aim is to ensure complete traceability of antimicrobials and improve official control by introducing an electronic prescription and reference thresholds for their use.

The Farm-to-Fork tracking module will centrally collect and store data on a product from producers, importers, distributors, wholesalers and retailers, track its movement through the logistics chain and provide reliable information to all involved in the process, on control authorities and consumers.

The online learning module is a tool for improving the knowledge and awareness of farmers regarding the implementation of innovations, the adaptation of farms to climate change, more efficient use of resources, etc.

The communication network of field and water sensors will provide farms with data on soil moisture, air and soil temperature, and rainfall. Thus, farmers will be able to make adequate decisions on the implementation of the most appropriate agrotechnical measures.

In 2024 through a procedure under the Public Procurement Act, a contractor was selected who was entrusted with the development of the EISA. The foreseen activities are in the process of implementation. The deadline for building the system is 31.12.2025.

In the context of the challenges before the agriculture, related to the transition to more environmentally friendly practices, without affecting the country's food security, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food has made commitments to implement a reform included in the NRRP - Update of the strategic framework in the agrarian sector. The essence of the reform consists in the preparation of a National Action Program to contribute to the implementation of the objectives of the "Farm to Fork" Strategy. The purpose of the Program is to update and upgrade the strategic framework for the management of the agricultural sector, regulated in the National Development Program Bulgaria 2030, by outlining tools, measures and activities related to the implementation of specific goals and commitments contributing to the protection of the climate, the environment, biodiversity and natural resources for the period up to 2030.

The program has been developed and is to be approved by the Council of Ministers by the end of 2024.

4. Additional state support

The support of the agricultural sector in Bulgaria under the two pillars of the CAP is supplemented by financial support with national funds under state aid schemes, short-term and investment loans granted by the Agriculture State Fund.

4.1. State aid

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food determines and implements the policy for national support in agriculture in accordance with the legislation of the European Union on state aid and in connection with its powers under the Law on State Aid.

State aid as a tool to support the country's agricultural sector is planned, developed and directed to the priority needs of Bulgarian agriculture, in compliance with European and national legislative norms - contracts, regulations, decisions, frameworks and others.

The applied measures are related to stimulating the investments in order to increase the efficiency of farms and the production of higher-quality products, insuring and compensating for damage from natural disasters and adverse climatic events; assistance in the prevention of plant and animal diseases; conservation of genetic resources in crop and livestock production; promoting animal welfare; stimulating the participation in exhibitions for popularization of the Bulgarian agricultural production and for exchange of experience.

The state aid initiative usually comes from the branch concerned (Crop, Livestock, Agricultural Processing), which is involved in the development of the measure.

The total value of state aid support in the Agriculture sector in 2023 amounted to BGN 744,498,590, of which:

- BGN 633,239,988 under state aid and de minimis aid schemes administered by the SFA;
- BGN 111,258,602 under 2 tax relief schemes (assignment of corporate tax for the tax year 2023 and reduced excise rate on gas oil).

During the year, state aid was provided in the following areas:

1) Investment aid – aimed at small and medium-sized agricultural holdings in order to increase investment activity.

- Aid for investment in tangible assets of agricultural holdings related to the primary production of agricultural crop production;

The aid is granted in the form of a capital subsidy to cover part of the costs of investing in machinery, equipment and lines for preparation, cooling and storage of primary agricultural products, as well as machinery, equipment and facilities for protection against frost and hail, necessary for the production of own primary agricultural production in the Crop sector.

- Investments for purchase or construction of facilities for processing and/or handling of raw milk;

The aid is provided in the form of a capital subsidy to cover part of the investment costs for construction of a facility for processing and/or processing of raw milk with the necessary equipment (mini dairies) or for the purchase of a temporary retail facility for dairy products (including the purchase of the necessary equipment) in

which raw milk is processed and/or processed, according to Ordinance No. 26 of 14.10.2010 on the specific requirements for direct deliveries of small quantities of raw materials and food of animal origin.

- Investments for purchase of facilities for production and storage of raw milk and facilities for feeding newborn animals with milk;

The aid is provided in the form of a capital subsidy to cover part of the costs of the investment in the purchase of facilities for production and storage of raw milk and facilities for feeding newborn animals with milk.

- Investments for construction of slaughterhouses;

The aid is granted in the form of a capital subsidy to cover part of the costs of investing in the construction of points for production and cutting of meat from own large ruminants and small ruminants on the farm and/or the purchase of mobile ones (movable objects that can be transported by vehicle).

2) Risk and crisis management - aimed at counteracting and compensating for damage in the event of natural disasters or adverse weather conditions, as well as in case of animal and plant diseases:

- Aid to compensate for damage to crops caused by adverse climatic events that can be equated to natural disasters

The support under the state aid scheme is direct aid amounting to up to 80% of the average production costs of growing a crop during the relevant marketing year.

- Aid to compensate for material damage to dead livestock and destroyed beehives;

The support is paid in the form of direct aid up to 100% of the average market prices of farm animals by species and category;

- Aid to prevent plant and animal diseases:
 - Aid to compensate the costs of farmers related to the implementation of measures under the National Pest Control Program in perennials during the winter;
 - Aid to compensate the costs of agricultural producers related to the implementation of measures under the "National program of measures for control of soil pests on potatoes from the Wireworms (Elateridae) Family;
 - Aid to compensate farmers for the implementation of measures under the National Program of Measures for Control of Tomato Leaf Miner - Tuta absoluta Meyrick (Lepidoptera);
 - Aid to compensate farmers for costs related to implementation of measures under the State Prophylactic Program and the Programs for the Surveillance and Eradication of Animal Diseases
 - Aid for co-financing of insurance premiums for insurance of agricultural production;
 - Aid to compensate for the costs of disposing and destroying of dead animals.

3) Aid aimed at ensuring the use of quality seed in crop production, maintaining a high level of breeding activity in livestock breeding and optimizing the process of producing quality agricultural products:

- Aid for the participation of farmers in a quality scheme for production of quality seeds and propagating material;
- Aid for keeping a herd book and determining the productivity traits of animals;
- Aid for certification of holdings in the fruit and vegetables sector under the GLOBALG.A.P standard.

4) Aid aimed at improving the quality of food and raw materials of animal origin by paying particular attention to animal welfare:

- Aid to implement voluntary commitments for the welfare of pigs;
- Aid to implement voluntary commitments for the welfare of poultry.

5) Aid for participation in exhibitions

Support of this kind contributes to the popularization of Bulgarian agricultural products on the market, as well as to the promotion of profitable plant varieties, animal breeds, innovative and effective technologies and practices among Bulgarian farmers. It is applied in the "Crop production", "Livestock breeding" and "Processing of agricultural products" sectors.

- 6) **De minimis aid** - De minimis aid is granted subject to the provisions of Regulation (EU) No. 1408/2013, Regulation (EU) 1407/2013 and Regulation (EU) 717/2014. The de minimis rule applies to aid which, due to its small size, does not endanger competition and can be provided by member states without the need for approval from the European Commission.

In 2023, support amounting to BGN 46,578,158 was provided under developed de minimis schemes.

7) State aid in the form of tax relief (administered under another procedure)

- Aid for investment in agricultural holdings by transfer of the corporate tax.

The aid is administered by the National Revenue Agency. According to preliminary data of the National Revenue Agency, the tax for the tax year 2023 requested for concession is BGN 11,259,579 (the information is as of 13.06.2024, when the deadline for submitting tax returns for the 2023 tax year is 30.06.2024);

- Aid in the form of a rebate on the value of excise duty on gas oil used in primary agricultural production.

In 2023, BGN 99,999,023 were paid to 14,000 farmers under the aid line.

Table IV.8. State aid in agriculture in 2023

No.	State aid	Utilized financial resource - BGN	Number of beneficiaries
	Total state aid administered by the Agriculture State Fund		
1	Aid to compensate farmers for costs related to implementation of measures under the State Prophylactic Program and the Programs for the Surveillance and Eradication of Animal Diseases	19,389,866	22,122
2	Aid for creation and maintenance of a herd book and for determination of the productivity and genetic traits of animals	8,906,639	5,030
3	Aid to compensate for material damage to dead livestock and destroyed beehives and bee colonies	79,408	8
4	Aid to implement voluntary commitments for the welfare of pigs	36,687,480	64
5	Aid to implement voluntary commitments for the welfare of poultry	26,627,102	283
6	Aid to compensate for the costs of disposing and destroying of dead animals - under the aid the suppliers of services are 2 incinerators	13,594,189	2
7	Aid "Investments for purchase of facilities for production and storage of raw milk and facilities for feeding newborn animals with milk"	1,232,840	65
8	Aid "Investments for construction of slaughterhouses"	33,290	1
9	Aid "Investments for purchase or construction of facilities for processing and/or handling of raw milk"	215,610	5
10	Aid to compensate for damage to crops caused by adverse climatic events that can be equated to natural disasters from 21.11.2022	21,622,047	786
11	Aid for compensating the costs of farmers related to implementation of measures under the National Program for Pest Control in Perennials during the winter period	7,828,695	3,563
12	Aid to compensate farmers for the implementation of measures under the National Program of Measures for Control of Tomato Leaf Miner	342,510	155
13	Aid to compensate the costs of agricultural producers related to the implementation of measures under the "National program of measures for control of soil pests on potatoes from the Wireworms Wireworms	1,487,330	277
14	Aid for co - financing of insurance premiums for insurance of agricultural production	883,734	246
15	Aid for participation of farmers in a quality scheme for production of seeds and propagating material	1,152,393	418

No.	State aid	Utilized financial resource - BGN	Number of beneficiaries
16	Aid "Investments in tangible assets of agricultural holdings related to the primary production of agricultural crop production"	6,387,521	84
17	Aid for certification of holdings in the fruit and vegetables sector under the GLOBALG.A.P standard	74,013	53
18	Aid for participation in exhibitions	3,616,198	790
19	Liquidity support to farmers to overcome the negative economic impact of the Russian aggression against Ukraine	425,837,128	35,325
20	"Aid to support costs of irrigation water for growing agricultural crops"	10,663,837	1,009
21	De minimis aid (Regulation (EU) 1407/2013, Regulation (EU) 1408/2013 and Regulation (EU) 717/2014)	46,578,158	30,194
	Tax measures		
22	Aid in the form of a rebate on the value of excise duty on gas oil used in primary agricultural production (costs are reported to the MF)	99,999,023	14,000
23	Aid for investments in agricultural holdings through the concession of corporate tax - for the tax year 2023 (non-final information as of 13.06.2024, with the deadline for submitting tax returns until 30.06.2024)	11,259,579	713
	Total state aid administered by the Agriculture State Fund	633,239,988	
	TOTAL state aid (including through tax measures)	744,498,590	

Source: SF Agriculture, National Revenue Agency, Customs Agency, BFSA

Expected data for 2023

As of 10.06.2024, by decisions of the Management Board of the State Fund Agriculture, a resource for state aid in agriculture in the amount of BGN 495,850,501 under state aid schemes and for de minimis aid, applied by the SFA, was approved. The absorbed resource is BGN 358,716,990.

4.2. Short-term credits

Within 2023 no decisions have been made by the Board of Directors of SF "Agriculture" to provide short-term loans as an additional financing tool for farmers.

During the year, credits for livestock breeders, poultry farmers and pig farmers received in the period 2008-2012 were deferred.

4.3. Investment credit schemes of the Agriculture State Fund

In 2023, the SFA applied the following credit schemes for the investment intentions of farmers:

- Credit scheme of the State Fund Agriculture for investments in;
- Scheme for crediting with funds of the State Fund "Agriculture" for the implementation of approved projects for public activities of persons with concluded contracts for the provision of financial assistance under sub-measure 4.3 of measure 4 and sub-measure 16.1. and sub-measure 16.4. from measure 16 of the Rural Development Program for the period 2014-2020.

- **Credit scheme of the Agriculture State Fund for investments in agriculture**

There are three main directions: Crop, Livestock Breeding, and Technical Assistance, in the credit scheme of the Agriculture State Fund for investments in agriculture. The scheme aims to encourage the investment process, to increase the competitiveness and quality of agricultural products by facilitating the access to credit.

The activities and sites envisaged for financial support are:

- creation, restoration and cultivation of perennial crops and investments in greenhouse production;
- establishing and equipping of livestock farms and purchase of purebred, hybrid and market animals;
- purchase of machinery, equipment and inventory used in agriculture.

The credits under the scheme have a repayment term from 12 to 114 months, depending on the type of investment, which also includes grace periods in terms of repayment of the principal.

The investment projects are financed at an annual interest rate equal to the reference interest rate applicable on the date of concluding the credit agreement, but not lower than the one determined by the Management Board of Agriculture SF for 2023 - 3% for direct crediting and up to 7% for refinancing through commercial banks. For credits financed directly by the Agriculture State Fund, the processing and management fee is 0.5%.

- **Scheme for crediting with funds of the State Fund "Agriculture" for the implementation of approved projects for public activities of persons with concluded contracts for the provision of financial assistance under sub-measure 4.3 of measure 4 and sub-measure 16.1. and sub-measure 16.4. from measure 16 of the Rural Development Program for the period 2014-2020.**

The scheme aims to support the implementation of:

- submeasure 4.3 "Support for investments in infrastructure related to the development, modernization or adaptation of agriculture and forestry" - under procedure BG06RDNP001-4.011 of measure 4 "Investments in tangible assets" of the Program for the Development of Rural Areas 2014-2020;
- Sub-measure 16.1 "Support for the formation and functioning of operational groups within the EIP" under measure 16 "Cooperation" under procedure BG06RDNP001-16.001 and procedure BG06RDNP001-16.003 of the Rural Development Program for the period 2014-2020;
- Sub-measure 16.4 "Support for horizontal and vertical cooperation between participants in the supply chain" under procedure BG06RDNP001-16 of measure 16 "Cooperation" of the RDP 2014-2020.

The term of validity of the Guidelines for applying the lending scheme is until 01.08.2025. Financing is carried out within the framework of the available lending resources of the State Fund "Agriculture" for the relevant year.

The provided credits are financed at an annual interest rate equal to the reference interest rate applicable on the date of concluding the credit agreement, but not lower than the one determined by the Management Board of State Fund Agriculture for the relevant year.

According to this scheme in 2023 no credit application was received.

Expected data for 2024

For 2024 agricultural producers are expected to be granted investment credits for:

- Credit scheme for investments in agriculture;
- Scheme for lending funds from the State Fund "Agriculture" to applicants with approved projects under Ordinance No. 8 of 20.06.2023 on the terms and conditions for implementing interventions from the Strategic Plan for the Development of Agriculture and Rural Areas for the period 2023 - 2027 in the beekeeping sector;
- Scheme for crediting with funds of the State Fund "Agriculture" for the implementation of approved projects for public activities of persons with concluded contracts for the provision of financial assistance under sub-measure 4.3 of measure 4 and sub-measure 16.1. and sub-measure 16.4. from measure 16 of the Rural Development Program for the period 2014-2020.

In the budget of the State Fund "Agriculture" for investment credits for 2024 BGN 90 million have been staked, on the condition of maintaining a net balance of up to minus 40 mln. BGN,

It is expected that by the end of the year funds will be provided for the implementation of investment projects to beneficiaries who apply for loans and meet the conditions specified in the schemes. In 2024 by decision of the Management Board of the State Fund "Agriculture", the new loans financed directly by the Fund are compounded with an annual interest rate equal to the reference interest rate applicable on the date of conclusion of the loan agreement, increased by one percentage point.

As of 25.06.2024 55 applications were received for credit under the Scheme for lending funds from the State Fund "Agriculture" to applicants with approved projects under Ordinance No. 8 of 20.06.2023 on the terms and conditions for implementing interventions from the Strategic Plan for the Development of Agriculture and Rural Areas for the period 2023 - 2027 in the beekeeping sector.

As of 25.06.2024 2 applications were received for credit under the Scheme for crediting with funds of the State Fund "Agriculture" for the implementation of approved projects for public activities of persons with concluded contracts for the provision of financial assistance under sub-measure 4.3 of measure 4 and sub-measure 16.1. and sub-measure 16.4. from measure 16 of the Rural Development Program for the period 2014-2020. The total value of the submitted applications amounts to BGN 4,872,900.

V. AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION ACTIVITIES

1. Control of agricultural and forestry machinery

1.1. Registration of agricultural and forestry machinery

Through the registration of agricultural and forestry machinery, a database is maintained with all machines in the territory of the country, which allows to monitor the technical condition of the machines, to control their safety during operation and transport, and to track the dynamics of renewal of the machine-tractor park.

In 2023, a total of 28,424 pieces of agricultural and forestry machinery were registered in the country, of which 10,147 were brand new.

Table V.1. Registered agricultural and forestry machinery in 2023

Machine type	Total	including new machines
Caterpillar tractors	105	14
Wheeled tractors	8,063	1,411
Self-propelled chassis	129	6
Other self-propelled equipment	5,905	1,775
Tractor trailers	2,462	797
Forestry equipment	1,666	560
Combine harvesters	986	186
Self-propelled feed harvesters	50	3
Other self-propelled machines	102	32
Sowing and planting machines	1,283	779
Fertilizer and plant protection machines	1,289	809
Fodder harvesters and feed processors	3,155	1,708
Soil cultivators	3,109	1,974
Dryers and others	2	0
Grain and seed cleaners	25	16
Irrigating machines	93	77
Total:	28,424	10,147

Source: MAF

1.2. Technical inspection of the equipment

The effective control of the technical condition and safety of equipment ensures protection of life and health of workers with agricultural and forestry equipment and reduction of accidents at work and victims of road accidents associated with equipment malfunctions.

In 2023, the regional directorates of agriculture conducted 142,860 technical inspections of agricultural and forestry machinery.

1.3. Qualification to work with machinery and issuance of certificates

After on-site inspections of the facilities and the training documentation, 3 certificates for registration of educational forms were issued in 2023 for training of the candidates for acquiring qualification to work with agricultural and forestry equipment. 18 corrections were made to permits and certificates for registration of educational forms due to change of the circumstances.

As of 01.02.2024 there are 197 valid certificates by category, issued to 91 educational forms for training.

Table V.2. Issued qualification certificates by categories in 2023

Category	Number of qualification certificates issued
tracked and wheeled tractors and machinery attached thereto	5,745
specialized and special agricultural machinery	2,559
specialized and special self-propelled reclamation equipment (earthmoving machines).	645
specialized and special self-propelled forestry equipment (hydraulic cranes and jaw loaders).	643
chainsaws and brushcutters	3,304
log bandsaw	8
cableways	21
Total:	12,925

Source: MAF

1.4. Testing and certification of used agricultural and forestry machinery

In 2023, 2,733 tests of used agricultural and forestry machinery and earthmoving machinery were performed at the testing and certification centers in Ruse and Plovdiv.

2. Hydromelioration

2.1. Sites for protection against the harmful effects of water

The annual report of the expenses incurred by "Irrigation Systems" EAD in 2023 for the activity under the contract for the sites for protection against the harmful effects of water (SPHWI) is for a total value of BGN 28,075,248 including VAT, and the advance funds provided under the contract by the MAF are BGN 25,344,650 including VAT.

In 2023, compromised sections of river and gully corrections and protective dikes were restored, which improved their conductivity and their function of flood protection of agricultural lands, settlements and technical infrastructure.

Maintenance of the operational condition of drainage systems and canals was carried out, which improved the water-air balance of the soil in cultivated agricultural lands, contributing to an increase in the yields of agricultural products.

The condition of the Danube dikes has been improved, with areas of shrubby and woody vegetation being cleared. Repairs were made to drainage pumping stations.

During the year, an update of the working project for the reconstruction of the "Kapitan Andreevo-1" DPS was carried out.

The activities carried out by Irrigation Systems EAD (financed with funds from the state budget of Bulgaria) have improved the general operating condition of water management systems and facilities.

Based on two contracts (Contract No. RD-50-23/05.04.2019, valid until 04.02.2024 and Contract No. RD-50-7/18.03.2024, entered into force on 03.04. 2024) in 2024 "Irrigation Systems" EAD provides a public service for protection against the harmful effects of water, including maintenance and operation of 3,163 km of river corrections, 241 km of Danube dikes, 254 km of protective dikes, 70 drainage pumping stations (DPS), 6 retention dam and drainage systems and fields draining 1.466 million decares of areas.

For the period 01.01.2024 - 02.04.2024, the costs incurred by Irrigation Systems EAD for carrying out the activities under the SPHWI contract amount to BGN 7,651,754 including VAT and for the period 03.04.2024 - 30.06.2024 7,146,209 BGN with VAT.

In the period until 30.06.2024 repair and restoration works were carried out on more than 10 sites (compromised sections of river corrections, drainage canals, DPS repairs, etc.).

The programs for 2024 envisage further restoration of compromised sections of dikes, river corrections and other SPHWI, as well as the first stage assignment and preparation of detailed/technical investment designs for compromised sites, with a view to their subsequent restoration. The costs of the activities in 2024 under Contract No. RD-50-7/18.03.2024 are expected to reach 22 million leva. The implementation of the SPHWI activities is seriously hampered due to the lack of construction equipment, mechanization and means of transport. The technical means available to the company are amortized and are not highly efficient, especially in critical and emergency situations.

In fulfillment of Decision of Council of Ministers No 201 from 14.07.2011 the Ministry of Agriculture and Food has assigned to Irrigation Systems EAD as contractor for the implementation of construction named "Engineering - research, design and implementation of construction and installation works related to the prevention of flooding of the surrounding agricultural lands and the adjacent facilities and embankments of LOT 4 of the Trakia Motorway "Yambol - Karnobat." 10 sub-sites of the construction have been completed and handed over as of mid-2024, and this leaves 2 sub-sites along Azmak Dere for implementation.

In order to realize the construction of the two sub-sites along Azmak Dere, the main goal at this stage is to start carrying out the complete archaeological surveys, as well as the corresponding expropriations and settlement of the ownership in public state property of the MAF of the private properties affected by the detailed development plan, municipal properties and forest fund properties, and these procedures require significant technological time.

2.2. Irrigation

There are a total 181 dams owned and managed by Irrigation Systems EAD. Of these, currently 19 complex and significant dams (public state property) have been provided for use, including management, maintenance, operation, protection and monitoring, and 15 are retention dams. In 2023 the company carried out partial and current repair works on the irrigation infrastructure, mainly in connection with the preparation of the irrigation season and emergency situations.

In 2023, Irrigation Systems EAD irrigated a total of 308,375 decares, supplying water masses to the amount of 294,737 thousand m³, incl. 111,495 decares of rice with 264,772 thousand m³ of water masses. The total irrigated areas were about 12% more than the previous year.

In recent years, there has been a trend of increasing the size of the irrigated areas, with the main influence being the atmospheric conditions in the respective year - precipitation and temperatures during the irrigation season.

Table V.3. Watered areas and supplied water masses by Irrigation Systems EAD in 2023 by types of crops

	TOTAL		Corn		Tobacco		Vegetables		Perennials		Rice		Other crops	
	Irrigated areas	Supplied water masses	Irrigated areas	Supplied water masses	Irrigated areas	Supplied water masses	Irrigated areas	Supplied water masses	Irrigated areas	Supplied water masses	Irrigated areas	Supplied water masses	Irrigated areas	Supplied water masses
	decares	thousand m ³	decares	thousand m ³	decares	thousand m ³	decares	thousand m ³	decares	thousand m ³	decares	thousand m ³	decares	thousand m ³
Burgas	5,065	304	564	61	0	0	2	0	1,608	75	0		2,891	167
Vidin	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0
Upper Tundzha	21,775	33,569	5,461	1,275	643	154	901	200	691	80	13,240	31,777	838	83
Lower Danube	9,494	2,055	2,189	442	0	0	585	199	104	15	0		6,617	1,400
Maritsa	99,513	155,766	28,868	4,268	655	86	1,304	107	1,632	116	63,945	150,813	3,109	377

	TOTAL		Corn		Tobacco		Vegetables		Perennials		Rice		Other crops	
	Irrigated areas	Supplied water masses	Irrigated areas	Supplied water masses	Irrigated areas	Supplied water masses	Irrigated areas	Supplied water masses	Irrigated areas	Supplied water masses	Irrigated areas	Supplied water masses	Irrigated areas	Supplied water masses
	decares	thousand m ³	decares	thousand m ³	decares	thousand m ³	decares	thousand m ³	decares	thousand m ³	decares	thousand m ³	decares	thousand m ³
Mizia	1,473	157	515	46	678	54	266	53	12	2	0		3	0
Sofia	5,722	929	0	0	0	0	4,643	781	998	116	0		81	32
Middle Danube	16,386	2,252	6,505	540	295	114	5,052	1,240	659	14	0		3,875	344
Middle Tundzha	46,192	5,386	30,966	4,127	140	56	1,091	191	4,625	430	0		9,370	582
Struma-Mesta	9,661	1,543	3,376	500	161	19	3,686	545	966	82	0		1,472	398
Topolnitsa	67,269	88,672	25,454	5,424	811	167	2,649	435	3,761	325	34,310	82,182	284	139
Haskovo	3,784	929	1,378	286	285	26	1,664	562	306	28	0		151	27
Black sea	6,679	595	4,510	232	0	0	1,224	307	580	21	0		365	35
Shumen	15,363	2,580	11,826	1,928	0	0	304	139	50	5	0		3,183	508
TOTAL	308,375	294,737	121,613	19,128	3,667	678	23,370	4,759	15,992	1,309	111,495	264,772	32,238	4,091

Source: Irrigation Systems EAD

In 2023" of the previous year prices at which Irrigation Systems EAD performs the service "supply of water for irrigation" keep the levels of the previous year and are differentiated by regions and depending on the method of supply.

Table V.4. Summary for Irrigation by Irrigation Systems EAD for the 2021 - 2023 period

	2021			2022			2023		
	1st irrigation	Irrigated decares	Water masses	1st irrigation	Irrigated decares	Water masses	1st irrigation	Irrigated decares	Water masses
	decares	decares	thousand m ³	decares	decares	thousand m ³	decares	decares	thousand m ³
Burgas	5,144	7,464	302	4,823	5,864	238	5,065	6,905	304
Vidin	4,201	6,675	151	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gorna Tundzha	21,395	32,596	35,638	19,280	32,481	31,144	21,775	39,328	33,569
Lower Danube	8,640	37,979	1,621	9,304	42,781	1,934	9,494	45,271	2,055
Maritsa	99,327	314,953	162,841	87,954	269,376	132,586	99,513	314,441	155,766
Mizia	2,896	10,246	222	2,010	5,475	121	1,473	3,863	157
Sofia	7,211	14,198	857	4,898	9,012	552	5,722	15,056	929
Middle Danube	15,233	66,422	1,893	15,366	62,326	1,948	16,386	73,943	2,252
Middle Tundzha	36,293	60,268	4,802	37,838	66,328	4,629	46,192	80,133	5,386
Struma-Mesta	8,775	17,777	1,189	9,024	22,157	1,469	9,661	22,509	1,543
Topolnitsa	61,707	78,081	93,690	62,958	88,363	88,283	67,269	95,684	88,672
Haskovo	4,663	17,085	1,085	4,303	15,602	995	3,784	14,160	929
Black Sea	2,223	8,393	335	4,527	10,279	420	6,679	14,865	595
Shumen	5,755	27,959	1,258	12,515	42,590	2,318	15,363	46,630	2,580
TOTAL	283,462	700,095	305,886	274,800	672,632	266,637	308,375	772,787	294,737

Source: Irrigation Systems EAD

2.3. Support for investments in hydromelioration infrastructure

The implementation of the state policy aimed at the development and maintenance of sustainable, competitive agriculture is inextricably linked to the adequate management and use of the built hydromelioration infrastructure for the supply of water for irrigation, as well as ensuring efficient prevention through reconstruction/rehabilitation and modernization of the hydromelioration infrastructure used for agricultural purposes and adaptation of agriculture to the effects of climate change.

In order to permanently provide better quality service and reduce water losses, it is necessary to provide significantly more funds. In this regard Irrigation Systems EAD has applied under submeasure 4.3 "Support for investments in infrastructure related to the development, modernization or adaptation of agriculture and forestry" of measure 4 "Investments in tangible assets" from the Rural Development Program for the period 2014-2020.

According to the terms for application under submeasure 4.3 24 Project proposals from "Irrigation Systems" EAD for restoration of existing hydro-ameliorative irrigation facilities were approved. In 2023 contracts have been concluded for the implementation of all objects approved under the measure, five of which have been implemented at the Act 16 stage already at the beginning of 2024, and the rest are being implemented in stages, according to the specified deadlines and in accordance with the irrigation season.

"Irrigation Systems" EAD will also have the opportunity to apply for intervention II D.5 "Investments in irrigation infrastructure" from the Strategic Plan for the Development of Agriculture and Rural Areas of Bulgaria for the period 2023 - 2027. Support under the intervention will be aimed at irrigation infrastructure, which achieves economic sustainability by increasing the ratio of benefits to the agricultural sector, as well as environmental sustainability by efficient use of water resources. Support will be directed to operators who manage hydromelioration infrastructure and provide the service "Delivery of water for irrigation" in accordance with the applicable national legislation. A financial resource in the amount of EUR 100 mln public funds is foreseen.

Irrigation Systems EAD has prepared a total of 41 investment proposals for support, which were selected to include sections of the most intensively used irrigation facilities with a primary need for rehabilitation, located throughout the country.

3. Plant protection and phytosanitary control

3.1. Monitoring the development of economically important pests and plant protection

Plant protection inspectors at the RFSD carry out systematic observations of agricultural crops for the emergence, development and spread of economically important diseases and pests that are directly dependent on agro-meteorological conditions during the growing season. It is the obligation of the farmers to inspect the fields for disease and pest infestation in a timely manner and to apply chemical control only when the thresholds of economic harmfulness of pests in different crops are reached.

In 2023 the following pests are included in the list of economically important pests for all regions of the country: gray corn borer, western corn rootworm, meadow moth, wireworms (Elateridae family), crickets (Gryllidae family) and sunflower blight with the causative agent *Plasmopara halstedii* on agricultural crops, which are a priority for systematic and permanent observations for occurrence, distribution and degree of attack.

3.2. Plant protection

▪ Plant protection in cereals

In 2023, the general phytosanitary condition of cereals was good.

Weed control

During 2023, herbicides were applied to a total of 1,328.580 thousand ha with autumn crops (compared to 1,164.270 thousand ha in the previous 2022), including 1,148.830 thousand ha with wheat and 179.753 thousand ha with barley. Treatment against broadleaf weeds was carried out on 593.461 thousand ha.

In soil herbicides were applied to 241.084 thousand ha on areas sown with corn, and total of 296.404 thousand ha were treated with vegetation herbicides against types of wheat and broadleaf weeds.

Pests and Diseases Control

Corn bug (Eurygaster integriceps Put.)

The total areas affected by the adult of the corn bug during the year are 137.012 thousand ha and treatment was carried out on 115.870 thousand ha.

Treatment against the larvae of the pest was carried out on 124.560 thousand ha, while 133.767 thousand ha were affected.

Cereal Leaf Beetle (Oulema melanopa (L.))

In 2023, 168.740 thousand ha were treated against the larvae of the cereal leaf beetle, while 185.310 thousand ha were affected.

Western corn rootworm

During the year, pheromone and pherocone traps are provided to determine the flight and density of the pest. According to operational data of the BFSA, the total area attacked by it is 3,490 thousand ha with corn (at 1,158 thousand ha in 2022), and treatment was carried out on 0.550 thousand ha. A large number of plant protection products authorized for marketing and use are available for pest control.

Powdery mildew

In 2023, the wheat fields affected by powdery mildew were 480,112 thousand ha, treatment was carried out on 701,419 thousand ha. Multiple early chemical treatments were carried out, as in most of the treated areas the fungicides used were combined with the application of vegetation herbicides.

Septoria

282,929 thousand ha were affected by the disease and treatment was carried out on 495,565 thousand ha.

■ Plant protection in industrial crops

Weed control

In 2023, soil herbicides were applied on 157,070 thousand ha of sunflower and 224,456 thousand ha were treated with vegetative herbicides.

In the autumn, chemical control of weeds in rapeseed was carried out, mainly with soil herbicides, and they were applied on 45,670 ha. Vegetation herbicides were applied on 55,870 thousand ha.

During the year, soil herbicides were applied on 1,147 thousand ha of tobacco, and 0.255 thousand ha were treated with vegetative herbicides.

Chemical control of weeds in potatoes was carried out by applying soil and vegetation herbicides. Soil herbicides were applied on 5,290 thousand ha, and vegetative herbicides were applied on 2,312 thousand ha.

Control of diseases and pests

Black spots (Phoma) and Stem canker (Phomopsis) in sunflower

Throughout 2023, 44,310 thousand ha were treated against phoma 44,360 thousand ha were treated vs phomopsis. The treatments were mainly preventive.

Mildew on Sunflower

In 2023 manifestations of a systemic and local form of blight on sunflower are observed. The total attacked areas in the year were 5,626 thousand ha, compared to 1,610 thousand ha in 2022.

The cause for the mildew is *Plasmopara helianti (halstedii)*. The control measures for the pathogen are: high level of agrotechnics - mandatory decontamination of seeds before sowing, deep plowing after harvesting, sowing of resistant varieties and hybrids, mandatory destruction of self-sowing plants and, in case of an established infection, observance of 7- 8 annual crop rotation with cereal crops. There are plant protection products authorized for placing on the market and for use to decontaminate the seeds.

Rape beetle (Meligethes aeneus)

In the months of April and May of 2023, treatments against the Rape beetle were carried out on 72.090 thousand ha Rapeseed.

Rape stem weevil (Ceutorhynchus napi)

In 2023, 28,190 thousand ha of rapeseed were treated against the pest.

- **Plant protection in vegetable crops**

- Pest Control**

- Tomato pinworm (Tuta Absoluta)***

- In 2023 the reproduction of the pest was not allowed in most greenhouses in the country. From 1 to 10 insecticide treatments were carried out on 0,492 ha.

- Under field conditions, 1 to 6 treatments against the tomato leafminer were carried out on an area of 1,325 thousand ha.

- During the year, the implementation of state aid under the "National Program of Measures for Control of Tomato Leafminer" continues. Beneficiaries of the aid are farmers growing tomatoes in greenhouses, as well as peppers, aubergines, potatoes grown in greenhouses on areas larger than 1 decare. 111 farmers applied under the program in 2023.

- **Plant protection in orchard crops**

- Pests and Diseases Control**

- Leaf-eating caterpillars***

- Predominant species in orchards are: *Lymantria dispar* L.; *Euproctis chrisorrhoea* L.; Geometridae; *Hyphantria cunea* Drury. In 2023, the pests were in low population density and degree of attack. The harmful activity and the spread of leaf-eating caterpillars were limited by treatments against other economically important pests on fruit crops. Treatment against the main leaf-eating species was carried out on 8,977 thousand ha of orchards, including 1,390 thousand ha of pome fruit and 7,587 thousand ha of stone fruit species in combination with the fight against other pests.

- Tortrix moths (Tortricidae) and Temetocera ocellana F. and Hedya nubiferana Haw***

- Treatment against pests was carried out on 2,440 thousand ha of pome fruit species.

- Aphididae***

- In 2023, all fruit crops were affected by aphids. 4,739 thousand ha of pome fruit and 13,873 thousand ha of stone fruit species were treated, from 1 to 7 times.

- Quadraspidiotus perniciosus***

- A total of 1,660 thousand ha of orchards were treated against the San Jose scale.

- Parthenolecanium corni Bouche***

- In 2023, 0,125 thousand ha of plums from a total of 9,896 thousand ha of plum trees were treated, as mainly combined treatments for plum fruit moth were carried out.

- Cherry fruit fly (Rhagoletis cerasi L.)***

- The treated areas were 10,207 thousand ha.

- Black plum sawfly (Hopllocampa minuta Christ.)***

- In 2023, 8,426 thousand ha were treated against the pest from 1 to 2 times.

- Fruit worms***

- 5,617 thousand ha of apple orchards were treated against apple maggots, 12,067 thousand ha of plum orchards against plum maggot and 5,126 thousand ha against eastern peach and apricot maggot.

- Peach-twig borer (Anarsia lineatella Zell.)***

- 2,679 thousand ha peach and apricot orchards were treated.

- Roundworm moth (Leucotera (Cemiostoma) scitella Zell.) on apple trees***

- 0,447 thousand ha were treated against roundworm moth.

Apple scab and pear scab

In 2023, 5,852 thousand ha were treated against apple and pear scab.

Powdery mildew on apple trees

In the year, 4,051 thousand ha of apple and pear orchards were treated against powdery mildew.

Early brown rot

1 to 4 treatments against early brown rot were carried out on 20,855 thousand ha of the managed stone fruit trees (including plums, cherries, sour cherries, peaches, apricots).

Late brown rot

In 2023, 2 to 4 treatments against late brown rot were carried out on 0,169 thousand ha of the managed stone fruit trees (including plums, cherries, sour cherries, peaches, apricots).

Peach powdery mildew

During the vegetation, 1 to 7 sprays were carried out. 3,870 thousand ha of peach orchards were treated.

Peach Leaf Curl

1 to 4 treatments were carried out on an area of 3,298 thousand ha peach trees.

Cherry leaf spot (*Blumeriella jaapii*) on cherries and sour cherries

In 2023, 1 to 3 treatments were carried out on an area of 5,755 thousand ha of cherries and sour cherries.

▪ Plant protection in vineyards

In 2023 "National Program of Measures to Prevent the Spread and Control of Vine Pests (Genus Vitis)" was developed. The national program aims to limit the spread of certain diseases and enemies and to keep the vines healthy.

Weed control

In 2023, soil herbicides were applied on 2,390 thousand ha and vegetation herbicides on 12,210 thousand ha of the managed areas occupied by vineyards.

▪ Pests and Diseases Control

European Grapevine Moth (*Lobesia botrana* Schiff.)

In 2023, out of a total of 39,639 thousand ha of vineyards, 16,727 thousand ha were treated from 1 to 7 times.

Schizotetranychus viticola Reck.

During the year, treatment was carried out on 6,728 thousand ha vineyards, from 1 to 5 times.

Grapevine Downy Mildew (*Plasmopara viticola*)

1 to 8 treatments against the mildew were carried out on an area of 34,500 thousand ha.

Powdery mildew (*Oidium*)

1 to 8 treatments were carried out on an area of 34,660 thousand ha of vineyards from 2 to 8 times.

Gray mould rot (*botrytis*)

From 1 to 6 treatments were carried out in the areas treated against gray rot (25,766 thousand ha).

▪ Plant Protection against Omnivorous Pests

Common Vole (*Microtus arvalis*)

In the spring of 2023, the total area of autumn trees attacked by the common vole was 31,880 thousand ha. Chemical control was carried out on 22,640 thousand ha.

Crickets

In 2023 attacked by crickets are 0.492 thousand ha with sunflower and 5,156 thousand ha with corn. At present, there are no registered plant protection products for fighting the pest.

Wireworms

Areas affected by wireworms are 23,710 thousand ha and for corn - 0,310 thousand ha.

In 2023, state aid was granted to compensate the costs of agricultural producers related to the implementation of measures under the „National Program of Measures for Control of Soil Pests on Potatoes from the Wireworm family. The aid consisted of compensation of the costs for purchase of plant protection products, for the control of soil pests on potatoes from the Wireworm family.

During the year, there were 297 submitted declarations from farmers for 2,557 thousand ha of potatoes attacked.

Maize Leaf Weevil (Tanymecus dilaticollis Gyll.)

The pest is spread throughout the country, but it is found in the highest density in the Danube Plain, Ludogorie and Dobrudza. It causes the most serious damage in corn and sunflower. The use of decontaminated seed has proven to be the most effective method of combating soil pests that cause damage in the early stages of crop development.

In 2023, chemical control was carried out against Maize Leaf Weevil (*Tanymecus dilaticollis* Gyll.) on 6,217 thousand ha of maize and 16.632 thousand ha of sunflower. Currently there are no suitable seed decontamination products authorized to deal with the pests.

Loxostege sticticalis

As a result of the mass reproduction of the meadow butterfly in 2022 and the announced calamity, in 2023 the pest is included in the list of economically important pests and is placed under increased and systematic surveillance. The aim is to prevent mass reproduction and to implement timely control measures.

0,070 thousand ha of sunflower and 0,310 thousand ha of corn were attacked by the *Loxostege sticticalis*.

Moroccan locust (Dociostaurus maroccanus)

Annually, the pest is more closely monitored and, if necessary, it is possible to declare a calamity and take action for its physical destruction and damage limitation.

In 2023 in the Blagoevgrad region, an increase in the population density of the pest was found. Locusts are found only on waste lands on an area of 0.024 thousand ha.

In Kardzhali region, hearths were discovered, which occupy an area between 2 - 4 square meters with a density of "countless" in meadows and pastures.

The occurrence of Moroccan grasshopper was found on meadow areas (0.010 - 0.015 thousand ha) in the territory of the municipality of Ivaylovgrad.

The pest is not found on agricultural crops.

The attack by Moroccan locusts in 2023 is relatively weak and limited in area. The pest continues to be under increased surveillance.

3.3. Phytosanitary Control

The objectives and priorities of phytosanitary control are:

- Protection of Bulgaria and the European Union from the penetration and spread of new plant pests;
- Protection of the plant resources of Bulgaria and the EU, through a preliminary study of new risks and ways of transmission, early detection upon importation or on the territory of the country and successful

eradication of outbreaks of pests;

- Preservation of Bulgaria's biological diversity and environment.

Activities to achieve these goals are:

- Production control of plants and plant products on the territory of Bulgaria with a view to timely detection and prevention of the spread of quarantine pests on plants and plant products;
- Effective control on import of plants and plant products from third countries on the territory of the country and the EU, as an external border of the Union;
- Ensuring the export of plants and plant products according to the phytosanitary requirements of the importing country;
- Legislation harmonized with the EU plant health regime;
- Carrying out phytosanitary monitoring programs for quarantine pests, in accordance with EU legislation;
- Laboratory-diagnostic network.

3.3.1. Production control of the territory of Bulgaria and movement of plants, plant products and other objects within the EU

Phytosanitary control in the production and movement of plants, plant products and other sites and monitoring in the country for quarantine pests and regulated non-quarantine pests (RNQ) in 2023 was carried out in compliance with the requirements of the Plant Protection Act (PPA), in accordance with EU legislation in the field.

The persons under Art. 22, para. 1 of the Plant Protection Act - importers, producers, processors, warehouses, forwarding centers, markets and persons handling plants, plant products and other sites subject to phytosanitary control, are registered in the official register of the professional phytosanitary control operators.

Registered professional operators in 2023 were 4,069. Of these, 175 were professional operators registered for thermal treatment of wood packaging material (WPM) and 568 - importers of plants, plant products and other objects.

In 2023, 5,669 inspections were carried out in the production of plants and plant products, compared to 6,962 in the previous year.

The main priority in this area is to ensure the production of healthy plants and plant products, their movement within the EU through the system of plant passports and trouble-free exports to third countries, complying with phytosanitary requirements for imports from the importing country.

In 2023, the plant protection inspectors of the BFSA carried out phytosanitary control under the following national monitoring programs:

- Monitoring for quarantine pests on potatoes;
- Monitoring for quarantine pests on fruit species, including strawberries and raspberries;
- Monitoring for fruit maggots;
- Monitoring for quarantine pests on vineyards;
- Monitoring for quarantine pests by vegetable species in greenhouses and open areas;
- Monitoring for quarantine pests in greenhouses, nurseries and garden centers for flowers and ornamental plants;
- Monitoring for *Xylella fastidiosa*;
- Monitoring for quarantine pests by forest species;
- Monitoring to establish the presence or absence of the pest *Meloidogyne graminicola* on the territory of Bulgaria;
- Calendar plan for monitoring plants and plant products for quarantine pests.

During the observations carried out under the monitoring programs on the territory of the country during the year, 6,395 inspections were documented (compared to 7,300 for 2022); 1,510 samples were analyzed in the regional diagnostic laboratories for plant health (ODRHR) (1,720 for 2022). 2,584 plant passports (compared to 2,060 for the previous year) of locally produced goods for movement in the country and the EU and 16 health certificates were issued.

The phytosanitary control at the BFSA is connected with the activity of the Central Laboratory of Plant Quarantine (CLPQ), which is designated as the National Reference Laboratory for plant pests - insects and mites, nematodes, bacteria, fungi and omycetes and for viruses, viroids and phytoplasmas.

In 2023, 3,783 samples were received in the Central Laboratory and 11,405 analyses of plants, plant materials and imported soils, incl. from EU traffic, from field control, from monitoring programs and from the private sector, were performed.

The timely detection of pests enables the phytosanitary inspectors to take timely and appropriate action to locate outbreaks and eradicate them where possible.

The specialized potato laboratory in Samokov, potato varieties are being tested for resistance to potato cyst nematodes.

3.3.2. Phytosanitary control at export

In 2023, 12,479 inspections were carried out (10,285 in 2022), on 30,592 shipments of plants and plant products intended for export, for compliance with the phytosanitary requirements of the importer country (30,410 in 2022).

The main goods subject to phytosanitary control for export are: timber, sunflower (peeled, colored, black), wheat, coriander, corn, rice bran, dried herbs and spices. Timber exports were mainly to Turkey, Northern Macedonia, Serbia, Albania, Israel and Mexico. The most significant exports of coriander were to Indonesia, Malaysia, Israel, UK and Morocco. Exports of sunflower (white and black) are most significant to the USA, Turkey, Australia and Canada, and of wheat - to Israel, Turkey, Tunisia, the USA, Indonesia and Thailand. Export of dried herbs was most significant to the US, Japan, UK and Indonesia, and that of spices - to the US, UK, Japan, Turkey and Serbia.

3.3.3. Phytosanitary control at import

In 2023, 568 operators were registered in the official register of phytosanitary control of importers of plants and plant products, compared to 425 the previous year. 18 plant passports were issued, compared to 45 in 2022.

3.4. Control of plant protection products and fertilizers

The main purpose of the control over the marketing of plant protection products (PPPs) and fertilizers is to ensure the marketing, storage, repackaging and production of permitted, usable, efficient, maximally safe for human and animal health, sparing environmental PPPs and fertilizers that meet the legal requirements for packaging and labeling. The scope of control covers companies for trade, repackaging and production of PPP and fertilizers, as well as unregulated trade sites and border crossings.

The control over the use of PPP and fertilizers is directed at ensuring the correct and sustainable use of plant protection products in compliance with the requirements of the Plant Protection Act to produce safe plant production. The scope of control involves farmers who apply plant protection products and fertilizers production of plant products intended for food, feed or other purposes outside the agri-food network.

In 2023 73 plant protection products were authorized, the authorization of 5 products was renewed, 24 products were suspended or withdrawn, and 2 products were refused under the mutual recognition procedure, one authorization was refused renewal and the authorization of 153 products was amended.

3.4.1. Results of the control activity on the marketing of PPPs

On the territory of the country, 1,298 sites related to supply of plant protection products to the market, including 858 for trade in agricultural pharmacies, 424 warehouses for wholesale (own warehouses and cells for rent), 14 sites for repackaging and 2 PPP production companies were registered.

In 2023, 1,606 inspections were carried out, 929 of which were in agricultural pharmacies, 547 in warehouses, 20 in repackaging sites, 13 in PPP production sites and 97 in unregulated sites (municipal markets, shops, etc.). 256 prescriptions, 19 citations for administrative violations and 15 penal citations were drawn up.

Table V.5. Control over the PPP market in the 2019 - 2023 period

Activities	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Number of registered sites	1,300	1,304	1,323	1,321	1,298
Number of site inspections	1,706	1,625	1,763	1,582	1,606
Number of prescriptions	269	234	290	173	256
PPP samples taken for analysis	99	99	100	88	73
Acts for established administrative violations	20	25	34	25	19

Source: BFSA

In the year, a total of 202 certificates were issued, including 19 certificates for PPP trade in warehouses, 30 for trade in agricultural pharmacies, and 153 certificates for change of circumstances.

73 compliance control samples were taken in 2023. No discrepancies were found in the analyzed samples.

Based on received applications, 12 certificates for extending the period of validity of the PPP and 2 opinions on non-compliance of the PPP with the indicators affirmed upon their approval were prepared and issued.

A total of 39,244 kg and 5,734.716 liters of PPP were seized from the trading, production and repackaging sites and left for safekeeping.

3.4.2. Results of the control activity on the use of PPP

The total number of inspections of the use of PPP in 2023 was 5,966, including 4,224 documentary checks in RFSD, 1,505 documentary checks during on-site farm inspections, 45 during aerial spraying, 19 during fumigation, 84 during treatment of seeds for sowing and 89 during treatment with ground equipment.

During the year, 1,102 prescriptions, 38 citations for established administrative violation and 29 penal decrees were drawn up.

On the territory of the country, 125 inspections were carried out on signals or complaints regarding the use of PPP, 16 citations for established administrative violations were drawn up and 15 penal decrees were issued.

Table V.6. Control over the use of PPPs in the 2019 - 2023 period

Activities	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Number of inspections of the use of PPPs carried out	7,164	5,649	5,792	5,624	5,966
Number of prescriptions	1,361	1,287	1,085	1,299	1,102
Acts for established administrative violations	52	36	37	21	38
Number of inspections on signals or complaints regarding the use of PPPs	241	141	121	156	125
Citations for discovered administrative violations for signals and complaints	38	23	17	22	16
Plant samples taken for analysis:					
<i>Pesticide residues</i>	71	92	95	29	68
<i>Leaf samples</i>	57	40	50	13	52
<i>Nitrate pollutants and heavy metals</i>	25	25	29	24	36
<i>On signals and complaints</i>	82	41	12	27	14
Number of individuals providing plant protection services	59	50	60	65	56
Number of permits issued for aerial spraying	155	56	112	59	54

Source: BFSA

Permits issued for the application of PPPs through aerial spraying, pursuant to Art. 109 of the Plant Protection Act

Permits issued for the application of PPPs through aerial spraying, pursuant to Art. 109 of the Plant Protection Act are 39 to farm areas and 15 to forest areas. The treated areas were 6,170 thousand ha of agricultural areas and 2,895 thousand ha of forest areas.

The individuals providing specialized plant protection services were 56, out of which 26 performed fumigation, 18 performed treatment of seeds and 12 provided consultancy service. 35 inspections of persons performing specialized plant protection services were carried out, where no inconsistencies were found.

Samples for pesticide residues under the National Program for Control of Pesticide Residues in and on Foods of Plant and Animal Origin and leaf samples for identification of PPP

Of the planned 77 samples for pesticide 68 samples were taken in 2023. Discrepancies were found in samples of spinach, red grapes and potatoes. 3 citations for administrative violations were drawn up for the use of non-permitted PPPs and those outside the scope of permitted use.

In 2023, out of the planned 120 plant samples (50 for identification of used PPPs and 70 in cases of reports related to protection of bees for poisoning, signals for unregulated use of PPPs), 52 samples were taken and analyzed. Inconsistencies were found in samples of strawberries, pears, cucumbers, pepper, canola and oil rose. 12 acts of administrative violation were drawn up, of which 7 were for the use of unauthorized pesticides, 3 for the use of pesticides outside the scope of authorized use and 1 each for non-compliance with good plant protection practice and for lack of disclosure in the Electronic platform for disclosure of plant protection activities (EPDPPA).

Samples of plants and plant products under the National Program for Control of Contaminants in Food (nitrates and heavy metals - lead and cadmium and microbiological contaminants)

In the analysis of 36 samples (8 for nitrate content, 25 for heavy metals and 3 for microbiological pollutants) in the primary production of agricultural crops, no inconsistencies were found.

Samples taken from plants and plant products outside the National Plan for Control on the Use of PPPs for 2023

According to signals, complaints and orders, a laboratory analysis of 14 samples was carried out and 4 acts were drawn up for an established administrative violation, of which 1 for the use of an unauthorized PPP, 1 for not observing a distance from a neighboring sensitive crop when using a PPP, 1 for an unfulfilled prescription of the competent authority and 1 for non-compliance with the principles of Good Plant Protection Practice. The presence of pesticide residues clothianidin and imidacloprid was found in a sample of corn seeds.

Opinions issued to farmers that applied for support in 2023

In 2023, 1,111 opinions were issued on the support measures.

Results of the control activity of farmers for the presence of microbiological pollutants

During the year, a total of 117 inspections of farmers were carried out for the presence of microbiological contaminants in the primary production of agricultural crops and 76 prescriptions were issued.

Inspections of agricultural holdings for compliance with the rules of Good Agricultural Practice - Nitrates (Agroecology)

During 2023, 253 inspections were carried out and 23 prescriptions were made. The main omissions made by farmers in complying with the rules of good agricultural practice are the lack of built facilities for the storage of solid or liquid manure, insufficient capacity of the built manure storage facility and omissions in keeping records in the Diary for plant protection measures and fertilizing.

A total of 7 inspections of agricultural holdings were carried out following reports and complaints about compliance with good agricultural practice, and 2 non-conformities were found.

3.4.3. Analysis of the results of the control of the market and use of PPPs in 2023

Progress has been made in meeting the objectives set out in the Annual National Plans for Market

Control and the Control of the Use of Plant Protection Products and Fertilizers and the controls carried out have been effective.

The serious violations found in 2023 in the control activity on the market supply of PPPs are trade and storage of unauthorized and expired PPPs, PPP trade in unregulated facilities without a trade certificate, and the most common inconsistencies are incomplete data in the log of delivered and sell PPPs, unordered by functional characteristics PPPs.

Within 2023 the most common inconsistencies in the control activity on the use of PPP among farmers are the lack of a contract with a company for the collection of empty packaging, lack of notification of carried out plant protection measures in EPDPPA, incomplete data in the Diary of carried out plant protection measures and fertilization or lack of such, there is no separate part in the farmer's warehouse for the temporary storage of expired PPP and empty PPP packages, the farmer does not have certificate under Art. 83 of the PPA, the Good Plant Protection Practices have not been observed. Some more serious violations were also found, such as storage for the purpose of using unauthorized or unsuitable plant protection products and the use of plant protection products outside the scope of authorized use.

Depending on the severity of the established non-conformity, prescriptions are given with a deadline for their implementation or acts are drawn up to establish an administrative violation.

A large number of PPP traders and farmers comply with the prescriptions, cooperate with the competent authorities and keep the required documentation and records.

With the construction and use of EPDPPA, a stable and significant reduction of signals related to the protection of bees from poisoning has been observed over the years.

In order to counteract the illegal import, trade and use of unauthorized and illegal PPPs, in 2023 the Bulgarian Food Safety Agency participated in the SILVER AXE VII international operation against the distribution of illegal pesticides.

A total of 1,164 targeted inspections for illegal plant protection products were carried out within the control activity in 2023, of which 551 on trading sites and 613 on farmer use of plant protection products, issuing 7 acts for established administrative violation.

During the inspections, a total of 54,796,255 liters and 979,050 kg of unauthorized PPP were found in the interior of the country, and a total of 608,550 liters at the border crossing. The joint actions of all competent authorities have prevented the import, distribution and use of large quantities of illegal pesticides that are dangerous to public health and the environment.

Unregulated sites are risk sites where conditions are created for unregulated trade in PPPs, as well as trade and distribution of unauthorized or counterfeit PPPs, making it necessary to focus on this control in the coming years.

4. Fertilizers

4.1. Registration of fertilizers

In 2023, 111 certificates were issued for the registration of fertilizers, soil improvers, biologically active substances, and food substrates in accordance to national legislation.

4.2. Control of fertilizers upon their placing on the market

A total of 799 inspections were carried out on the territory of the country in 2023 in connection with the control of fertilizers carried out by the BFSA, with 640 inspections planned. 19 prescriptions were issued and a deadline for implementation was specified. 1 citation for established administrative violation was drawn up.

In pursuance of the National Plan for Control of Fertilizers, Soil Enhancers, Biologically Active Substances and Nutrient Substrates, 37 samples of fertilizers registered under the national legislation were taken and tested in 2023. 37 statements of compliance were prepared in accordance with the Plant Protection Act. In one sample, a discrepancy was found in the composition with regard to the content of nutritional elements declared by the manufacturer on the product label and the corresponding indicators from the registration certificate. Actions have been taken by the control body according to art. 139 of the PPA. As of 16 July 2022,

Regulation (EU) 2019/1009 is applied to lay down rules for making fertilizer products available on the EU market and for amending Regulations (EC) No. 1069/2009 and (EC) No. 1107/2009 and repealing Regulation (EC) No. 2003/2003

1 sample was taken outside the National Plan for Control of Fertilizers, Soil Improvers, Biologically Active Substances and Nutrient Substrates for 2023, where no inconsistencies were found.

Table V.7. Control over fertilizers in the period 2021 - 2023

Activities	2021	2022	2023
Number of registered fertilizers	117	110	111
Number of site inspections	881	876	799
Samples of fertilizers taken for analysis	94	73	37
Citations for violations	8	3	1

Source: BFSA

Use of sludge in agriculture

In 2023, 30 permits were issued for utilization of sewage sludge for use in agriculture, on fields with a total area of 6,971.812 decares in the lands of the village of Kubratovo and Benkovski district, Sofia City Province.

The total amount of recovered sludge, expressed as dry matter, was 13,383.34 tons (12% less compared to the previous year) for sunflower and corn crops. The producer of the sludge is "Sofiiska voda" AD, and the utilized sludge is from the drying fields of the Settlement wastewater treatment plants in the village of Kubratovo and district Benkovski.

5. Variety testing, approbation, and seed control

The state policy in the field of variety testing, variety maintenance, production, trade, import and export of sowing and planting material is implemented through the Executive Agency for Variety Testing, Approbation and Seed Control at the MAF.

EAPVTASC controls the production, harvesting, distribution, trade and storage of sowing and planting material; its certification in compliance with the accepted methods, schemes and technological characteristics for quality; manages the procedure for testing, recognition and zoning of cultivated plant varieties; annually issues the Official Variety List of the Republic of Bulgaria for the varieties of field, vegetable, fruit crops and vines; enters the newly registered varieties in the European catalogs of the EU and is responsible for the full harmonization of the national legislation in the field of seeds and propagating material with that of the EU.

The Agency is the national body for implementation of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) seed schemes.

In 2023, by-laws on seeds and propagating material, transposing directives amending and supplementing basic EU directives, were updated. The existing regulations were amended and supplemented, specialized internal regulations, such as test methods for distinctness, homogeneity and stability (RCS) according to the technical protocols of the European Plant Variety Office (CPVO) and the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV), test methods for biological and economic qualities (BIA), were developed.

In order to meet the expectations of customers for provision of administrative services, in compliance with the highest professional standards, EAPVTASC is accredited and has effective quality systems according to ISO 9001:2015, as per the standard of the International Association of Seed Laboratories (ISTA) and by the European Plant Variety Office. The Agency is authorized by the EU for the plant varieties (EAEC/CPVO) to make expert assessments on its behalf in terms of distinctness, uniformity and stability of new varieties, to provide legal protection in the EU.

Administration of state aid

Pursuant to a contract for granting of state aid to promote the production and use of quality seeds and propagating material, in 2023 EAPVTASC provided services to farmers related to:

- field inspection of seed crops and common nursery plantations; labelling;
- sampling of seed batches, intended for certification;
- laboratory analysis of seed samples by groups of crops;
- post-control of seed batches;
- qualification of certified and CAC fruit and certified and standard vine planting material.

The quality scheme introduces additional and some higher requirements to the production process and the final product and guarantees higher quality of the produced seeds and propagating material from the following groups of crops: cereals, feed, oilseeds, potatoes, tobacco, cotton, certified and CAC fruit seedlings, certified and standard vine seedlings and certified and standard vegetable seeds.

The total value of the services provided by EAPVTASC under this scheme in 2023 amounted to BGN 1,152,393.

State aid is a prerequisite for achieving significant added value in the use of certified seeds. The beneficiaries are 418, but the positive effect of producing more and better quality products per unit area and improving the agri-environment of agricultural production are beneficial for the whole society.

Publication of an official variety list of the Republic of Bulgaria

In 2023, EAPVTASC regularly exchanged information with the European Commission, Member States and other international institutions regarding the names, entries and de-registration of plant varieties in and from the official variety list, as well as the trade in seeds and propagating material.

The official variety list of the Republic of Bulgaria is part of the European catalogs of varieties of field and vegetable crops, which allows varieties of Bulgarian selection to be present on the EU free market. The official variety list is published on the Agency's website and it is updated promptly after the entry of new plant varieties. Under the Law on Protection of New Varieties of Plants and Breeds of Animals, the Agency carries out substantive examination of the distinctness, uniformity and stability of new plant varieties, on the basis of which the Patent Office issues a certificate of protection.

In 2023, 978 varieties (compared to 1,030 in 2022) of the following types of agricultural plants were entered into the official variety list: field species - 539, vegetable species - 287, orchard species - 19, vine - 93, tobacco - 15, medicinal and aromatic species - 13, and species outside the scope of Directives 2002/53/EC and 2002/55/EU - 12 species.

Of these, 236 species are protected in the country with a certificate of legal protection issued by the Patent Office, as follows: field species - 161, vegetable species - 44, vine - 15, tobacco - 7, medicinal and aromatic species - 3, and species outside the scope of Directives 2002/53/EC and 2002/55/EU - 6 species.

Carrying out variety testing for distinctness, uniformity and stability, soil control, biological and economic qualities and preliminary testing of new plant varieties

In 2023, a total of 737 species, hybrids and lines were planted and tested (858 for 2022), with 409 of them under signed contracts for species testing (397 for 2022) and 324 - similar species, and a comparative collection to prove the distinctiveness of the requested new species (461 for 2022). The comparative variety collection (seeds, material from vegetatively propagating plant species and official variety descriptions), maintained by EAPVTASC includes 9,988 varieties (compared to 7,650 in 2022) of 80 crop species.

In order to obtain legal protection on the territory of the country, 55 papers were prepared and sent to the Patent Office (compared to 24 for 2022), final reports and official variety descriptions.

During the year, 15 varieties of sunflower, were tested for DUS under a contract by the ESRB, .

Out of the total number of sown/planted varieties, 473 are field, 239 vegetable, 11 essential oils and

medicinal, and 10 vine. Compared to the previous year, there was an increase in field and fruit species and vines, and a decrease in vegetable species.

By types of agricultural crops, the variety test for DUS is distributed as follows:

- 18 types of field crops (compared to 18 in 2022);
- 18 vegetable crops (compared to 14 in 2022);
- 3 essential oils and medicinals (compared to 3 for 2022);
- 1 type of vine (compared to 3 for 2022).

153 final reports with official variety descriptions were prepared and accepted (compared to 226 for 2022).

In 2023, 813 soil control samples were set (compared to 820 in 2022) from 35 types of agricultural crops, of which 806 were approved.

The total number of varieties, without varieties, standards, which are set and tested in tests for biological and economic properties (BEP) for inclusion in list "A" of the Official Variety List and in preliminary tests, according to concluded contracts, was 1,101, - 39 less than in 2022

Of these, 881 varieties have been set up and tested in preliminary testing (compared to 925 for 2022), and for BEP - a total of 220 varieties (compared to 215 varieties for 2022).

The varieties of standards included in the BEP tests were 68. The varieties of standards and their number in the BEP tests are in compliance with the methodological requirements for the respective types of agricultural crops.

Of the 1,101 varieties tested for BEP and preliminary testing, 92.8% were foreign selection, and 7.2% were Bulgarian selection (compared to 94.7% and 5.3% for 2022, respectively).

In 2023, the number of BEP tests and preliminary tests was 66

7 meetings of expert commissions were held to discuss the results of the tests of new varieties by crop groups. 15 varieties (compared to 21 for 2022) of Bulgarian selection and 43 varieties (compared to 60 for 2022) of foreign selection were tested. 58 varieties were recognized for inclusion in list "A" of the official variety list of the Republic of Bulgaria.

79 permits were issued during the year, 31 of which were updated, according to art. 39a of the Law on Seed and Propagating Material and in compliance with Commission Decision 2004/842/EC, which supports the business in terms of production and trade in seeds in the agricultural sector.

Keeping a public national electronic register of the persons who trade in sowing and/or planting material, under art. 28, para. 4 of the LSS

In order to regulate the trade in seeds and planting material, EAPVTASC keeps a public national electronic register of persons trading in seeds and/or planting material, which enables users and other administrative units to quickly find information on registered persons by crop groups.

In 2023, a total of 528 trade certificates were issued (287 more than in 2022), with 317 for initial registration, 211 reissued and 332 deleted from the register.

Certification of sowing and propagating material

The certification of seed and propagating material was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the procedures of the quality management system and the "Quality scheme for production of quality seeds and propagating material".

In 2023, applications for certification were received for 32,826 ha of seed production crops from different crop groups (compared to 31,570 ha in 2022).

The total area of inspected crops of field and vegetable crops by EAPVTASC inspectors amounted to 32,741.9 ha (1,135.9 ha more than in 2022). Of the inspected species of agricultural plants, the largest share

was occupied by the group of cereals - 30,451 ha (93.8%), followed by oil and fiber - 1,385 ha (4.3%), fodder - 594 ha (1.8%), potatoes - 292 ha (0.9%), vegetable species - 19 ha (0.1%), tobacco - 0.5 ha and beets - 0.4 ha.

After the field inspections, 32,527 ha of seed production crops were approved, 247 ha were downgraded to a lower category than the one requested for certification, and 52 ha were rejected due to lower indicators than required by the regulations under Art. 29, para. 6 of the Law on Seed and Propagating Material.

For the purposes of certification, 4,485 samples were taken from homogeneously prepared seed batches. 481 samples were taken from individuals (samplers) who received permission from the Executive Director of EAPVTASC under the terms and conditions of Ordinance No. 8 of October 31, 2016.

In 2023, 74 ha of vine nurseries, 29 of nursery vineyards and 17 ha of vine rootstocks were inspected.

A total of 3,190,900 vine propagating material was qualified, of which 311,400 improved vines, 2,539,700 rootstock cuttings and 339,800 graft cuttings. 397,964 pieces of rootstocks of fruit species and 145,342 pieces of fruit planting material, imported from third countries, were qualified.

Field inspections were carried out on 7.6 ha of oil rose rootstocks, including 2.7 ha of the "pre-basic" category and 3 ha of the "certified" category. 86,700 pieces of oil rose propagating material have been certified. 0.15 ha of lavender rootstock, "pre-basic" category was also inspected.

Control activities under GMOA and LSS, including import of seeds and propagating material from and to third countries

In 2022, more than 678 document and on-the-spot checks were carried out. The GMO inspections did not detect the presence of GMOs in conventional seed batches.

Effective control was exercised during harvesting and marketing of seeds and propagating material. During carried out inspections, the inspectors took 93 samples for control analysis. The results of the analyses show that the seeds meet the minimum germination requirements. According to the implementation of the Multi-Year National Control Plan of the Republic of Bulgaria, 8 samples of hybrid corn seed lots were taken for analysis in an accredited GMO monitoring laboratory. GMOs were not detected in the analyzed samples.

9 acts were drawn up to establish an administrative violation under the Law on Seed and Planting Material.

For the results from the inspections, inspection checklists and statements of findings with precepts were issued, in cases of established irregularities.

At the request of producers, 66 samples of hemp plants were taken to quantify the content of tetrahydrocannabinol in hemp varieties at the request of producers and during varietal testing.

10 batches of raw hops were sampled and certified.

Expected data for 2024

In the first half of 2024 the following draft regulatory acts were prepared:

- Ordinance amending and supplementing Ordinance No. 7 of 2013 for the conditions and procedure for variety testing, recognition, registration and deregistration of plant varieties in and from the Official Variety List of the Republic of Bulgaria;
- Ordinance amending and supplementing Ordinance No. 19 of 2004 on production and trade of propagating material of vegetable crops;
- Ordinance amending and supplementing Ordinance No. 31 of 2008 on certification of hops and hops products and on registration of hop delivery contracts.

In 2024, EAPVTASC continued to provide services related to the application of state aid for participation of farmers in a quality scheme for production of seeds and propagating material. The estimated maximum annual aid budget for 2024 amounted to BGN 1.2 million.

The applications for certification of sowing and planting material from spring and perennial crops were registered in time.

In 2023, a total of 32,806 ha were declared for a field inspection.

Of the declared seed production crops, the largest share was occupied by the group of cereals - 31,450 ha (95.9%), followed by feed - 664 ha (2%), potatoes - 339 ha (1%) and oil and fiber producing plants - 147 ha (0.4%). Seed production crops of vegetable crops - 98.3 ha, tobacco - 1.5 ha, and beets - 0.5 ha were also declared.

92.1 ha of wine plantations and 8 ha of nursery plantations of medicinal and aromatic plants applied for certification/approval.

The Agency continues to control the harvesting and marketing of seeds and propagating material. Seeds that do not meet the minimum germination requirements are suspended from marketing.

An inventory of oil rose plantations was also made.

3 meetings of expert commissions for DUS and 8 meetings of expert commissions for BEP were held to discuss the results of the testing of new varieties by groups of crops and to make decisions for inclusion in lists "A" and "B" of the official variety list of Republic of Bulgaria. For DUS, 112 varieties were discussed and recognized, and for BEP - 71. 67 varieties were recognized.

6. Food chain safety

EU food safety policy aims to ensure a high level of protection of human health and consumer interests in food, including traditional products, as well as the effective functioning of the internal market.

The Ministry of Agriculture manages, coordinates and controls the implementation of state policy in the field of food safety and animal health through its specialized administration.

The Agri-Food Chain Policies Directorate assists the Minister of Agriculture and Food in developing, coordinating and implementing state policy in the field of food and feed quality and safety, animal health, plant health and plant reproductive material.

The Bulgarian Food Safety Agency (BFSA) conducts official control of the entire food chain based on the farm-to-table approach, following the best European practices in the application of high standards in the control of food safety and quality, food additives and beverages, veterinary activity, animal health and welfare, plant protection and fertilizers, phytosanitary control, feed control, border control, etc. A high level of consumer confidence in the quality and safety of food is ensured by uniform controls throughout the food chain.

6.1. Animal health and welfare.

Animal health

The priority tasks of the BFSA in this area are:

- protection of animal health in the country;
- protection of the health of farm animals against dangerous viral infections associated with major economic losses;
- ensuring the production of raw cow milk compliant with the requirements in accordance with European legislation;
- free movement of animals, products and raw materials obtained from them between Member States and exports to third countries;
- protection of the population from the occurrence of zoonoses (diseases transmitted from animals to humans).

To achieve these priorities in 2023, a scheme to assist farmers in implementing the measures set out in the National Program for Prevention, Surveillance, Control and Eradication of Animal Diseases and Zoonoses in the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2022 - 2024 continues to be implemented.

In 2023, the mandatory measures set out for implementation of the National Program for Prevention, Surveillance, Control and Eradication of Animal Diseases and Zoonoses in the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2022 - 2024 were implemented.

The activities of the BFSa are aimed at reducing the risk of the occurrence and spread of acute and exotic infectious animal diseases, given the geographical location of our country. To this end, the following national disease surveillance programs, cofinanced by the EU, are being implemented, namely:

- Program for surveillance of avian influenza in poultry and wild birds;
- Program for control and eradication of rabies;
- Program for supervision of bluetongue in ruminants;
- Program for supervision and eradication of classical swine fever;
- Program for control of salmonellosis in laying hens, broilers, breeding flocks and turkeys;
- Program for supervision of Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSE);
- Program for precautionary measures against some cross-border animal diseases, which includes contagious nodular dermatitis in large ruminants, foot-and-mouth disease in large ruminants, small ruminant plague and smallpox in sheep and goats.

During the year, the following diseases of higher importance were found on the territory of the country, included in the list of priority diseases described in Regulation 2016/429 on animal health in the European Commission: highly pathogenic influenza (11 outbreaks, including 5 in Dobrich region, 2 in Pazardzhik region, 2 in Veliko Tarnovo region, 1 in Haskovo region and 1 in Sofia region).

In accordance with the requirements of Directive 2020/687 and 2016/429 of the EU and the Plan of Emergency Measures for Control of Avian Influenza, the BFSa took immediate measures to eradicate all infected and contact poultry in the outbreaks.

In 2023 two outbreaks of infectious anemia in horses were registered in the regions of Veliko Tarnovo and Montana.

6 samples with a positive result for the presence of an immune response against West Nile fever and one smallpox outbreak in small ruminants in the Burgas region were found.

During the year, 11 outbreaks of brucellosis in large ruminants were announced, 9 of them in Kardzhali region, and 3 in Yambol region.

17 outbreaks of colic fever have also been announced - 5 in the Haskovo region, 9 in the Sliven region and 1 each in the Shumen, Varna and Pleven regions.

In 2023 one case of anthrax was found in a goat in the Dobrich region.

During the year, 8 brain samples from goats in the Plovdiv region were found to be positive for the presence of the prion causing the scrapie disease. All established results were for the classic manifestation of the disease. There were no positive cases of spongiform encephalopathies in large ruminants.

In regards to African swine fever, 3 outbreaks have been detected in domestic pigs, affecting 3 animals, and 322 outbreaks in feral pigs.

In connection with the complicated epizootic situation with regard to African swine fever in Europe and the outbreaks identified in 2023 in Bulgaria, the following measures were taken in accordance with EU Regulation 2016/429 and the EU Strategy for ASF Control - SANTE/7113/2015 - Rev. 10:

- Supervision program;
- Control of the movement of people, animals, products, including personal luggage from countries where there is ASF;
- Confiscation of meat products, testing and disposal;
- Disinfection of vehicles coming from ASF countries;
- Disposal of waste from vehicles from countries with ASF;
- Biosecurity inspections in pig farms;

- Development of individual contingency plans for pig farms;
- Regular meetings with the sector, EFA, hunting organizations;
- Biosecurity training for the sector and for hunters;
- Reduction of backyard farms around industrial farms;
- Prohibition of fresh grass feeding and special measures with regard to feed;
- Development of a mobile application for trichinella and ASF samples;
- Prohibition on the movement of wild boar from other EU Member States and for imports from third countries;
- Training of hunters on ASF issues, sampling, biosecurity, including material development;
- Construction of special pits for carcasses and animal by-products for each hunting holding;
- Fence along the border with Romania;
- Obligation to report any wild boar found dead or showing atypical behavior to the RFSD;
- Special regime, restrictions on hunting in restricted areas;
- Information campaigns;
- Coordination between institutions in order to reduce the risks of spread in transport and tourism;
- Additional national requirements such as pre-movement notification and permission received from the receiving RDFS (valid for sites from both Part I and Part II of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/605); Biosecurity, contingency plans, incl. during transportation (valid for sites from both Part I and Part II); laboratory tests to identify the pathogen of ASF and when moving from sites of Part I to regions in southern Bulgaria (examination of the carcasses within 24 hours before the transport - by a registered veterinary doctor).

Given the identified outbreaks of bluetongue in 2014 and contagious nodular dermatitis in 2016, in order to protect animals susceptible to these diseases and to protect livestock in the country, vaccination against bluetongue, serotype 4 and against infectious nodular dermatitis continued in 2023.

In 2023, for the fifth consecutive year, the coronavirus control program in mink was implemented. No circulating virus was detected in the 5,000 samples tested.

Animal Welfare

The control of animal welfare is carried out through official inspections by the Regional Food Safety Directorates (RFSD) at all stages of animal breeding, including during their transport. The inspections were planned, periodic, on signal, investigative, follow-up and on the basis of risk analysis, which is based on the detected non-conformities in the rearing of the different types of animals, as well as during their transportation.

Animal welfare - livestock sites

All livestock sites registered under art. 137 of the Veterinary Activities Act (both industrial and private farms, vivariums, collection centers, control points, shelters, etc.) are covered by the inspections carried out by means of an on-site visit to the livestock site.

Table V.8. Percentage of compliance with animal welfare requirements per sectors in the period 2022-2023

Category	Laying hens		Pigs		Calves		Large ruminants		Sheep		Goats		Ducks	
	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023
Inspected production sites - number	242	231	313	333	254	339	1,999	2,311	1,560	1,629	359	322	171	172
Production sites without discrepancy - number	231	226	301	319	201	307	1,624	2,060	1,314	1,475	295	286	169	165
% of compliance	95.5%	97.8%	96.2%	95.8%	79.1%	90.6%	81.2%	89.1%	84.2%	90.5%	82.3%	88.8%	98.8%	95.9%

Source: BFSA

In 2023 there was a decrease in the percentage of non-conformities found for non-compliance with the requirements for the welfare of animals kept in the production facilities in the sectors of laying hens, calves, large ruminants, sheep and goats. The increased control by the RFSD contributes to this. Corrective measures have been taken to eliminate discrepancies and improve the situation.

During the year, the trend of improvement in animal husbandry conditions continues in terms of providing food and water suitable for the species, freedom of movement, inspections, injuries, automatic and mechanical equipment and staff competence. The data show that the qualifications of the staff taking care of the animals are still not at an optimal level. In this regard, the BFSA has taken measures for additional training.

Animal welfare during transportation

In 2023, the issuance of permits to transport live animals continued, which ensures compliance with the rules of animal welfare and protection during transport. Within the year, 144 permits (licenses) were issued for short trips and 44 for long trips, with an increase in the number of issued permits compared to 2022.

The BFSA keeps an up-to-date register of permits issued for the transport of live animals in accordance with art. 166 of the VAA, and up-to-date information on approved vehicles is entered in the integrated information system VetIS.

The Agency also interacts with other contact points by reporting violations of animal welfare requirements during transport.

In 2023, 11 notifications of infringement of the requirements of Regulation (EC) No. 1/2005/EC were sent to the contact points of other Member States, most of which were found by the official veterinarians at Captain Andreevo Border Checkpoint. The main types of detected violations are: exceeded travel time, lack of guarantees under Art. 21, 1 (e) of Regulation (EC) No. 1/2005/EC; scarce and/or insufficient bedding; unapproved object of final destination.

Based on the data obtained from the inspections carried out at the Kapitan Andreevo border checkpoint, there is an increase in the percentage of compliance with the requirements of Regulation (EC) № 1/2005 for the transport of live animals to Middle Eastern countries. On the other hand, violations found and notifications received in the transport of pets (dogs and cats) have increased significantly in recent years.

In relation to this, the BFSA works in close cooperation with other institutions and organizations, as well as with Member States.

In 2023, a total of 23,298 inspections were carried out. The percentage of established non-compliances for the year was 0.20%, reporting a significant decrease compared to previous years. The total number of cases of non-compliance with the requirements for the welfare of animals during transport in 2023 were 47. The sanctions imposed in this regard are 31.

In 2023, roadside inspections during transport continued to be carried out in conjunction with the Ministry of Interior in order to put an end to the practice of transporting live animals in unlicensed vehicles and to strengthen controls overall. The discrepancies found with licensed transporters are becoming fewer and less significant.

Official controls carried out on farms and during the transport of live animals are improved on the basis of periodic training of official veterinarians, and also as a result of joint meetings with all stakeholders on animal welfare.

Animal welfare for animals used in testing and stray animals

Pursuant to art. 155, para. 7 of the VAA, in 2022 a total of 37 permits for use of animals in experiments were issued. There is a significant increase in the number of issued permits compared to the previous year, due to the launch of projects by Universities and scientific institutions, which are the main applicants for the service. On the other hand, the Committee on Animal Ethics will continue to work towards reducing the number of laboratory animals used for student training, in accordance with European requirements for the protection and humane treatment of laboratory animals. In this regard, the recommendations to Universities for the filming of many of the exercises of students studying in medical specialties in accordance with the requirements of Directive 2010/63/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of September 22, 2010 regarding the protection of animals used are also increasing for scientific purposes and EC recommendations.

The BFSA has prepared an annual report for 2023 on the implementation of the municipal programs for control of stray dog population. A report was approved on the implementation of the National Program for Control of Stray Dog Population on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria for 2023.

The BFSA's website keeps an up-to-date public register of shelters.

6.2. Animal identification and veterinary activities

The activities performed by the BFSA in this area are the following:

- Identification and registration of farm animals (large and small ruminants, pigs, equidae), bee colonies, pets;
- Registration of breeding sites in accordance with the current European and national legislation;
- Ensuring timely entry of correct data in the IIS registers of the BFSA Integrated Information System (VetIS) in connection with the implementation of the National Program for Prevention, Surveillance, Control and Eradication of Animal Diseases, including Zoonoses in Bulgaria;
- Providing up-to-date and correct information maintained in the IIS registers and entering the information in the additionally developed module to the Integrated Administration and Control System (IACS), maintained by the Agriculture State Fund;

In 2023, the work on developing the existing and adding new functionalities in VetIS continued for the purposes of official control, as well as in connection with improving the user experience.

Ordinance No. 44 of April 20, 2006 on the veterinary requirements for livestock farms was amended and supplemented during the year. Introducing requirements for "insects" and "frogs" animals, as well as changing part of the requirements for bird objects in the section on net spacing and sizes.

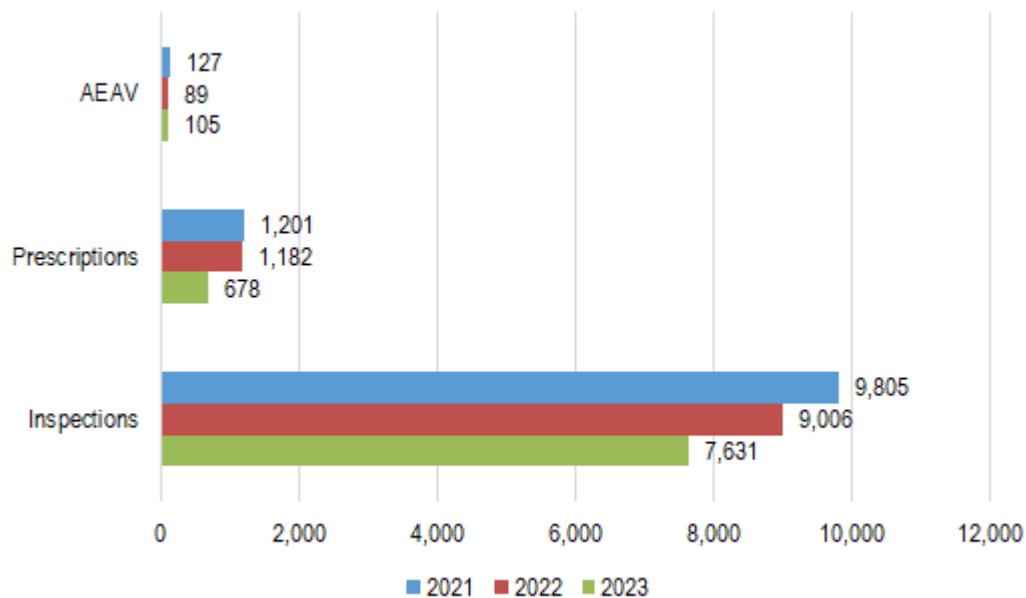
Changes have been adopted in Ordinance No. 42 of 12.12.2008 on the requirements for veterinary medical facilities and the type and volume of veterinary medical activity that can be performed in them. A new type of medical facility (VMF) "veterinary hospital with clinics" was introduced, and a number of requirements for VMF have been changed.

In 2023, the BFSA carried out total 22,302 inspections on the registration of livestock sites, animal identification, the activities of registered veterinarians (RV) in the implementation of the national prophylactic program and veterinary medical facilities (VMFs). During the control, a total of 1,889 prescriptions were issued and 1,626 AEAV were served. A total of 1,135 penal decrees were also issued, 1,098 of which entered into force.

With regard to the registration of the livestock facilities, the BFSA officials performed a total of 7,631 inspections, as a result of which 678 prescriptions were issued and 105 administrative violation documents were handed over. Subsequently, 59 penal decrees were issued, of which 57 entered into force.

Within the last three years, a gradual decrease in inspections in this field can be noted, which is explained with the fact that in 2020 the legislation was changed with the aim of significantly easing the registration process of animal breeding sites of the private holdings type. A similar trend is observed in the issuance of prescription. The number of AEAU served in 2023 however, increases compared to the previous year.

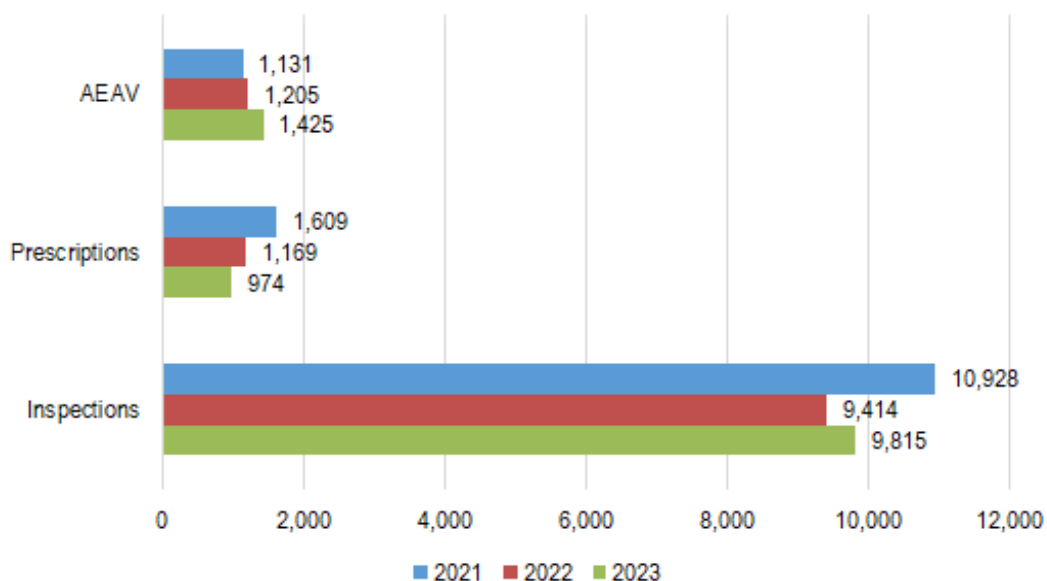
Graphics V.1. Control on the registration of animal breeding sites in the 2021– 2023 period



Source: BFSA

During animal identification control in 2023, a total of 9,815 inspections were carried out, 401 more than in 2022. As a result, a total of 974 precepts were issued and 1,425 AEAU were served. 1,033 penal decrees were issued, 998 of which entered into force. The number of prescriptions decreased compared to the previous year, but the issued AEAUs increased.

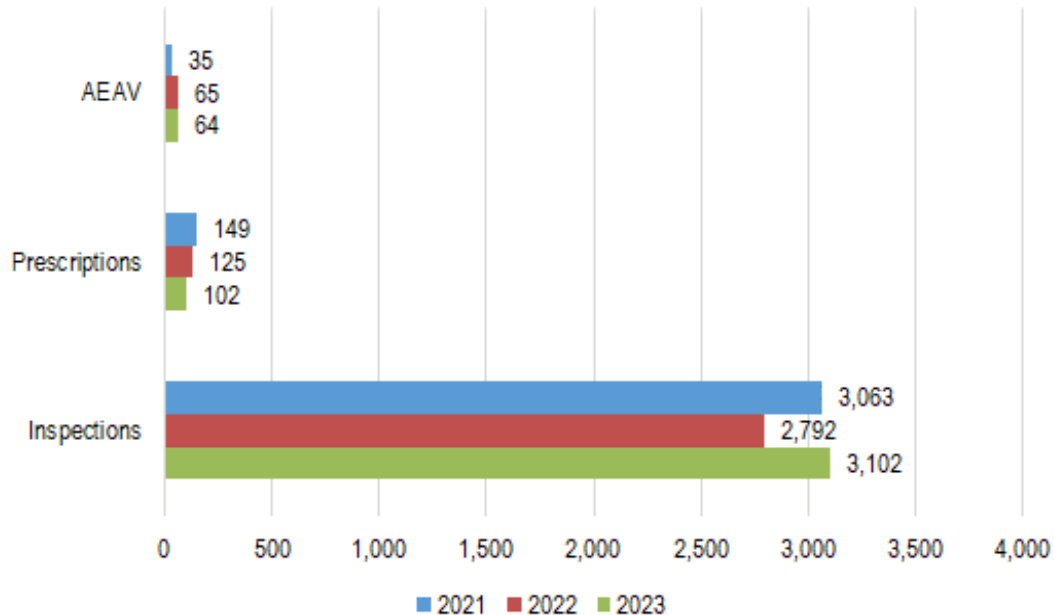
Graphics V.2. Animal identification control in the 2021 - 2023 period



Source: BFSA

During the control in the field of activity of the RV in 2023. 3,102 inspections were carried out, which is 310 more than the previous year. 102 prescriptions were issued and 64 AEAUV were served. 31 penal decrees were also issued, all of which entered into force. Comparing with 2022, the number of issued prescriptions decreases, and that of delivered AEAUV remains without significant change.

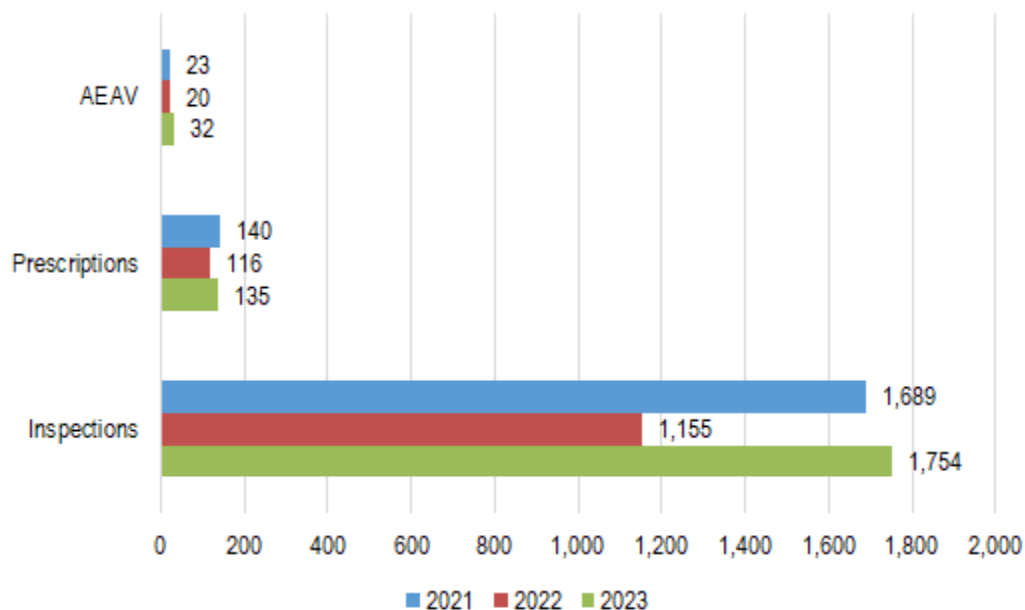
Graphics V.3. Control on the activities of registered veterinarians, including the implementation of the National Prophylactic Program in the 2021 - 2023 period.



Source: BFSA

In 2023, the RFSD staff carried out a total of 1,754 inspections of veterinary medical facilities. During their control, 135 precepts were issued and 32 AEAUV were delivered. 12 penal decrees were issued, all of which entered into force. Compared to 2022, an increase was observed in the number of carried out inspections of VMFs, as well as in the issued precepts and AEAUV.

Graphics V.4. Control on the veterinary medical facilities in 2021 and 2023



Source: BFSA

In 2024, the control related to the identification and registration of animals and veterinary activities continued to pursue the main operational objectives set:

- Ensuring the timely identification and registration of animals, as well as registration of livestock farms in accordance with the VAA, which contribute greatly to ensuring the protection of human and animal health and protection against fraud;
- Ensuring timely entry of correct data in the IIS registers of the BFSA - VetIS on the identification and registration of animals, as well as data related to the implementation of the National Program for Prevention, Surveillance, Control and Eradication of Animal Diseases, including Zoonoses in Bulgaria;
- Reporting on the activities performed by the registered veterinarians under the National Program for Prevention, Surveillance, Control and Eradication of Animal Diseases and Zoonoses;
- Livestock service activities;
- Development of the Integrated Information System of BFSA - VetIS.

The fulfillment of these goals will be achieved by carrying out checks for compliance with the requirements of the legislation in the area; work and processing of documentation related to programs to support agricultural producers; inspections in connection with the preparation of reports of agricultural producers; preparation of projects for the amendment of normative acts and improvement of individual controls in the IIS of the BFSA - VetIS.

6.3. Food control

The BFSA methodically manages and coordinates the activities of the RFSD to control the safety and quality of raw materials, food, including those with protected geographical names, organic products, as well as materials and articles intended for contact with food, food additives, enzymes and flavorings; animal welfare during slaughter.

The BFSA's website keeps a public national register of business operators, sites for production, processing and/or distribution of food and food supplements and foods intended for use during intense muscular activity. The total number of registered sites and vehicles in the scope of control by the RFSD for 2023 was 274,675.

In 2024 the implementation and use of a new electronic system for submitting applications for registration/approval of food production, processing and distribution facilities is pending.

The official control of food in Bulgaria is carried out adequately, in full compliance with the requirements of the European and national legislation. Based on risk analysis, effective official control over food safety is carried out in food production, processing and distribution facilities. Additional thematic inspections (winter and summer tourist season, official and religious holidays, etc.) and inspections on signals are carried out.

Table V.9. Official control carried out on food safety in 2022 and 2023

	2022	2023
1. Total number of inspections carried out, including:	148,756	141,077
1.1. In the sites for food production and wholesale	21,855	20,629
1.2. In retail establishments and restaurants	118,736	96,578
1. 3. Unscheduled inspections	8,165	23,872
2. Measures taken by the official control		
2. 1. Issued AEA Vs (number)	797	1,396
2. 2. Issued precepts (number)	5,610	6,888
2. 3. Prohibited and discarded food (kg)	654,000	271,000 kg of food and 9,695,525 eggs in relation to the disease Avian Influenza
2. 4. Closed sites/sites with temporarily suspended activity (number)	48	118

Source: BFSA

In 2023, a total of 141,077 official control inspections were carried out in establishments for production, wholesale and retail in food and catering establishments, thematic inspections, unscheduled inspections and inspections on signals.

The established non-conformities can be grouped in the following most common directions:

- Structural non-conformities concerning the buildings and equipment at the sites;
- Operational non-conformities regarding the implementation of activities related to product safety;
- Non-conformities related to the self-control systems of business operators;
- Inconsistencies in labeling and presentation of consumer information;
- Gaps in food traceability;
- Foods that do not meet statutory safety requirements.

The analysis of the average values of effectiveness of the official control performed in 2023 shows that: on average, every 20th inspection resulted in issuance of a Prescription (compared to every 26th in 2022); on average, every 101th inspection ends with drawing up of an act for establishing an administrative violation (compared to every 187th for 2022). There is an increase in the issued prescriptions and the drawn up AEAV compared to the previous year.

The results of official inspections show that a risk-based approach to planning and implementation of official inspections is appropriate and effective in detecting non-conformities and ensuring food safety.

In 2023, the BFSA Head Office received 10 notifications of suspected food poisoning throughout the country. In the joint inspections and an epidemiological study with representatives of the Regional Health Inspectorates, food traceability and sampling for food and personnel analysis, it was proven in two of the cases that the source of the disease was the food consumed.

Laboratory control

The BFSA coordinates laboratory-diagnostic tests, analyses and expertise related to animal health, plants, raw materials, food, materials and articles intended to come into contact with food, feed, GMOs and products containing, consisting of or produced from GMOs.

The Agency manages and coordinates the implementation of national and monitoring programs for laboratory control, as follows:

- National Program for Control of Quality Characteristics of Foods (NPCQCF);
- National Program for Control of Pesticide Residues in or on Foods of Plant and Animal Origin (NPCPR);
- National Program for control of food and food contact and additives, chemical and microbiological contaminants and control of food treated with ionizing radiation;
- Program for monitoring and reporting of antimicrobial resistance of zoonotic and commensal bacteria in the Republic of Bulgaria (AMR);
- National Program for Control of Genetically Modified Foods (NPCGMF);
- National monitoring program for control of residues of veterinary medicinal products and pollutants from the environment in live animals and products of animal origin (NMPRC);
- National program for the prevention, supervision, control and eradication of animal diseases, including zoonoses in the Republic of Bulgaria.

Implementation of programs for national and monitoring programs for laboratory control

- **National Program for Control of Quality Characteristics of Foods (NPCQCF), 2023;**

The program aims to conduct effective and systematic official control, with a view to monitoring the quality characteristics of food, for which there are requirements laid down in normative acts, standards and

technological documentation (TD). Its application is important in relation to protecting the consumer from misleading or deceptive labeling information. The control of food produced according to standards (national, approved or branch) was carried out by inspections of production sites and by sampling of commercially available food.

In 2023, a total of 1,151 samples were planned under the program, of which 1,093 samples were completed. Inconsistencies were found in 162 of the examined samples.

Compared to 2022 there has been an increase in both the number of planned samples and the degree of program implementation (95% in 2023 compared to 89% in 2022). Against the background of the larger number of samples taken, there is an increase in the number of detected discrepancies. Their share of the total number of samples taken also increased - to 15%, compared to 13% in 2022.

Table V.10. Number of planned, executed and non-conforming samples during the implementation of NPCQCF 2023.

		Scheduled samples	Completed samples		Non-conforming samples	
		number	number	%	number	%
1	Foods produced according to national, established, and industry standards	315	318	101	67	21
2	Table salt	28	-	-	-	-
3	Bee honey	132	127	96	11	9
4	Foods for energy value	112	110	98	1	1
5	Foods with nutritional claims	56	55	98	3	5
6	Dairy products for non-dairy fats	192	170	89	2	1
	and physicochemical parameters according to TD*				33	19
7	Dairy products for PC indicators according to TD	186	186	100	39	21
8	Frozen poultry carcasses and poultry cuts for total water content	125	122	98	5	4
9	Olive oils	5	5	100	1	20
	Total	1,151	1,093	95	162	15

Source: BFSA *Two samples have the presence of non-dairy fats, and 33 samples are non-compliant according to physicochemical indicators

For each non-conformity, information has been sent to take appropriate action. The non-fulfillment of part of the planned samples is due to the temporary suspension of the activity of part of the objects, as well as the lack of financial means for sending and examining samples in laboratories outside the BFSA structure.

- **National Program for Control of Pesticide Residues in and on Food (NPCPR), 2023**

In implementation of NPCPR, in 2023 the study of a total of 362 food samples of plant origin is planned. A total of 241 samples were examined, 184 of which were taken during the official food control carried out by the Food and Drug Administration, and 57 - from fruits and vegetables, in connection with the official control, from Bulgarian producers, transported from the EU and imported from third countries.

In 2023, the research of 30 food samples of animal origin is planned under the program. Of these, 16 samples or 53.3% were completed, which significantly exceeds the implementation in 2022 (29.4%). During the execution of the program, 10 non-conforming results were found.

As in the previous year, the non-implementation of the plan is due to suspension of sample testing at CLCTC under the implementation of the program due to the commitment of laboratory capacity to analyses for official border control (samples from Kapitan Andreevo BCP) and the lack of financial resources to designate external laboratories to send samples under the 2023 NPCPR.

- **National Program for control of food and food contact and additives, chemical and microbiological contaminants and control of food treated with ionizing radiation 2023;**

The Program introduces the requirements of a number of regulations specific to individual pollutants. For 2023 laboratory tests under the program are planned as follows: 881 samples for the content of chemical pollutants; 96 samples for food additive content; 3 food samples treated with ionizing radiation; 670 samples for the content of microbiological contaminants in foods of plant origin; 56 samples for nitrites; 4,602 on microbiological contaminants in foods of animal origin, ready-to-eat foods, ice from ice makers and water for drinking and domestic purposes.

The implementation of this program in 2023 was as follows:

- The following number of samples were tested for microbiological contaminants: from production enterprises - 21,478 samples; from the commercial network - 3,242 samples; from sites under Ordinance No. 26 of 2010 - 179 samples, unplanned samples - 653. From the studies for microbiological contaminants, 294 discordant results were obtained (salmonella, Escherichia coli, listeria, enterobacteria). in 2023 57 samples for histamine and 3 samples for imported histamine were tested. 1,313,686 samples from pigs and 428 samples from horses were tested for trichinella. Discrepancies found for trichinella mainly in feral pigs.
- A total of 346 samples were examined for chemical contaminants in foods of plant origin, including 240 from Bulgarian producers, 49 from trade with EU member states and 57 - from third countries. Inconsistencies found for chemical contaminants in food samples with heavy metals - 5 samples;
- For chemical contaminants in foods of animal origin: according to the plan for the control of pollutants in food of animal origin placed on the Union market, a total of 151 samples were examined - for the content of halogenated persistent organic pollutants (polychlorinated biphenyls - PCBs, metals - (lead, cadmium, mercury), mycotoxins (aflatoxin M1) and radionuclides. For chemical contaminants of food samples - imported from third countries, 66 samples were examined. No discrepancies were found.

Overall, plan implementation for chemical pollutants in 2023 is 56%. Compared to 2022, there has been an increase in the number of taken samples.

The implementation of the Program during the year was hampered by delays in its approval and non-implementation of part of the samples, due to a lack of financial means to pay for external laboratories.

- **Program for monitoring and reporting of antimicrobial resistance of zoonotic and commensal bacteria in the Republic of Bulgaria (AMR) 2023**

In 2023, taking samples of cecums (cecal content) from pigs and samples of prepackaged, chilled meat from pigs and large ruminants from the commercial network of the country is mandatory. This is also true for imports from third countries is planned under the Program. Sampling of cecal contents is random only from slaughtered locally reared pigs, with planning proportional to the annual capacity of the respective slaughterhouse.

As in the previous year, in 2023 the implementation of the program was 100%. 611 samples of cecal contents of slaughtered pigs and 150 samples of chilled meat from pigs and large ruminants from the commercial network were studied.

- **National Program for Control of Genetically Modified Foods (NPCGMF), 2023**

In the control of genetically modified foods in 2023 85 samples are scheduled for laboratory testing of raw materials - soy, rapeseed and/or corn, which are used in food production; from ready-to-eat foods - meat products, soy foods, waffles, corn chips/snacks, popcorn, corn bread, chocolate and chocolate products; foods for infants and young children based on soy and/or corn, formula milk intended for infants and from rice and rice products. Samples of food from organic production were taken within the total number of samples.

During the year, 81 samples were examined (95% of the planned), and no inconsistent results were

found. The plan has not been fully implemented due to the lack of relevant products on the market.

Regarding taking urgent measures in relation to unauthorized genetically modified rice in rice products originating in China and in accordance with the requirements of EU legislation, a total of 6 consignments of rice entered are subject to 100% documentary control, identity verification and physical control with laboratory analysis included for the presence of an unauthorized GMO. During the laboratory testing of the samples, no inconsistencies were found.

- **National monitoring program for the control of residues in live animals and food of animal origin (NMPRC), 2023.**

The official control regarding residues of veterinary medicinal products and contaminants in live animals and food of animal origin is carried out through the implementation of the National Monitoring Program for Residue Control (NMPRC) approved by the European Commission (EC). According to the requirements of the legislation, three plans have been developed and are being implemented by the NMPRC:

- A risk-based national production control plan implemented to verify the compliance of food-producing animals and animal products with the requirements of the legislation - it is planned to take and examine 1,562 samples, of which 1 378 samples are completed;
- National plan for randomized monitoring of production, through the implementation of which, randomized monitoring is provided for a wide range of pharmacologically active substances authorized as veterinary medicinal products or as feed additives, as well as prohibited or unauthorized pharmacologically active substances and their residues, based on random sampling - it is planned to take and examine 120 samples, of which 92 samples were completed;
- A risk-based national control plan for food-producing animals and products of animal origin entering the Union and intended to be placed on the Union market through their border control posts (BCPs). The control carried out within the framework of this plan is part of the official control of the BCPs - it is planned to take and examine 304 samples, of which 203 samples were completed.

In 2023, about 84% implementation of the samples set for the three plans was observed. Compared to 2022, there has been a decrease in the number of planned and taken samples. There is also a slight decrease in the percentage of outstanding analyzes to 16%, at 19% in 2022. One discrepancy was found (detection of an antibiotic in a bird liver sample). Adequate actions have been taken according to the requirements of Delegated Regulation (EU) 2019/2090.

The non-implementation of the reporting period plan was due to the lack of production of raw materials from the respective animal species, due to temporary suspension of production sites and to the incomplete financing of the analyses for laboratories outside BFSA.

- **National program for the prevention, supervision, control and eradication of animal diseases, including zoonoses in the Republic of Bulgaria**

The main responsibility of the BFSA in relation to the program is to coordinate laboratory-diagnostic research, analysis and expertise related to animal health.

In implementation of the program, the following diagnostic tests were performed in 2023:

Table V.11. The diagnostic tests performed under the program in 2023

Disease	Number of laboratories	Number of tests
Brucellosis in large ruminants	10	218,655
Brucellosis in small ruminants	10	1,080,559
Brucellosis in pigs	10	10,571
Brucellosis in rams	10	24,056

Disease	Number of laboratories	Number of tests
Leptospirosis - large ruminants and pigs	9	26,076
African swine fever	3	35,210
Classical swine fever	3	16,060
Avian influenza	1	32,705
Scabies	1	4,464
Plague in small ruminants	1	4,464
Smallpox in sheep and goats	1	645
Leptospirosis-NRLs	1	2,256
TBC	1	50
Colic fever	1	78
Salmonella-Primary	7	1,052
Rabies-surveillance	1	761
TSEs in large ruminants	3	19,399
in small ruminants	3	3,291

Source: BFSA

Audit of official controls in 2023

In 2023, the following audits were carried out by the General Directorate "Health and Food Safety" of the EC (DG SANTE) in the field of official food control in Bulgaria:

- European Commission audit DG SANTE 2023-7740 to assess the official control system for live bivalve molluscs. The audit covers the official control of live bivalve molluscs, both in and out of classified production areas, including harvest and landing, prior to their entry into shipping or treatment centres/plants and laboratory support. In connection with the deficiencies identified by the audit, a multidisciplinary working group was formed of experts from the MAF, the BFSA, the Center for Risk Assessment of the Food Chain, the NDRVMI, the EAFA, the MEW and representatives of the branch organizations in the sector, as well as business operators, producers of live bivalve molluscs, with the task of developing a Plan for classification of the production areas for the extraction of live bivalve molluscs in the Black Sea water area. Tasks have been set by sector with the aim of collecting preliminary information for the timely removal of the deficiencies found by the audit in the system for official control of live bivalve molluscs;
- General follow-up audit No. 2023-7662 to evaluate the implementation and progress of the recommendations to the competent authorities on thematic audits conducted in recent years for the evaluation of official control. Progress was reported on a total of 9 raised topics related to foods of animal origin, foods of non-animal origin and food improvers. As a result of actions taken and information provided (or expected shortly),

6.3.1. Alert and Cooperation Network (ACN (RASFF + AAC+ +FFN+PHN))

The Alert and Cooperation Network is a tool for the exchange of information regarding identified hazards and non-compliances throughout the agri-food chain between EU Member States via an online platform - iRASFF, which covers:

Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF)

The Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) was established on the basis of the provisions of art. 50 of Regulation (EC) No. 178/2002 and covers any direct or indirect risk to human health arising from food, materials intended for contact with food and feed. At a later stage, with art. 29 of Regulation (EC) No 183/2005,

the scope of the Network was extended and covers serious risks to animal health and the environment caused by feed.

The exchange of information is carried out in a clear and structured way using the iRASFF web-based application and enables rapid responses, timely actions, and a coordinated approach by Member States to threats to public health. Its effectiveness is ensured by a simplified structure consisting of identified contact points of the European Commission, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the Member States, exchanging data in a clear and structured way.

In 2023, the iRASFF platform has been repeatedly updated to meet legislative requirements and ensure transparency and traceability in decision-making by competent authorities. A major focus of the iRASFF upgrades in 2023 was the finalization of the expansion process, including the implementation of a module for plant health and legislation in that area, as well as updating documentation procedures and work instructions. The use of the Network's functionality related to the generation of "conversations" between participants with access to the platform is increasing - more than 11,990 conversations have been created with exchange of information between participants from the contact points.

For effective operation of the RASFF system in Bulgaria, the following contact points were set up:

- National Contact Point of the Republic of Bulgaria, located in the specialized administration of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food;
- Contact point at the Ministry of Health;
- Contact point at the Bulgarian Food Safety Agency.

In 2023, the total number of incoming notifications to the iRASFF platform, distributed by the contact point of the European Commission to the contact points of the member states, was 8,747, which is 1,232 more than in 2022.

The upward trend in the number of notifications registered in the Alert and Cooperation Network over the past four years continues in 2023. According to the "notifying country" indicator the first place, with the largest volume of notifications created is for Germany as was in 2023, followed by the Netherlands and France. Bulgaria ranks fifth among the member states with the largest volume of processed cases. Regarding the category of goods, in 2023 non-conformities affecting fruit and vegetables, nuts, food additives, pulses, spices, fish and meat products have been reported on the Network.

There were 4,199 notifications in the "Food" sector, 303 in the "Feed" sector and 193 reported cases of non-compliance with plastic kitchen utensils and dishes.

In 2023 the largest share is occupied by notifications of shipments rejected at the border, followed by notifications "for tracking" and those "for information". By "country of origin" criteria, the most cases were reported for Poland, the Netherlands, France, Spain, Italy, etc. Bulgaria is at the bottom of this ranking with only 21 cases. When the origin of the goods is a third country, in the first place in the Network are the cases of goods originating in Turkey, followed by China, India, USA, Ukraine, Egypt, Nigeria and Pakistan. As in the Agri-Food Fraud Network, pesticide residue in food reports were the most numerous, followed by those where pathogens were found, with 65% of notifications being Salmonella in different types, followed by Listeria monocytogenes and Escherichia coli, mycotoxins and abuses of different origins.

Depending on the type, notifications are distributed as follows:

- Border rejection notifications - 1,539;
- Alert notifications - 1,263;
- Information notifications - 1,058;
- Follow-up notifications - 812;
- News notifications - 17.

The total number of notifications in the iRASFF system, for which Bulgaria has taken action as a notified and notifying state for 2023 is 620. The dissemination of notifications is as follows:

- Incoming:
 - Food sector - 135 notifications (41 for non-compliance; 7 information for attention notifications ; 39 information for follow-up notification; 2 alert notifications; 45 - for warning, 2 - for news and 1 border rejection notification);
 - "Forage" sector - 10 notifications (4 for information that require follow-up actions, 6 - for a warning and 3 administrative inquiries have been answered);
- Outgoing:
 - Food sector - 27 notifications; (9 - for non-compliance, 10 - for information to draw attention, 1 - for warning and 7 - for information that requires follow-up action. One inquiry was made regarding the implementation of the legislation);
 - "Forage" sector - 12 outgoing notifications (10 - for non-compliance, 1 - for information to draw attention and 1 - for information that requires follow-up action);
 - "Border Control" sector - 436 notifications (138 for shipments rejected at the border and 298 for non-compliance).

The number of notifications to which Bulgaria is a recipient or a creator also showed an increase, which requires time and resources of the single contact point and the contact points in the competent departments to take measures, conduct an investigation and report the results .

Administrative Assistance and Cooperation (AAC) System

The AAC system serves for exchange of information between the competent authorities of the member states and the Commission when performing official controls and/or taking effective follow-up actions, in accordance with Title IV of Regulation (EU) No. 2017/625. The administrative assistance can include the provision of information and documents, performing investigations and on site inspections, and it is an important tool for maximizing the efficiency of the available resources in Member States.

In 2023, the total number of notifications in the AAC system for the EU was 3,166. There was an increase in the notifications of non-compliance by 612. Germany generated 30% of all notifications distributed in the Network. In 2023, Bulgaria created a total of 300 non-compliance notifications, mainly for non-compliant shipments rejected at border checkpoints, which do not pose a serious risk to the health of consumers.

According to the indicator "recorded delay in preparing a response" in the implementation of the RASFF procedures and mechanisms, Bulgaria does not feature on any reminder list of open conversations (red bell list).

Agri-Food Fraud Network (FFN)

The FFN provides Member States with the opportunity to exchange information and cooperate on a voluntary basis on issues related to infringements of European legislation in the field of the agri-food chain, in accordance with the rules laid down in Regulation (EU) No. 2017/625, in order to counteract food fraud. The increase in food fraud at EU level requires adequate and timely measures to optimize the control system and strengthen its ability to assess at an early stage the potential vulnerability to fraud in different parts of the food supply chain and the ability of the national authorities to detect and prevent potential fraud.

In mid-2021, the Agri-Food Fraud Network is integrated into iRASFF.

Regarding the notifications distributed to the FFN in 2023 a total of 758 cases were generated, which is an increase of 20% compared to the previous year. More than half of the cases are related to the unregulated pet trade or trade in "gray sector" goods. They are followed by notifications of established irregularities related to documentary inaccuracies, lack of or falsified/incomplete documentation, incorrect labeling, etc.

In 2023, a total of 148 notifications were sent to Bulgaria through the Anti-Food Fraud Network, of which 85 - for information and 63 - for response.

In the FFN there are no notifications on which Bulgaria has not taken action and has not provided an answer.

6.3.2. Control on veterinary activities, veterinary medicinal products, feed and animal byproducts, border control

6.3.2.1. Control on veterinary medical activity

The planning of audits of official control in the BFSA in 2023 is in accordance with the rules of the approved "Procedure for carrying out audits of the official control of the BFSA" and of the "EC National Audit Systems Network Guide - Risk-based planning of audits of official control systems". For the purposes of the audit process at the BFSA, a "Three-year program for the audits of the official control for the 2021 - 2023 period" has been prepared. On the basis of the review and analysis carried out, an update of the program has been made for 2023.

In 2023, 16 audits of the official control were planned to be carried out in different audit areas of the agri-food chain, distributed as follows:

- 6 audits in the field of official control of animal health and animal welfare with audited organizations RFSD Pleven, RFSD Kyustendil, RFSD Targovishte, RFSD Veliko Tarnovo, RFSD Silistra and RFSD Lovech;
- 3 audits in the field of official control in the production and supply of food of animal origin, including:
 - o official control in the production and supply of milk and dairy products with audited organization RFSD Blagoevgrad;
 - o official control in the production and supply of fish and fish products with audited organization RFSD Sliven;
 - o official control in the production and supply of meat from undulates, game meat, poultry meat and products of it, with audited organization RFSD Montana;
- 2 audits in the field of official control in the production and supply of food of non-animal origin, with audited organizations RFSD Kardzhali and RFSD Yambol;
- 1 audit in the field of official control of animal by-products and products derived from them, that are not intended for human consumption, with audited organization RFSD Shumen;
- 2 audits in the field of control of retail and catering establishments, with audited organizations RFSD Stara Zagora and RFSD Pazardzhik;
- 2 audits in the field of import control with audited organizations BIP - Port of Burgas and BIP Kapitan Andreevo.

During the year, 13 of the planned audits were carried out. Three audits were not performed: "Assessment of the system of official control of animals and goods at the border checkpoint of first entry into the Union", audited organization BIP - Burgas Port; "Assessment of the system of official control of animals and goods at the border checkpoint of first entry into the Union", audited organization BIP - Kapitan Andreevo and "Assessment of the implementation of the National Program for the Prevention, Control and Eradication of Animal Diseases and Zoonoses - Influenza on birds", audited organization RFSD - Lovech. The non-performance of these planned audits is partly due to the fact that during the period of their planned implementation - m. September - m. November, outbreaks of bird flu occurred on the territory of the country and they were canceled in order to prevent the spread of the disease.

At the audits held in 2023 of the official control, inconsistencies were found and recommendations were raised both to the audited organizations and to the directorates at the central level, which methodically lead the activity in the audited sphere.

The measures taken by the audited organizations are primarily related to the conduct of specialized training on the correct application of the legislation and established procedures and instructions, documenting the control and taking appropriate administrative measures towards the business operator to eliminate the identified discrepancies.

The main priorities for effectiveness inspections of the official control are:

- Increasing the effectiveness of the official control exercised by the RFSD at all stages of production, processing, storage, import, transportation and distribution of food, feed, VMPs, plant protection products and fertilizers, with a view to achieving a high degree of protection of people's health, animal, plant and environmental health;
- Protecting consumers from fraud, deception and illegal practices with food, feed, VMPs, plant protection products and fertilizers;

The inspections for effectiveness of the official control carried out by the RFSD are carried out according to the approved Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) "Procedure for verifying the effectiveness of the official control carried out by the BFSA" and "Program of the General Directorate "Verification of the official control" at the BFSA Central Office for inspections of the effectiveness of the official control performed by RFSD in accordance with Art. 12 (2) of Regulation (EU) № 2017/625 of the European Parliament and of the Council". The programs for verification of the official control implemented by the RFSD are prepared on rotational basis and also according to the number and nature of the non-conformities found during the previous inspections of the respective RFSD.

In 2023 14 inspections of the activities of the RFSD were carried out, of which 6 planned and 8 unplanned. RFSD were checked - Lovech, Dobrich, Yambol (2 checks), Pleven, Sliven (2 checks), Vratsa, Pazardzhik, Sofia region, Burgas, Kardzhali, Blagoevgrad and Plovdiv. During the inspections, the employee commissions found 196 non-conformities/violations, of which 109 were significant and 87 were non-significant. Recommendations for their elimination are given for the identified non-conformities/violations.

6.3.2.2. Control of veterinary medicinal products

The control of veterinary medicinal products (VMPs) is related to the issuance of authorizations for the marketing of VMPs, amendments in connection with changes in the circumstances in which the products were authorized, work on procedures for the mutual recognition of VMPs, decentralized procedure and national procedure, transfer of rights on permits to trade in PPP, etc. BFSA issues certificates for registration of homeopathic veterinary medicinal products.

The quality, efficacy and safety of VMPs are monitored through the reports on any adverse reactions to the usage of VMPs obtained through the system of pharmacovigilance and any deviations in the qualities of VMPs, as well as through continuous surveillance of the market. The received signals for adverse reactions that occurred on the territory of Bulgaria are published in the EU pharmacovigilance database - EudraVigilance. The maintenance of a pharmacovigilance system by the holders of authorization for trading in VMPs is controlled via periodic inspections by the BFSA.

The register of VMPs authorized for use is updated periodically in order to support the control of the VMP market, as well as to provide veterinary professionals and external users with the information provided for in the law.

The public registers of the issued permits for wholesale trade in VMPs, retail trade in VMPs, production of VMPs and licenses issued for activities with narcotic substances for veterinary purposes are updated periodically.

In connection with the surveillance of antimicrobial resistance, the BFSA annually collects and summarizes data from the holders of permits for the use of VMPs on the sold quantities of VMPs with antimicrobial activity. The data is submitted to the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) based on formats approved by the ESVAC (European Surveillance of Veterinary Antimicrobial Consumption) and OIE.

The BFSA enters into the EU EudraGMDP database information on the authorizations granted for the production/import of VMPs and the certificates for Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) and participates in the exchange of information under the international rapid alert system for the blocking and withdrawing of VMPs from the commercial network due to product quality deviations.

The Agency participates in the single point of contact and exchange of information through the Alert and Cooperation Network in case of identified fraudulent practices with VMPs, as well as in the international rapid alert system for the withdrawing of medicinal products due to quality deviations.

In carrying out the laboratory control of VMPs, the BFDA carries out laboratory analysis of the qualitative and quantitative composition, physicochemical properties, safety and efficacy of VMPs under procedures for the issuing of authorization for trading in VMPs or amendments and extension of the scope of the authorization for trading in VMPs, in case of suspicion of a deviation in the quality of VMPs and in the implementation of the market surveillance program.

The BFSA participates in joint laboratory tests of veterinary medicinal products organized by the European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines and Health Care. It develops criteria, prepares a procedure and makes a proposal to the Executive Director for the designation of the laboratories that will carry out tests for official control purposes, according to their competence.

The official VMP control is carried out by BFSA employees at central and regional level.

The BFSA controls the use, production, trade, storage and advertising of VMPs. The control over the trade in VMPs, as well as the use of VMPs in livestock holdings and veterinary establishments, is carried out in accordance with the BFSA Inspection Program for State Control of Veterinary Medicinal Products, which determines the frequency and procedure for conducting inspections based on risk assessment.

When carrying out the official control over the trade and use of VMPs, the RFSD inspectors also inspect beekeeping shops, feed trade sites and agricultural pharmacies, as risky trade sites for unregulated trade/supply of VMPs.

According to the BFSA Inspection Program for State Control of VMPs, on the basis of a risk assessment, the RFSD inspectors carry out inspections in animal breeding sites to control the use of VMPs, at least once a year at all sites for wholesale and retail trade with VMPs and on the veterinary medical facilities on the territory of the respective RFSD.

By order of the executive director of the BFSA February 2024, a Quality Control Program for the commercially available veterinary medicinal products was approved and implemented, and based on it, a plan was prepared and implemented for annual sampling and analysis of VMPs from the commercial network.

The program applies to VMPs permitted for trade under a national procedure, a mutual recognition procedure and a decentralized procedure. The quality control of VMPs is carried out under a centralized procedure (sampling and laboratory analysis) under a program of the European Medicines Agency.

The BAFS annually drafts and executes a Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) Inspection Plan of VMP manufacturers/importers. The inspections comply with the risk assessment criteria for each manufacturer, taking into account the implemented Quality Management System at the site, the nature of the production process and the characteristics of the products.

The control with regard to veterinary medicinal products covers: producers of VMPs; producers, importers and distributors of active substances, used as starting substances in the composition of VMPs; wholesalers of VMPs; retailers with VMPs /veterinary medical pharmacies/; retailers of VMPs who have been granted permission to sell VMPs remotely; livestock facilities and veterinary medical practices.

The frequency of inspections is determined on the basis of a risk assessment.

In 2023, the following were received: 1 signal for inconsistency of the data on the label of the primary packaging of the packaging with the trade permit and Ordinance No. 62 on the requirements for the data on the packaging and the leaflet; 1 signal for a deviation in the quality of VMP and 5 signals for unregulated trading with VMP. In this regard, the necessary measures have been taken, ordered and the relevant inspections have been carried out.

Most often non-conformities with the requirements of the Veterinary Medicine Acts and the by-laws regarding the trade and use of VMPs are established during inspections of livestock farms and veterinary outpatient clinics.

The established non-conformities directly increase the risk of: application of unauthorized VMPs to animals; inability to fully trace the origin of purchased/applied VMPs and identify treated animals; unregulated application of VMPs by persons without the necessary qualifications to animals from which food for consumption is obtained; failure to comply with withdrawal periods after use of VMPs for which such are required; use of

VMPs with an expired shelf life or with deviations in quality; use of VMPs in violation of the conditions under which the use permit was issued, as well as in violation of the requirements of Regulation No. 62 of 09.05.2006; storage of VMPs in violation of the requirements prescribed by the manufacturer.

In 2023, the inspections carried out by the RFSD in connection with the official control over the trade, storage and use of VMPs amounted to 3,798 (13.8% more than the previous year), of which: 122 of wholesale trade sites; 338 of retail outlets (pharmacies); 1,241 veterinary medical establishments; 1,618 livestock sites and 472 pet stores, beekeeping shops, etc. A total of 243 precepts were issued and 48 citations for establishing administrative violations were drawn up as a result.

Inspections in which non-compliances were found and for which prescriptions were given are about 6% of the total number, which is 1 percentage point less than in 2022. Acts establishing an administrative violation were drawn up in about 1.3% of inspections.

In relation to the implementation of the quality control program for commercially available VMPs, 15 samples have been tested in 2023, out of 15 planned for the year.

With regard to the control activity over the trade and use of VMPs in 2023, the following has been done: one permit for wholesale trade in VMPs was issued; changes in issued licenses/permits for wholesale trade in VMPs were approved/issued ex officio permits for wholesale trade in VMPs - 68; 12 permits for retail trade in VMPs were issued; entry in the list of VMP retailers in Bulgaria, who have been granted a permit for remote selling of VMPs - 10; changes in issued licenses for retail trade in VMPs/issued ex officio permits for retail trade in VMPs were approved - 167; 25 licenses for retail trade in VMPs were terminated; 2 licenses for wholesale trade in narcotic substances were issued; approved changes/issued additions/renewal of licenses for wholesale trade in narcotic substances for veterinary medical purposes - 4; 7 manufacturers, importers and distributors of active substances used as starting materials for veterinary medicinal products were registered; 10 retailers are included in the list of retailers of veterinary medicinal products (VMPs) in Bulgaria, which have been granted permission to sell VMPs remotely.

6.3.2.3. Border control

Official control is carried out at border control points (BCPs) located on the territory of Bulgaria, which are approved in accordance with the requirements of Art. 59 of Regulation (EU) 2017/625, as well as Regulation (EU) 2019/1014, as follows: Kapitan Andreevo BCP; Varna Port BCP; Burgas Port BCP; Gyueshevo BCP; Zlatarevo BCP; Kalotina BCP; Sofia Airport BCP; Bregovo BCP.

The BFSA, via the BCP departments, carries out official control upon entry into EU territory of animals and goods falling within the scope of art. 47 (1) of Regulation (EU) 2017/625. This includes carrying out official controls upon the entry of consignments of animals and goods from third countries containing: live animals; animal products, germ products, animal by-products, hay and straw and foods containing both plant products and processed animal products; plants, plant products and other objects; food and feed of non-animal origin to which measures under enhanced official control of the BCPs are applied and those to which emergency measures are applied; materials and objects in contact with food.

In addition to the eight approved border inspection posts, BFSA carried out official control of the following points of entry into the EU: Malko Tarnovo, Lesovo, Logodazh, Strezimirovtsi, Varna Airport, Burgas Airport for: goods that are part of the personal luggage of passengers within the meaning of the requirements of Regulation (EU) 2019/2122; checks of compliance with the animal health requirements for the non-commercial movement of pets in accordance with Regulation 2013/576.

The official control of the border control points at the introduction of consignments of animals and goods from third countries on EU territory is carried out by official veterinarians, official phytosanitary inspectors and other official inspectors and includes the performance of documentary, identification and physical inspections, including taking samples for laboratory analysis in compliance with the requirements of the directly applicable European law and national legislation.

In 2023, the BCPs, through the official inspectors of the BFSA, carried out official control of consignments of animals and goods falling within the scope of Art. 47 (1) of Regulation (EU) 2017/625 as follows: live animals - 306 shipments; products of animal origin - 7,181 shipments; food and feed of non-animal

origin - 106,061 shipments; plants, plant products and others - 67,831 shipments.

During the year, a total of 431 notifications were created, of which 138 were for shipments rejected at the border and 293 notifications for non-conforming shipments (non-compliance), which were notified in the RASFF system.

6.3.2.4. Control of feed and animal by-products

Feed control

In 2023, the Unified Multi-Annual National Control Plan (MANCP) of the Republic of Bulgaria for food, feed, animal health, welfare and plant protection (January 2021 - December 2023) was implemented to achieve the strategic goal "Effective functioning of the feed control system".

In order to achieve a high level of protection of human and animal health, environmental protection and protection of consumers from delusions, regular, risk-based control of each stage of production of forage, processing, storage, transportation, distribution, including feed feeding, was carried out during the year.

Feed control in 2023 follows the following priorities:

- Achieving a high level of protection of human health, animal health and the environment via effective controls at all stages of production, processing, storage, import, transport, distribution, including animal feeding, by implementing and enforcing European law and national feed legislation;
- Protecting consumers from fraud, deception and illegal feed practices;
- Performing a regular and risk-oriented control of processes at feed business operators - at each stage of feed production, processing, storage and distribution, including animal nutrition;
- Control of feed, regarding the content of unwanted and prohibited substances, as well as control of their compliance with the information provided to customers;
- Effective control of genetically modified feed, control of the placing on the market, tracing and labeling of feed containing or produced from GMOs. The purpose of these controls is to ensure informed consumer choice;
- Control of the production, marketing, transport and use of medicated feed in order to minimize the risk of placing on the market of raw materials and/or food of animal origin for human consumption, containing concentrations of pharmacologically active medicinal substances above the maximum admissible levels, set in the applicable legislation;
- Control of the compliance with the feed prohibition related to transmissible spongiform encephalopathies in order to avoid risks to human and animal health;
- Control of the intra-species feed ban in relation to the feeding of terrestrial animals of a species with processed animal protein derived from animals of the same species.

Registration and approval of facilities in the feed sector

In accordance with the requirements of the Feed Act and in conjunction with Regulation (EC) No. 183/2005 on feed hygiene, the activities performed in the Feed sector are carried out at sites and by operators approved or registered by the Bulgarian Food Safety Agency.

As of Sunday, December 31, 2023, the total number of registered and approved sites/operators on the territory of the country is 11,489, which are distributed by activities as follows:

Table V.12. Number of registered and approved facilities/operators in the Feed Sector in accordance with the requirements of Art. 9 and Art. 10 of Regulation (EC) No. 183/2005 as of 31.12.2023

Declared activity	Number of sites
I. Registered sites under Art. 9 of Regulation (EC) No. 183/2005, exercising activities according to Art. 5 (2) of the Regulation	4,357
1. Manufacturers of supplements	5

Declared activity	Number of sites
2. Manufacturers of premixtures of supplements	2
3. Manufacturers of compound feed	276
4. Operators performing activities of cutting, packaging, repackaging and sale of compound feed and feeding materials	54
5. Packaging, labeling, storage and marketing of feeds	17
6. Grinding, packaging, labeling, storage and marketing of feeds	5
7. Manufacturers of feed materials	345
8. Feed traders	2,530
9. Feed transport operators	1,017
10. Warehouse leasing operators	106
II. Registered operators at the level of primary production of agricultural crops intended for feed, exercising activities under Art. 5 (1) of Regulation (EC) No. 183/2005	6,979
1. Registered sites of farmers producing primary forages at the location of the property	5,049
2. Registered sites of farmers producing silage using silage additives, as feed is intended only for the needs of their own farm	341
3. Registered sites of farmers mixing feed exclusively for their own farm, without the use of additives and premixtures, using supplementary feed	1,429
4. Registered sites of farmers, mixing feed and producing silage, intended only for the needs of their own farm	160
III. Approved sites under Art. 10, exercising activities under Art. 5 (2) of Regulation (EC) No. 183/2005	143*
1. Manufacturers of feed additives	7
2. Manufacturers of premixtures, based on feed additives	5
3. Manufacturers of compound feed	46
4. Traders in feed additives and premixes	78
5. Feed detoxication operators	1
8. Operators, engaged in the processing of raw vegetable oil, except for sites registered under the Food Act, and/or production of fatty acids through the processing of vegetable oils and animal fats, production of biodiesel and blending of fats and/or engaged in the blending of fats and/or the manufacturing of products, obtained in the production of biodiesel	6
IV. Approved sites under Art. 55 of the Feed Act	10
1. Manufacturers of medicated feed	10
Total registered and approved sites/operators in which activities under Art. 9 and Art. 10 of Regulation (EC) 183/2005 are performed	11,489

Source: BFSA and MAF* *Including 10 approved sites for production and/or trade with medicinal feed and/or intermediate products under Art. 55 / c (1) of the Feed Act were approved.

The BFSA maintains and updates 7 national registers of the registered and of the approved sites/operators in the feed sector for the activities specified in Art. 9 and Art. 10 of Regulation (EC) No. 183/2005. They are public and available to consumers on the BFSA website, as well as on the website of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety:

According to signed bilateral agreements between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of Bulgaria, in 2023 BFSA also maintains 6 lists of representatives or producers of certain feed products approved for export to the PRC (maize, alfalfa, plant-based compound feed, feed additives, sunflower meal and dry grain stillage with extracts).

The operators in the Feed sector are registered and/or approved for all sites under their control, for each activity performed by them. The registration and approval of sites in the Feed sector is a dynamic process.

Table V.13. Number of registered and approved sites in the Feed Sector in 2022 - 2023

Item No.	Type of operator	Number of sites as of 31.12.2022	Number of sites as of 31.12.2023	Change in %
1.	Registered operators according to art. 15 (1) of the Feed Act	4,142	4,357	+5.2%
1.1.	Manufacturers of compound feed	240	276	+15.0%
1. 2.	Operators performing activities of cutting, packaging, repackaging, labeling and marketing of compound feed and feed materials	59	54	-8.5%
1. 3.	Packaging, labeling, storage and marketing of feeds	16	17	+6.3%
1. 4.	Grinding, packaging, labeling, storage and marketing of feeds	8	5	-37.5%
1. 5.	Manufacturers of supplements	5	5	0.0%
1. 6.	Manufacturers of premixtures of supplements	2	2	0.0%
1.7.	Manufacturers of feed materials	351	345	-1.7%
1.8.	Feed traders	2,480	2,530	+2.0%
1. 9.	Feed transport operators	885	1,017	+14.9%
1. 10.	Warehouse leasing operators	96	106	+10.4%
2.	Approved operators according to art. 15 (3) and (4) of the Feed Act	136	143*	+5.1%
2. 1.	Manufacturers of compound feed	40	46	+15.0%
2. 2.	Manufacturers of feed additives	7	7	0.0%
2. 3.	Manufacturers of premixtures of supplements	4	5	+25.0%
2. 4.	Traders in feed additives and premixes	78	78	0.0%
2. 5.	Operators performing: - processing of raw vegetable oil, except for sites registered under the Food Act, and/or - production of fatty acids through the processing of vegetable oils and animal fats, production of biodiesel and blending of fats and/or - engaged in the blending of fats and/or - producing biodiesel	6	6	0.0%
2. 6.	Feed detoxication operators	1	1	0.0%
3.	Approved producers of medicated feed according to art. 55C (1) of the Feed Act	10	10	0.0%
4.	Registered farmers exercising activities under Art. 5 (1) of Regulation (EC) No. 183/2005	6,890	6,979	+1.3%
4. 1.	Registered farmers producing primary feed	4,914	5,049	+2.7%
4. 2.	Registered farmers producing silage using silage additives, as feed is intended only for their own farm	423	341	-19.4%
4. 3.	Registered farmers mixing feed exclusively for their own farm without the use of additives and premixtures, using complementary feed	1,536	1,429	-7.0%
4. 4.	Registered farmers mixing feed and producing silage, intended only for the needs of their own farm	17	160	+841.2%
	Total	11,178	11,489	+2.8%

Source: BFSA and MAF; *Including 10 approved sites for production and/or trade with medicinal feed and/or intermediate products under Art. 55 / c (1) of the Feed Act were approved.

As of 31 December 2023 the total number of operators falling within the scope of Art. 9 of Regulation (EC) No. 183/2005 increased by 215 or by 5.2% compared to the previous year. The deleted registrations, at the request of the operator, on the basis of Art. 16 (10.1) or Art. 17d (2.1) of the Feed Act increased on an annual basis by 10 or by 4.3%, to 245. The revoked registration certificates, based on Art. 16 (10.2) or art. 17 (2.2) of the Feed Act and application of Art. 15 of Regulation (EC) No. 183/2005 as of 31.12.2023, was 28, without change compared to 2022. The most common reason for registration revokes on this basis is the temporary suspension of the operator's activity for a period longer than one year.

During the year, 3 sites were approved, in which activity is carried out in accordance with the feed legislation, which was 3 less compared to 2022.

Towards the end of 2023 5 site approvals were deleted, at the request of the operator - according to Art. 19, para. 18, item 1 of the Feed Act, with 3 in the previous year.

As of 31 December 2023, the total number of sites where the activity "production of medicated feed" is carried out, falling within the scope of art. 10 of Regulation (EC) No. 183/2005, was unchanged compared to the previous year.

Production of compound feed

According to data from the producers of compound feed, provided in pursuance of Art. 14b of the Feed Act, in 2023 the country produced a total of 1,337,693.46 tons of compound feed, which is an increase of 93,044.69 or 7.5% compared to the previous year.

Table V.14. Production of compound feed in 2023 by animal species, tons

Type of animals	For the market	For own farms	Total
Ruminants	143,207.805	57,887.778	201,095.583
Pigs	276,981.710	167,106.734	444,088.444
Poultry	495,654.549	137,226.245	632,880.794
Other animals	55,067.235	4,561.400	59,628.635
Total	970,911.299	366 782,157	1 337 693,456

Source: BFSA

Production of medicated feed

As in previous years, in 2023 the country produced medicated feed only for pigs. Production was 24,761.45 tons, an increase of 5,466.18 tons or 28.2% compared to 2022. Of the total amount of medicated feed produced during the year, 75.7% are for the needs of the own livestock farms, and 24.3% - for sale on the market - 24.3% (at 65.1% and 34.9% respectively in 2022).

Table V.15. Production of medicated feed in 2023 by districts, tons

District	For the market	For own farms	Total
Varna	6.00	8,879.00	8,885.00
Veliko Tarnovo	-	277.20	277.20
Razgrad	-	598.00	598.00
Ruse	196.00	6,553.75	6,749.75
Stara Zagora	-	36.00	36.00
Shumen	5,821.50	2,394.00	8,215.50
Yambol	-	-	-
Total	6,023.50	18,737.95	24,761.45

Source: BFSA

Official feed control

The feed control covers both sites in the feed sector and livestock sites, including establishments that produce feed or only feed animals that are kept for food production and their products are intended for human consumption.

In 2023, feed control followed the defined main specific operational objectives, related to the strategic objectives set in the MNCP of the Republic of Bulgaria for 2021 - 2023, namely: to ensure that the feed meets the safety requirements and the requirements of Regulation (EC) No. 767/2009 in regards to the information to be provided on the label or the document accompanying the batch, including the information to be provided when trading by means of distance communication.

In accordance with Art. 17 of Regulation (EC) No. 178/2002 and recital (6) of Regulation (EC) No. 183/2005, feed business operators are responsible for the safety of their feed, the protection of animal health and the prevention of risks. for the environment.

The official feed control is scheduled and ongoing. The scheduled control is based on country-wide risk assessment criteria. In 2023, the "Feed Control Framework Plan for 2023" was implemented and guidance for work on its implementation were applied. It covers feed control on all levels, including animal feed in farms.

Ongoing controls include follow-up checks, checks in case of suspicions and investigations (alerts, complaints, RASFF/AAC system notifications, etc.), checks on applications for feed exports to third countries, TRACES checks and others.

The feed control framework plan covers three control systems: "Animal feed and nutrition", "Transmissible spongiform encephalopathies and animal by-products" and "Veterinary products and residues of veterinary medicinal products". The inspections carried out in 2023 and the samples taken from feed for analysis were evenly distributed over the period and cover all groups of operators.

Results of control activities under the Animal Feed and Nutrition Control System

The overall progress in achieving the strategic and specific objectives of the Animal Feed and Nutrition Control System is assessed as positive. In 2023 a total of 4,096 inspections and audits were carried out at all stages of the production, processing, distribution and feeding of feed, with 3,651 in 2022. The planned inspections increased by 200 or by 6.2% compared to the previous year, up to 3,420. This is 95% completion of the number of inspections set in the Framework Control Plan for 2024, which partial completion was due to the deletion/temporary suspension of registration/approval of establishments/operators in the sector that were scheduled for inspection in the period, as well as insufficient human resources in some RFSDs.

During the inspections, non-compliances with the requirements of the legislation applicable in the sector were found, in connection with which 1,013 prescriptions were issued with specific deadlines for their elimination - 210 or 17.2% less than in 2022.

No serious non-conformities were observed with regard to feed tested which would result in animal or public health hazards. The type of non-conformities found did not pose a potential risk to animals.

The most common reasons for the non-conformities are: the unawareness of the operators' liability accordance with Regulation (EC) No.178/2002; insufficient knowledge of the legislation requirements; insufficient financial resources on the part of feed business operators.

According to the type of the site where the non-conformities were found, the largest number of precepts were given during inspections in livestock farms - 490, which is 30.9% less than in 2022. The identified discrepancies were mainly related to compliance with the requirements for hygiene, self-control of operators and traceability of feed. Non-conformities with regard to hygiene requirements mainly concerned deficiencies in the cleaning procedures and their implementation. Non-conformities in self-control were mainly related to non-sampling of feed for self-control. Incomplete/irregular record keeping was the main part of the non-conformities found in terms of compliance with traceability requirements.

In 2023, during the inspections of the sites in the feed sector, samples were taken for analysis on indicators declared by the manufacturer for compliance, as well as for compliance with the permissible safety values defined in the legislation.

The total number of analyses of samples taken for official control in 2023 was 4,339 (including 241 analyses for moisture content), of which:

- 400 samples for nutritional composition (2 inconsistent results were obtained from the analyses performed, 2 less compared to 2022);
- 221 samples for feed additives, with a fixed maximum content, including permitted coccidiostats (non-compliances were found in 12 analyses, 3 more than in 2022);
- 1,166 samples for undesirable substances (for presence of heavy metals, mycotoxins, active residues of pesticide, dioxins, ambrosia) (3 non-compliant results were obtained of the analyses, remaining unchanged on an annual basis.
- 1,166 samples for undesirable substances, including for the content of heavy metals, mycotoxins, residues of active substances of pesticides, dioxins, ragweed (3 non-compliant results were obtained, compared to 12 in 2022)
- 128 samples for microbiological contamination - presence of salmonella (2 non-conforming analyzes were found, with 1 more than in 2022);
- 19 samples of feed for the presence of GMOs, (presence of unauthorized genetically modified feed was not detected).

A total of 196 analyzes have been carried out on the mycotoxin content indicator at import of feed and no non-compliances were found.

When exporting feed, a total of 2,123 analyzes were carried out (including for heavy metals, for fluorine, for pesticide residues, for mycotoxin content, for dioxin content, for salmonella, for ragweed, for the presence of GMOs, for radioactivity, for melathion, for cyanides, for ethylene dibromide and for phosphides) where no discrepancies were found.

The cases of feed non-compliance with the requirements of the applicable legislation in 2023 decreased to 21 compared to 31 in 2022.

Control of feed under the control system "Transmissible spongiform encephalopathies and animal by-products"

The observance by the operators from the feed sector of the feed prohibitions, defined in art. 7 and Annex IV to Regulation (EC) No. 999/2001 and in Art. 11 of Regulation (EC) 1069/2009, is controlled.

During the performed documentary and physical inspections in 2023, no infringement of the requirements of Art. 11 of Regulation (EC) No. 1069/2009 on the intra-species feed ban were found.

During a laboratory control in the year, non-compliance with the requirements of Art. 7 and Annex IV of Regulation (EC) No. 999/2001 was established and all necessary administrative penalties and actions were taken for the violation.

Taken in 2023 feed samples for the presence of ingredients of animal origin are 277, including 253 samples in implementation of the feed control framework plan, 9 samples at the discretion of the inspector, 9 samples of feed intended for export and 6 samples taken in connection with study performed with confirmed presence of Scrapie.

Proteins of animal origin are at risk for contamination with microorganisms (Salmonella spp. and other bacteria from the Enterobacteriaceae), which is why feed samples are taken for the presence of microbiological contamination. In 2023, 173 feed samples were analyzed for presence of Salmonella spp., incl. 30 samples in implementation of the Feed Control Framework Plan under the TSE and by-products control system and 143 samples of feed intended for export.

In 2023, 170 feed samples were analyzed for presence of enterobacteria, incl. 27 samples in implementation of the Feed Control Framework Plan under the TSE and by-products control system and 143 samples of feed intended for export. In the laboratory control performed during the year, no positive results of laboratory analysis for the presence of salmonella and enterobacteria have been established.

Feed control under the "Veterinary medicinal products and residues of veterinary medicinal products" control system

As of 31.12.2023, 10 sites for production with medicinal feed and/or intermediate products under Art. 55 c (1) of the Feed Act were approved.

In 2023, a total of 24 inspections of approved operators engaged in the production of medicated feed (4 more than in 2022), of which 16 scheduled inspections, 3 follow-up inspections and 5 investigative inspections, were carried out. During the inspections carried out, 5 prescriptions were given to 3 operators, which represent 30% of the 10 sites checked (with 3 prescriptions given to 2 operators in 2022).

In 2023, a total of 18 feed samples were taken and analyzed under the control system (incl. 6 samples of medicated feed analyzed for the presence of medicinal substances unauthorized for use as feed supplements; 7 samples to quantify the active medicinal substance incorporated in the production of medicated feed and 5 samples for inevitable transfer of the same into non-target feed). In 2 of the samples of medicated feed, analyzed for the quantitative determination of an active medicinal substance, a discrepancy was found between the expected amount of the active substance and that found in the laboratory analysis, in connection with which all necessary measures and actions were taken in accordance with the legislation.

Audits of Feed Business Operators

According to the requirements of Art. 6 and Art. 7 of Regulation (EC) No. 1831/2003 and in connection with Art. 26 (2) of the Feed Act, feed business operators carrying out activities other than those at the primary feed production level are obliged to have developed and implemented procedures based on the principles of HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point).

In 2023, 263 audits of feed business operators and 30 follow-up audits to check the implementation of the audit recommendations were carried out (with 241 audits and 20 follow-ups in 2022).

It can be concluded that the operators have developed, introduced and implement the relevant procedures, thus fulfilling the requirements of Art. 6 and Art. 7 of Regulation (EC) No. 1831/2003. For some operators, it was found that procedures based on HACCP principles were not relevant at the time of the audit. For all identified non-conformities, recommendations were given and the operators have taken corrective action. Their implementation has been inspected and they were closed.

In 2023, 30 acts were drawn up for an established administrative violation (5 more than in 2022), most often related to non-compliance with the requirements of Art. 6, para. 1, para. 3 and para. 7, Art. 7, para. 1, Art. 15, para. 1, Art. 17c, para. 1, Art. 26c and Art. 27, para. 1 and para. 2 of the Feed Act. The analysis shows that the imposed penalties have an effect on the observance of the requirements of the feed legislation by the operators in the sector.

Control of animal by-products

The correct handling of animal by-products (ABP) and their derived products in accordance with the requirements of European and national legislation guarantees the protection of human and animal health and the protection of the environment. As a result of animal husbandry activities, animal by-products are released, which are subsequently sent for destruction or processed/reprocessed for the purpose of using them for food (forage production), as organic fertilizers for crop production or for technical purposes.

The BFSA methodically directs, coordinates and supervises the implementation by the regional food safety directorates (RFSD) of the control in the field of animal by-products.

In 2023, the strategic objectives set out in the Multiannual National Control Plan of the Republic of Bulgaria for food, feed, animal health, animal welfare and plant protection (2021 - 2023) (MNCP) were implemented.

ABP and derivatives control in 2023 follows the following priorities:

- Achieving a high level of protection of human health, animal health and the environment via effective controls at all stages of production, processing, storage, import, transport, distribution, including animal

feeding, by implementing and enforcing European law and national legislation regarding ABP and derivatives;

- Ensuring effective implementation of European and national legislation on the agri-food chain and in particular Regulation (EC) No. 2017/625 and applicable special legislation;
- Ensuring an effective system of official control and monitoring of the implementation of safety rules.

According to the requirements of the Law on Veterinary Medicine and in connection with Regulation (EC) No. 1069/2009 on animal by-products, activities with ABP and derived products are carried out by operators and in facilities and enterprises that are registered by the BFSA.

As of December 31, 2023, the total number of registered sites/operators on the territory of the country is 560 (6.7% more compared to 2022), which are distributed by activities as follows:

Table V.16. Number of active operators, sites and enterprises handling ABP and derived products as of 31.12.2023.

Section	Active operators, sites and enterprises handling ABP and derived products	2022	2023.	Change %
I	Facilities or enterprises handling ABP for the purpose of intermediate activities after their collection and enterprises storing ABP	206	227	10.2%
II	Facilities or enterprises for the storage of derived products obtained from ABP	80	81	1.3%
III	Incinerators, co-incineration plants and combustion plants	21	23	9.5%
IV	Processing enterprises	12	13	8.3%
V	Oleo-chemical enterprises	4	3	-25.0%
VI	Enterprises for conversion of ABP into biogas	21	22	4.8%
VII	Enterprises for the conversion of ABP into compost	4	4	0.0%
VIII	Enterprises for the production of pet food	45	49	8.9%
IX	Facilities and enterprises handling ABP or derived products for purposes outside the food chain	63	61	-3.2%
X	Registered operators of ABP and derivative products for specific purposes	12	14	16.7%
XI	Collection centers	0	0	0.0%
XII	Enterprises and sites producing organic fertilizers or soil improvers	11	14	27.3%
XIII	Other registered operators	46	49	6.5%
	Total:	525	560	6.7%

Source: BFSA

Official control of operators, sites and enterprises handling ABP and derived products

During the official control in 2023 the RFSDs have carried out a total of 1,495 inspections of operators, sites and enterprises handling ABP and derived products , including: 270 checks during planned control; 1,185 checks during unscheduled control and 40 audits.

Compared to 2022, the number of inspections carried out decreased by 677 or 31%, which is mainly due to the lower number of unscheduled inspections in connection with alerts, complaints, registration/approval, trade, transport of ABP and export. Performed audits increased by 31 or more than four times.

The frequency of official planned control based on individual risk assessment varies from one to four times a year. In 2023 of 433 registered operators, sites and enterprises handling ABP and derived products under Art. 24 of Regulation (EC) No. 1069/2009, a total of 1,093 inspections were carried out, and the registered 127 sites, enterprises and operators under Art. 23 of Regulation (EC) No. 1069/2009 - a total of 402 inspections.

In 2023 1,928 checks were carried out under horizontal rules regarding labeling and traceability of ABP and derived products, 16% less compared to the transition year. 21 inconsistencies were found in terms of traceability and safety of ABP and derived products, for which 20 prescriptions were given and 2 acts were issued for an established administrative violation. In terms of labeling, no non-conformities with the legislation were found.

As a result of the official control carried out in 2023, out of a total of 297 operators, sites and enterprises dealing with ABP and derived products, a total of 21 non-conformities were found at 12 operators. For the identified non-conformities, 21 prescriptions were given with specific deadlines for their removal and 2 AEAV were issued. The non-conformities are in relation to traceability, general hygiene, records and procedures and storage.

Compared to the previous year, there was an increase in the number of identified non-conformities by 1, and the number of operators where non-conformities were found and the number of prescriptions given decreased. The issued AEAVs are increasing.

Official control of ABP in animal breeding facilities

The official control of ABP in animal breeding sites in 2023 is carried out on the basis of a risk assessment, consisting of scheduled and unscheduled control (registration, signals/complaints, follow-up inspections). In 2023 the official control carried out is assessed as satisfactory with a total of 6,576 inspections for ABP in animal breeding sites, of which 2,629 are planned and 2,947 are unplanned. During the year, a decrease in the total number of inspections was observed by 6.5% compared to the previous year 2022 (when 7,032 checks have been made).

As a result of the inspections, a total of 367 non-conformities were found, for which 256 prescriptions, 48 AEAVs, 10 foreclosure acts and 5 orders were issued. The number of identified non-conformities decreased by 43% compared to the previous year, and the objects in which they were found - by 40%. Prescriptions given and AEAVs issued are also less on an annual basis (by 339 and 11, respectively). At the same time, foreclosure acts increased by 9, and orders - by 5.

The most frequently identified reasons for allowing non-conformities with the requirements of the legislation in relation to ABP and derived products at each stage of the production chain are unrealized responsibility on the part of the operators, their insufficient knowledge of the requirements of the European and national sectoral legislation and insufficient financial resources from operator side.

6.4. Analysis of the food chain risks

One of the main functions of the Food Chain Risk Assessment Center (FCRAC) is to protect and strengthen consumer confidence in the safety and security of the entire food chain by conducting independent scientific risk assessments, scientific opinions and information related to the food chain on issues that directly or indirectly affect food safety, animal and plant health, plant products, plant and animal propagating material.

Another key priority is the evaluation of plant protection products (PPPs) in accordance with the requirements of Regulation (EC) No. 1107/2009, Regulation (EC) No. 396/2005, as well as the collection, processing and provision of information to EFSA on approved Good Agricultural Practices of permitted PPPs in Bulgaria in connection with the review of maximum residue limits.

Through its independent, scientifically based assessments, the FCRAC helps consumers to make informed decision on the one hand and the competent control authorities to assess the impact of risk management measures in the food chain on the other. In addition, the risk assessments prepared by the FCRAC provide a basis for further analysis and assessment of the benefit/risk balance in the future.

In 2023, the Center fulfilled its main goal - preparation of scientific opinions and publication of scientific reviews/analyses and information in the field of health, reproduction and animal welfare, biological and chemical hazards in the food chain, zoonoses, genetically modified organisms, materials for food contact, plant health, pesticide residues in food, supplements in food, food additives, new foods, dietary products, nutrition and allergens. The scientific opinions prepared were at the request of MAF, the BFSA and other organizations. In addition to assessments of the risk of the spread and entry of particularly dangerous animal and plant diseases, most of the opinions include planned assessments of the risk to the health of consumers and rapid assessments of specific cases of identified residues of chemical contaminants in food, including pesticides, in which recommendations are given for taking measures to manage food safety risks. All publications are available on the FCRAC website.

The focus of the FCRAC activity for the year is:

- Continuous monitoring and evaluation of the course of the disease highly pathogenic Influenza A in birds, which for another year is spreading in Bulgaria and leads to great losses for the poultry industry. Risk assessments are regularly carried out before any repopulation of poultry farms following an outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza A. The main priority is the evaluation of different strategies for vaccination of birds in Bulgaria, taking into account the available data for the territory of the country and recommendations regarding the need to prepare a strategy based on risk assessment - types of available vaccines, antigenic proximity of the vaccines to the Bulgarian strains of the virus, identification of high-risk areas in the country, identification of species and categories of birds to be vaccinated, options for vaccination strategies, appropriate surveillance schemes, the main consideration being the preservation of commercial markets for export of products from vaccinated animals and positive results from the ongoing vaccination of ducks in France and clinical trials in chickens in the Netherlands;
- Tracking the development of the epidemic situation in the world and in Bulgaria with regard to a number of other infectious animal diseases, such as African swine fever (ASF), in relation to which the epidemic situation in Bulgaria is stabilized in 2023, infectious anemia in horses in Bulgaria, ruminant bluetongue and contagious nodular dermatitis in Bulgaria and a vaccination withdrawal strategy.

An important process that will have an impact on the development of animal husbandry in the coming years is the revision of the current EU animal welfare legislation by the EC, within the framework of the "Farm to Fork" strategy, as well as the new scientific opinions of European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) on the welfare of farmed farm animals, which will provide the scientific basis to support a legislative proposal from the EC.

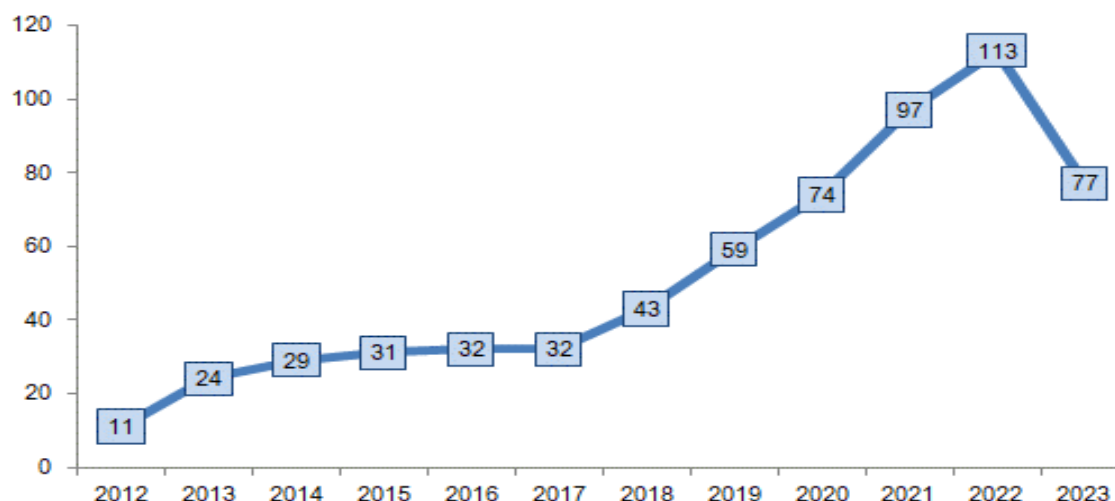
EFSA's new scientific opinions published in 2022 and 2023 animal welfare concern: raising pigs; rearing of laying hens in farms, broilers and parent flocks for broilers; raising calves; breeding of dairy cattle, ducks, geese and quail; animals during transport. In connection with this review of the legislation, FCRAC has informed the interested Bulgarian farming organizations and is preparing an analysis/survey of the attitudes and readiness of the Bulgarian livestock industry to implement the upcoming changes.

Another major innovation that the European Commission is working on in 2023 is the direction for applying the new genomic techniques in plant breeding. On July 5, 2023 the European Commission has adopted a legislative proposal for a Regulation on plants obtained by certain new genomic techniques (NGT) and food and feed produced from them, and amending Regulation (EU) 2017/625, whereby plants obtained with Category 1 NGT are removed from GMO legislation and their placing on the market for food, seed and feed is liberalized. The FCRAC has prepared an opinion on the draft regulation with identified dangers of the final deregulation of these innovations for the health of people, animals and the environment and the sustainability and independence of farmers, and made proposals for a reasonable approach when placing them on the market with a mandatory prior risk assessment, traceability and labelling. The draft Regulation aroused strong interest among the professional community in Bulgaria, agricultural organizations and academic circles in the country with extremely opposite opinions. Several different forums were held during the year - round tables, press conferences of organic producers and beekeepers, information days, agro forums for discussion and finding a common position for Bulgaria, although many open questions and polar positions remain.

In 2023, the Center prepared: 57 opinions and risks assessments; 121 pieces of scientific information; 13 scientific reviews and analyses; 7 scientific analyses of data from the RASFF system; 3 annual data reports for Bulgaria for 2022 to EFSA on zoonoses, residues of chemical pollutants and pesticides in food.

After the observed increasing trend for the period 2012 - 2022, in 2023 a certain reduction in the number of scientific evaluations and analyzes made by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is reported. Within 2023 77 scientific opinions were prepared (including: 57 scientific risk assessments and 20 scientific reviews and analyses), with 113 in 2022 and 97 in 2021. Although below the level of the previous two years, the number of assessments and scientific reviews in 2023 remains high, while the quality of opinions has improved.

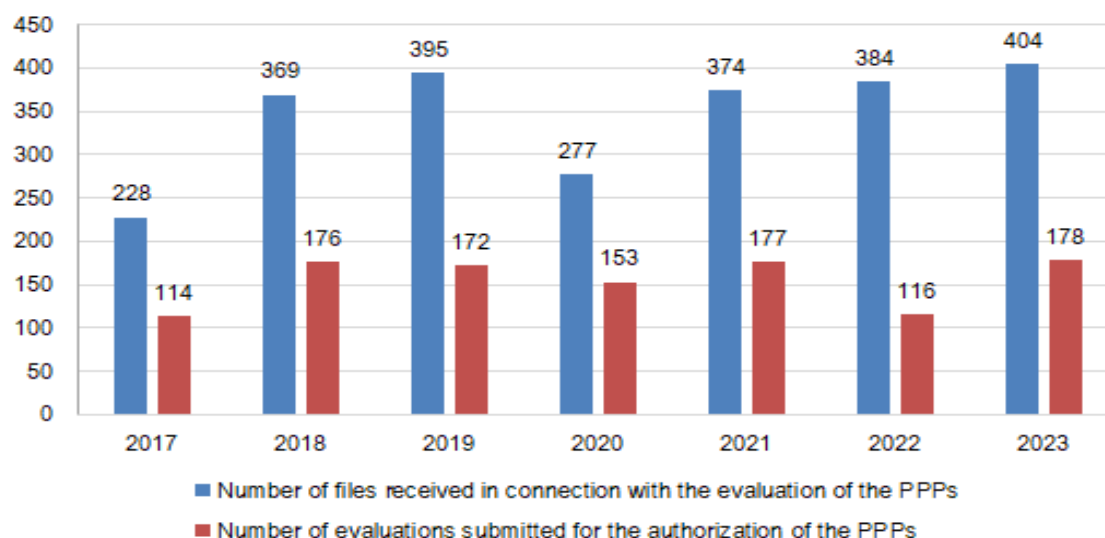
Figure V.5. Number of scientific opinions prepared by the FCRAC for the 2012 - 2023 period



Source: FCRAC

In 2023 the FCRAC continued to fulfill its other main objective in relation to the assessment of active substances included in plant protection products and the assessment of plant protection products (PPPs). FCRAC is the only competent authority in Bulgaria to carry out this type of assessment. The evaluation is commissioned by the European Commission and coordinated with the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). Bulgaria has been allocated 2 active substances on which FCRAC is working.

Figure V.6. Files received and evaluations submitted for the authorization of the PPPs for the period 2017 - 2023



Source: FCRAC

Assessments are made in terms of human and environmental safety, consumer safety and efficacy, physico-chemical characteristics.

With regard to the activities related to the evaluation of plant protection products, the FCRAC carried out in 2023:

- Collection of information on authorized PPPs in Bulgaria, summary of the parameters of approved good agricultural practices and provision of the information to EFSA in connection with the maximum permissible amount of residue of certain types of pesticides (MP RTP) under Article 12 of the Regulation (EC 396/2005 - for 2 active substances;

- Review of published Regulations for amendment of the MP RTP for compliance of uses permitted in Bulgaria for PPPs- 23, including 3 confirmed as requiring national action.

In 2023 a total of 404 dossiers related to the evaluation of the PPP were received in the FCRAC, which includes new dossiers and provision of additional information on already available PPP dossiers.

There were 178 completed and submitted to the BFSA assessment reports of PPPs during the year, with 62 more than the previous year.

In 2024, the FCRAC continued to prepare and update risk assessments in the following areas:

- Influenza A in birds and the development of the possibilities for building a strategy for vaccination of birds in Bulgaria, subject to the preservation of commercial markets and waiting for the results of the conducted vaccine trials in chickens in the Netherlands and in ducks in France;
- African swine fever in Bulgaria, Europe and the world;
- Current animal diseases or with increased risk of entering the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria;
- Other economically significant, exotic, emerging, transboundary and vector-borne animal diseases and zoonoses;
- The development of European legislation on humane treatment of animals and the expected EC proposal for a new regulation, as well as its impact on Bulgarian animal husbandry;
- The development of European legislation regarding new genomic techniques in plant breeding, food and feed;
- Residues of PPPs, VMPs and environmental pollutants and assessment of dietary mercury exposure of the population in Bulgaria;
- Allergens, dietary foods, new foods and foods with health claims, allergens, nutritional supplements, new foods, safety assessment of traditional foods;
- Plant health, the phytosanitary risk of plant pests for Bulgaria;
- An assessment of the safe use of food additives and flavorings is envisaged;
- Fulfillment of the goals set out in the national plan to fight against antimicrobial resistance, attributed to the FCRAC - tracking trends for the development of alternatives to antibiotics in veterinary and human medicine, use of feed additives to replace antibiotic therapy in farm animals and birds.

The Center's experts continue to carry out the activities of approval, renewal and review of the approval of active substances, antidotes and synergists and to carry out evaluations with assessment reports for PPPs in accordance with FCRAA and in accordance with the requirements of Regulation (EU) No. 1107/2009 for:

- plant protection products in their authorization for placing on the market and use, renewal, amendment and withdrawal of authorization for placing on the market and use, extension of the scope of authorization for placing on the market and use of a plant protection product for a minimum use and mutual recognition of product authorizations;
- plant protection products identity in their authorization for parallel trade;
- plant protection products that contain substances which are candidates for substitution.

6.5. Legislative changes and strategic documents in the field of food chain safety

The optimization of the regulatory framework in the field of food and feed safety, animal health and welfare and plant health continued in 2023. During the year, work was done on projects of the following more important normative acts and strategic documents, some of which have already been finalized or are expected to be finalized in 2024, as well as the following activities were carried out:

- Draft Law amending and supplementing the Foods Act;
- Draft Law for amending and supplementing the Law on the Implementation of the Common Organization of Agricultural Markets of the European Union. Regulates the conditions for organizing farmers' markets;

- DCM for amending and supplementing the Ordinance on the requirements for the use of extraction solvents in the production of food and food ingredients;
- Ordinance No. 2 from 27.03.2024 on the conditions and procedure for food sampling and lab testing of foods;
- Ordinance for amending and supplementing Ordinance No. 2 from 20.01.2021 on the specific requirements for the safety and quality of food offered in children's institutions, school canteens and retail establishments on the territory of schools and children's institutions, as well as of food offered at organized events for children and students;
- Implementation of the measures set in Action Plan of the National Program for Prevention and Reduction of Food Loss (2021-2026). A draft Memorandum on cooperation and partnership between the Ministry of Health and the branch associations, associations and organizations of the interested parties within the framework of the National Program has been prepared. A Guide has been prepared for the redistribution of surplus edible food to persons in need;
- Draft Action Plan for the implementation of Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/627 in relation to live bivalve molluscs, live echinoderms, live tunicates and live marine gastropods that filter feed the water;
- Draft of a new Law on veterinary medical activity, developed due to the need to update the current national legislation in the field of veterinary medical activity and to adopt national measures to implement EU legislation on the agro-food chain within the scope of the Veterinary Medicine;
- Act for amendment and supplement of the Veterinary Medicine Act regarding the veterinary medicinal products;
- DCM for amending and supplementing the Tariff for determining the prices to be paid for the implementation of the measures under the Program for the prevention, supervision, control and eradication of animal diseases and zoonoses;
- DCM for amendment and supplement to the Ordinance on the terms and conditions for spending the funds for compensation of animal owners in the cases under Art. 47, para. 1 of the Veterinary Medicine Act;
- Ordinance for amending and supplementing Ordinance No. 42 of 12.12.2008 on the requirements for veterinary medical facilities and the type and volume of veterinary medical activity that can be performed in them.
- Ordinance supplementing Ordinance No. 10 of April 3, 2009. on the maximum permissible concentrations of undesirable substances and products in feed and determining the categories of feed raw materials that can be used for the labeling of pet foods;
- Ordinance for amendment and supplement to Ordinance No. 6 of 2007 on the conditions and procedures for pasture breeding of pigs of the Eastern Balkan breed and its crossbreeds;
- Ordinance for amending and supplementing Ordinance No. 8 of 05.11.2020 on the conditions and procedure for carrying out disinfection, disinsection, deratization and devastation in limiting and eradication animal diseases;
- Amendment of Decision No. 520 of the Council of Ministers of 2018 to update the composition and regulations of the Central Epizootic Council of the Ministry of Health for the organization, coordination and financial provision of measures for the prevention, containment and eradication of particularly dangerous infectious diseases;
- Plan for control and prevention of the spread of the African swine fever disease in the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2024 - 2026;
- Annual report for the implementation of the Plan for control and prevention of the spread of the African swine fever disease in Bulgaria for the period 2021 - 2023;
- Plan for control and prevention of the spread of the African swine fever disease in the Republic of

Bulgaria for the period 2024 - 2026;

- Sampling guidance for highly pathogenic avian influenza from wild birds and mammals;
- Prepared analysis regarding the need for a Vaccination Strategy against Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in Bulgaria in cooperation with all interested parties;
- Draft National Action Program against Antimicrobial Resistance 2023-2027 (joint project with the Ministry of Health);
- Ordinance for amendment of Ordinance No 12 of 2023 on the terms and conditions for the use of plant protection products;
- Draft Ordinance amending Ordinance No. 21 of 2016 on the terms and conditions for the registration, labeling and control of fertilizers, soil improvers, biologically active substances and food substrates;
- Draft Ordinance amending Ordinance No. 13 of 2016 on the measures for the protection of bees and bee families from poisoning and the methods of carrying out plant protection, disinfection and disinsection activities;
- Draft Act to amend and supplement the Plant Protection Act in order to ensure the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2019/1009 to lay down rules for making fertilizer products available on the EU market and for amending Regulations (EC) No. 1069/2009 and (EC) No. 1107/2009 and repealing Regulation (EC) No. 2003/2003.

The following were also prepared during the year:

- Documentary procedures for creating rules for determining exit points on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria for the export of animals.
- Instruction for determining the starting points, for carrying out animal welfare checks, according to Article 21, paragraph 2, letter "c" of Regulation (EU) 2017/625;
- Standard operational procedure for determining the starting points, for carrying out animal welfare checks, according to Article 3, item 39 of Regulation (EU) 2017/625.

Priority activities in 2024

In 2024 the process of drafting laws and by-laws in the field of food safety, animal health and plant health continues.

The preparation of the Annual Report for 2023 is a priority. for the implementation of the Multiannual National Control Plan (MNCP). The new Multiannual National Control Plan for the period 2024-2026 has been finalized.

The activities that continue to remain important are related to the preparation of a draft of a new Veterinary Medical Activity Act, fully compliant with the framework and provisions of Regulation (EU) 2016/429 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016 on transmissible animal diseases and amending and repealing certain acts in the area of animal health and delegated acts thereto (applicable from 21 April 2021) and Regulation (EU) 2019/6 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2018 on veterinary medicinal products and repealing Directive 2001/82/EC.

A new Law on the professional organization of veterinarians in Bulgaria is being developed, due to the need to fully implement the provisions of Regulation (EU) 2017/625 of the European Parliament and of the Council of March 15, 2017 on official controls and other official activities carried out to ensure the application of food and feed legislation, animal health and welfare rules, plant health and plant protection products and the harmonization of control requirements and the terms and conditions for the implementation of veterinary medical practice with the draft of a new law on veterinary medical activity.

The work of the Coordination Council for extremely dangerous animal diseases and zoonoses established at the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, coordinating the implementation of the measures for prevention and control of the spread of infectious diseases on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria, continues.

It is necessary for the Council of Ministers to adopt the draft National Action Program for Combating Antimicrobial Resistance 2024 - 2027, prepared under the "One Health" approach (with Ministry of Health as the leading institution) and to work on the implementation of the set measures in order to achieve the objectives of the Green Deal to reduce the use of antimicrobials and meet the requirements of the new legislation on veterinary medicinal products related to ensuring the collection of information on the quantities of antimicrobials used and raising awareness among farmers regarding good practices to reduce the use of antimicrobials.

Draft Ordinance is being developed amending and supplementing Ordinance No. 21 of 2016 on the terms and conditions for the registration, labeling and control of fertilizers, soil improvers, biologically active substances and food substrates.

7. Livestock Selection and Reproduction

7.1. Livestock Selection and Reproduction

The Executive Agency for Selection and Reproduction in Animal Breeding (EASRAB) assists the Minister of Agriculture and Food in pursuing the state policy in the field of breeding and management and conservation of genetic resources. The Agency monitors the state of national genetic resources and coordinates the activities related to their management.

The EASRAB participates in the management of national genetic resources in animal husbandry through management, organization and participation in the activities of the National Council for Management and Conservation of Genetic Resources. In 2023, 10 meetings of the Council by Sections for the individual directions in animal husbandry were held, where the problems of the respective branch were discussed and proposals for improving the breeding activity were made.

The EASRAB coordinates the creation of new breeds and hybrids of animals by administering the activities of the State Commission on Animal Breeds (SCAB) and performs the necessary expert assessment on the merits at all levels. In 2023 an application has been received from the Patent Office for the recognition of a new breed of dog - "German Shepherd Dog".

The Agency makes annual monitoring of the breeds in connection with the maintenance and periodic updating of the Register of Breeding herds of the National Gene Fund under Article 18 (6) of the Animal Breeding Act.

In 2023, the risk status and change trend was determined of the following: 30,855 cattle (of three autochthonous and three commercial breeds); 15,453 buffaloes (of one commercial breed); 142,021 sheep (of 20 autochthonous and 3 commercial breeds); 10,695 goats (from 3 autochthonous breeds); 701 pigs (one autochthonous and one commercial breed) and 9,792 horses (one autochthonous and four commercial breeds).

During the year, the breeding organizations in the country and the EASRAB control 28 autochthonous and 12 commercial breeds, which are the subject of support under the Program for the Development of Rural Areas, measure 10 "Agroecology and climate in the direction "Protection of endangered local breeds".

Due to the African swine fever disease, from the end of 2019 to 31.12.2023, 1,056 pigs of the autochthonous East Balkan pig breed were destroyed, as a result of which its status was already changed to breed becoming extinct. The Pleven Horse and Bulgarian Red Cattle breeds can also be identified as endangered breeds. Of the autochthonous breeds, the condition of the Local Stara Zagora sheep, Byala Marishka, Local Karnobat sheep and the Sakar sheep is alarming, and of the commercial breeds - Karnobatska and Trakiyska fine-wooled sheep, of the East Bulgarian horse, Danube horse and Danube white pig. During the year, measures for restoration of two national breeds - the Bulgarian brown cattle and the Bulgarian red cattle - continued to be implemented. A breeding program has been developed for the Bulgarian Brown Cattle, and the breeding activity with the breed is undertaken by two breeding organizations. A breeding plan has been developed for the development of the Bulgarian red cattle and it was implemented in 2023 as well.

The EASRAB maintains an information database on the state of genetic resources, based on the EFABIS model of the European Regional Focal Point. The national system is linked to EFABIS, and the latter to the DAD-IS information system of the World Food Organization (FAO). This integration enables the transfer of data from national to European and global information systems. In 2023, the information in the database for 608,201 animals and birds was updated.

The Agency manages and maintains a National Genetic Bank with two repositories (Sofia and Sliven), which store cryopreserved semen from different species and breeds of animals.

As of the end of 2023, the National Genetic Bank stored a total of 1,576,637 doses of deep-frozen semen from 340 breeders, as follows: of 287 cattle breeders, 26 buffalo breeders, 17 goats, 7 rams and 3 stallions of 23 breeds of cattle, 4 breeds of buffalo, 8 breeds of sheep, 4 breeds of goats and 3 breeds of horses, which increases the variety of genetic material offered for sale.

As a separate part of the National Genetic Bank, the EASRAB also maintains a National Genetic Reserve that guarantees the national sovereignty of the country with regard to genetic resources, conservation, restoration and sustainable management of biodiversity, as well as limiting its loss.

As of 31.12.2023 a total of 414,286 doses of deep-frozen seminal fluid from: 469 cattle and 33 buffalo breeders, 58 rams, 13 he-goats and 46 stallions. The doses are from 27 breeds of cattle, 4 breeds of buffalo, 21 breeds of sheep, 6 breeds of goats and 10 breeds of horses.

To ensure higher biosecurity, the frozen semen from the National Genetic Reserve is stored in two cryo-storage facilities - Sofia and Sliven.

The EASRAB manages and maintains the two State Artificial Insemination Stations (SATIS) in Sofia and Sliven, ensuring the breeding activity and the conservation of genetic resources in the country. The stations also receive and store long-lasting breeding material from valuable highly productive breeds from threatened with extinction and endangered local autochthonous breeds of animals.

At the end of 2023, 8 breeders of the following breeds were bred in Sliven SATIS: Bulgarian Red Cattle, Bulgarian Rhodopean, Brown, Holstein Black, Aberdeen Angus Red, Montbeliard and Bulgarian Murrah.

During the year, 35,820 doses of deep-frozen semen were produced from the available cattle and buffalo breeders in Sliven SATIS.

A horse breeding depot is maintained in the Sofia SATIS, where the EASRAB's own horses are bred and provided under contracts. In 2023, 75 ejaculates were obtained and 5,316 doses of deep-frozen semen were produced from the stallions bred at the station.

In the implementation of the ten-year Conservation Program for "ex situ" management of genetic resources in Bulgaria 2015 - 2024, from the middle of 2018 rams and he-goats are bred at Sofia SATIS. The rams and he-goats received in the SATIS are under contracts for joint activity with the respective breeding organizations. As of 31.12.2023 1 goat, 4 young goats, 3 ovines, 1 caprine, 2 female goats, 4 small caprines and 2 goatlings are bred in Sofia SATIS.

The Agency has taken preventive measures for the protection and conservation of the East Balkan pig breed in connection with African swine fever. In order to prevent the risk of loss of valuable genetic resources, a response system has been set up in the event of natural disasters, epidemics, industrial accidents or other unforeseen causes, with severe consequences for animal populations. A clinical examination of a pig farm, which is under the selection control of the Association for Breeding and Storage of the East Balkan Pig, was carried out. As a result, in the two facilities of the Agency (Artificial Insemination Station in the town of Sliven and livestock farm, owned by EASRAB in the town of Kyustendil) there are six breeding groups of 4 sows and one boar each, participating in two genealogical schemes.

EASRAB assists with the activities of breeding organizations in the implementation of their breeding programs, ensuring proper assessment of selection traits and assessment of breeding value through: providing an opportunity for research of the quality indicators of controlled traits in its laboratories; breeding of male animals and production and storage of semen; proving the origin of breeding animals in its laboratory.

To this end, the Agency manages and maintains a laboratory for control of milk productivity and a laboratory for control of wool productivity.

In 2023, in the state laboratory for determining the physico-chemical composition of milk in the town of Sliven a total of 12,588 samples of cow milk were analyzed, which is 329 less than in the previous year. Of these, 12,107 samples were provided by Association for Bulgarian Rhodope Cattle and Jersey - Smolyan and 481 were from animals controlled by EASRAB.

The laboratory for testing rams on own productivity (town of Shumen), servicing the selection in fine-wool sheep breeding, makes it possible to determine the size of some selection traits and the quality of wool in terms of physical and mechanical properties, yield and the amount of pure fiber. In 2023, 724 wool samples were tested in it, 14 less than in the previous year.

EASRAB provides breeding organizations with various options for joint activities, cooperation and partnership in breeding male breeding animals, production and cryopreservation of semen from them. Within 2023, 6 cattle and 2 buffalo breeding stock, 5 male calves, 2 buffaloes, 1 ram, 4 heifers, 3 she-goats, 1 ram, 2 goats, 4 heifers, 2 goatlings and 30 stallions, mares and growing foals were bred in the bases of the EASRAB under contracts for joint reproductive activity.

In 2023, the activity of the National Genetic Laboratory continued, ensuring reliable, scientifically based determination of the animal breed at a modern level, recognized by the international community and allows the performance of reference DNA analyzes. This provides an opportunity to control both the activities of breeding organizations and the implementation of coupled support schemes in the field of animal husbandry. The performed DNA analyses also reveal new regularities necessary for the development of breeding strategies and programs for the conservation of national genetic resources in animal husbandry. During the year, DNA was isolated from 4,629 samples of cattle and 1,010 of sheep at the National Genetics Laboratory.

The realization of seed material of breeders from the national gene pool is carried out by 7 licensed sperm storage centers. An organization has been created in five centers for the operation of 11 mobile lines covering the areas with closed sperm storage centers over the years.

In 2023, a total of 22,463 doses of semen were sold (69.5% of dairy breeds, 27.5% of meat-producing breeds, and only 3% of buffaloes), which is 3,243 less than in the previous year. Of the 15,614 doses of semen from dairy cattle breeds sold, the largest share was occupied by those from the Holstein-Friesian cattle - 23.9%, followed by Simmental - 23.5% and Bulgarian Black and White cattle - 13.1%. Of the meat-producing breeds, the largest share of doses belongs to Aberdeen Angus - 71.2% and Limousin - 24.3%

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in preserving the genetic diversity of animals used for agricultural purposes. With the approval of the FAO Global Plan of Action for the Conservation of Genetic Resources in Animal Husbandry, the EASRAB has taken concrete steps for the effective management and long-term conservation of genetic diversity in animal husbandry. To this end, a ten-year Conservation Program for ex situ management of genetic resources in Bulgaria has been developed. It stipulates that breeders of commercial and autochthonous breeds of cattle, buffaloes, sheep, goats and horses, from which genetic material is preserved, shall enter the State Stations for artificial insemination. With the implementation of the cryopreservation program, the National Genetic Reserve and the National Genetic Bank will be enriched with potentially useful genes from 11 breeds of cattle, 1 breed of buffalo, 26 breeds of sheep, 4 breeds of goats and 13 breeds of horses.

In implementation of the program, over the last years the EASRAB has undertaken activities for restoration of the Bulgarian Red Cattle breed. By the end of 2023, 11 animals of the Bulgarian Red cattle breed were bred. The main goal of the breeding work is to preserve and increase the available gene pool and to strengthen the biological qualities, ensuring the typicality, productivity and survival of the breed. Due to the narrow genetic diversity and the impossibility of further breeding of the breed in its pure state, a refined cross with bulls from the Angler and Danish Red Cattle breeds was initiated, as they were involved in the breeding process.

In implementation of the programs for rescue from extinction and restoration of the Danube, Pleven Horse and Bulgarian Heavy Horse breeds, the concluded contracts of EASRAB with the Association for Restoration and Development of the Pleven Horse and Hydran breeds and the Association of Horse Breeders in Bulgaria were still in force in 2023. The aim is to obtain and store semen from stallions of the three breeds, to make embryo transfer, as well as to naturally cover mares of the Danube and Pleven horse breeds. In 2022, 10,626 doses of equine semen were stored in the National Genetic Bank and the National Genetic Reserve.

In order to promote the national genetic resources and the breeding activity, EASRAB organized and conducted exhibitions financed by the State Fund for Agriculture under the state aid schemes. In 2023, only one event was held in the city of Sliven: National Livestock Exhibition

In 2023, the EASRAB continued to represent Bulgaria in international bodies and organizations related to the management and conservation of European and global genetic resources in animal husbandry and to participate in working groups, meetings and various projects.

7.2. Control and coordination of breeding activities

In 2023, the EASRAB carried out control by conducting an inspection of the activities of breeding organizations that received support under the state aid scheme "Aid for keeping a herd book and determining the productivity and genetic traits of animals" for animals applying for 2022. In accordance with the requirements of the scheme, the inspections carried out cover animal breeding as follows: 1,623 farms with 132,964 cattle, 259 farms with 15,188 buffaloes, 1,989 farms with 357,827 sheep, 364 farms with 33,030 goats, 31 farms with 40,274 pigs, 6 farms with 1,070,586 poultry, 326 owners with 8,473 horses, 20,131 bee colonies, 13 owners with 329 dogs and 3 farms with 719 rabbits.

The EASRAB has carried out control over the activities of organizing and holding exhibitions by the Breeding Organizations under State Aid Schemes - "Assistance for participation in exhibitions" in 2023 of the Agriculture State Fund.

Within 2023 the agency has carried out checks at fourteen dog shows, seven horse shows with animals presented by the "Association of Horse Breeders in Bulgaria", the "Bulgarian Sport Horse" Association and the "Eastern Bulgarian Horse" Association, as well as at five animal breeding shows organized by the "Breeding Organization for dairy sheep", "Association for breeding of dairy breeds of goats", "United Bulgarian livestock breeders", "Organization of the breeders of the autochthonous breeds of sheep in Bulgaria", "Association for breeding and breeding of the Mariska sheep" and "Association for breeding of the Ile de France breed in Bulgaria".

The Agency controls the state breeding farms, carrying out one spring and one autumn inspection of horse herds at Kabiyuk State Enterprise during the year.

In 2023, the EASRAB carried out planned inspections of 37 breeding organizations (23 in sheep and goat breeding, 12 in cattle and buffalo breeding and 1 each in pig breeding and horse breeding).

An unscheduled inspection of the Association for Breeding of Local Autochthonous Breeds in Bulgaria was carried out, following a report of violations filed by the Ministry of Health Inspectorate.

The agency self-reported and carried out a check on keeping primary zootechnical documentation related to the origin of animals born in 2023 and reproductive abilities of ewes, according to the breeding program of 19 breeding organizations in sheep breeding and 4 in goat breeding. A total of 51,343 sheep and goats raised in 325 livestock farms were checked, of which 45,556 sheep in 286 flocks and 5,787 goats in 39 flocks. As a result of the inspection, conclusions were drawn and the necessary measures were taken.

Upon a complaint from a legal entity, an inspection was carried out of the "Association for Breeding of the Black-Striped Breed in Bulgaria" with headquarters in the city of Dobrich.

Following a complaint received in connection with the activities of the Association of Horse Breeders in Bulgaria, one of its members was checked.

In the first six months of 2023 inspections were carried out at the Mouton Charolais Bulgaria Breeding Organization; Association of horse breeders in Bulgaria for the breeds of the Bulgarian Trotting Horse and Trakehner; Association for autochthonous breeds of goats in Bulgaria - city Pernik; Breeding Association of Sofia Elinpelinska; Association for the Bulgarian Rhodope Cattle and Jarsey. The results of the on-site inspections regarding the declared circumstances were submitted to the Commission for Recognition of Breeding Organizations and Approval of Breeding Programmes.

During the year, 3 organizations were recognized as breeding organizations with 4 breeding programs approved by breed.

Due to the lack of approved breeding organizations in the country for certain breeds, in 2023 EASRAB continued to carry out selection activities by species and breeds, as follows: cattle breeding - with 668 cattle, sheep breeding - with 578 sheep and goat breeding - with 569 goats. This activity enables farmers breeding the said breeds, for which no breeding organizations have been established, to apply for coupled support schemes

for animals under selection control.

In connection with the implementation of coupled support schemes in the Livestock sector for animals under selection control, inspections were carried out to identify the animals under selection control, as well as to record the approved animals in the VetIS system of the BFSA. In 2023, the EASRAB entered in the VetIS system: 142,840 cattle of 18 breeds; 16,621 buffaloes of one breed; 365,845 sheep of 34 breeds; 38,667 goats of 10 breeds.

The quality of the breeding material produced, entering and distributed on the territory of the country is controlled by the EASRAB, through the maintenance of a national register of male breeding animals and a Register of breeding herds from the national gene pool.

As of 31.12.2023 the Register of male breeding animals included: 2,062 beef bulls, 327 buffalo bulls, 9,808 rams, 1,252 he-goats, 276 stallions, 385 boars, 100 dogs and 60 rabbits.

Information is entered in the Register of Breeding Herds as follows: cattle breeding - 1,808 herds with 134,513 animals, buffalo breeding - 284 herds with 16,551 animals, sheep breeding - 2,125 herds with 368,584 animals, goat breeding - 371 herds with 37,789 animals, pig breeding - 34 herds with 51,157 animals, horse breeding - 743 owners with 11,960 animals, poultry farming - 15 flocks with 1,407,115 birds. The register also includes 152 apiaries with 19,606 bee colonies, 37 owners of dogs of breeds of economic importance with 462 dogs, as well as 2 owners of rabbits with 572 animals.

In 2023, 1 importer was registered in the register of importers of organic products, with 2 notifications for intra-Community trade submitted. Doses of deep-frozen semen from 96 cattle breeders of 7 breeds were imported: Holstein, Simmental, Jersey, Wagyu, Limousin, Aberdeen Angus and Belgian Blue.

8. Agricultural Science, Training and Advisory Activities

8.1. Agricultural Scientific Research and Scientific Service Activities Provided by the Agricultural Academy

8.1.1. Main research priorities in the Agricultural Academy

The Agricultural Academy (AA) carries out its activities within the framework of the state agricultural policy, the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union (2021 - 2027) and the National Strategy for the Development of Scientific Research (2017 - 2030).

The main strategic goal of the AA is to turn agrarian science into a major factor for the sustainable development of Bulgarian agriculture and, through knowledge and innovation, to increase its competitiveness, guarantee food security and improve the quality of the environment by creating, increasing and multiplying the scientific potential. The Academy works for the prosperity of agricultural science, for environmentally friendly and climate neutral agriculture.

The main activities of the Academy in 2023, according to the priorities set in the National Strategy for the Development of Scientific Research in the Republic of Bulgaria (2017 - 2030), cover the scientific areas for the development of innovation, the economy and society, namely:

- Health and quality of life. Prevention, therapy, green, blue and ecological technologies, biotechnologies, ecological foods;
- Environmental protection. Environmental monitoring. Utilization of raw materials and bioresources. Purification and waste-free technologies;
- Socio-economic development and management.

Scientific and applied research of the AA includes the three thematic areas of the Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialization 2021-2027, as follows:

- Healthy living and biotechnology industry - this includes scientific research related to: methods for clean production, storage, processing and reaching the end user of specific Bulgarian ingredients, means and products; production of specialized food and beverages; personal medicine, diagnostics and individual therapy, medical and medicinal forms and means; biotechnologies with direct application for a healthy

lifestyle; introduction of innovative methods in agriculture and fish farming, without the use of chemical preparations for pest control and fertilization; green economy; industrial biotechnology;

- Clean technologies, circular and low-carbon economy - within this thematic area, AA focuses on research on zero-waste technologies and methods for incorporating waste products and materials from production into other production and services;
- New technologies in the creative and recreational industries - work is being done in the direction of development of the cultural and creative industries, incl. digitization and preservation of cultural heritage.

AA scientists continue to work on the priorities set out in the Green Deal, such as the strategies "Farm-to-Fork" and "Biodiversity", the Zero Pollution for Air, Water and Soil Plan, the circular economy, the ecosystem restoration, and Digitalization of agriculture in line with the European Digital Decade (2020- 2030).

In 2023, a total of 226 research projects were developed in the structural units of the AA. Of these, 109 projects were funded by the Academy's budget subsidy; 12 by the Scientific Research Fund (SRF); 5 by the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) and 58 by the national and international organizations and agencies (World Health Organization, Horizon Europe, COST, FAO, IAEA, NEXT Black Sea Basin Programme, Erasmus+, etc.).

Within these projects and programs, scientific research in the following directions and thematic areas is leading:

- Preservation and increase of the biodiversity of plant genetic resources - expeditions are carried out to search for, characterize and preserve wild species and old local varieties as a valuable genetic resource and an endangered national treasure. Collections of genetic resources of basic agricultural crops, medicinal and other plant species in Bulgaria are created and maintained;
- Genetic and breeding research to create new varieties and hybrids with increased productivity and quality, adapted to the market and climate changes - varieties with good adaptability and plasticity to changes in agro-climatic conditions, with good productivity and quality, resistant to diseases and enemies are created, enabling the development of sustainable and competitive agriculture. Demo fields are being built to present varieties suitable for cultivation in conditions of biotic and abiotic stress and recommendations are being prepared for their zoning in the country;
- Sustainable and efficient management of resources (soil, water, biomass) in the conditions of climate change, impact mitigation and adaptation practices - the influence of land use methods on the quality of groundwater in highly stressed agro-ecosystems, as well as the forms of pollution of water and soil caused by industry and energy; the influence of reduced irrigation on crop yield and quality is studied; concepts and technological solutions are created for the preservation, restoration and sustainable management of soil resources and biodiversity, for assessment, monitoring and mitigation of the impact of climate change;
- Farming systems for conventional and organic production. New solutions in integrated systems for combating enemies in agricultural agrocenoses - technologies and innovations are being developed for conventional and organic agriculture, incl. innovative plant protection practices;
- Genetic and breeding research in animal husbandry. Improving nutrition, animal welfare and limiting harmful environmental effects - projects are being developed for: exploring, maintaining and increasing the diversity of important farm and other animal species; strategies for managing national genetic resources in animal husbandry and improving husbandry, welfare and productivity in various ruminant and non-ruminant species; assessment of feed quality and creation of innovations in animal nutrition; selection and breeding programs for long-term conservation and preservation of the biodiversity of aboriginal breeds, incl. preserving the purity of breeding breeds and assessing their adaptive potential;
- Sustainable development of fisheries and aquaculture - monitoring of the state of fish and non-fish resources in river basins and the Bulgarian Black Sea water area and implementation of technological innovations to support the implementation of EU policies and programs. Complex monitoring studies of reservoirs in the country are being conducted with a view to their suitability for fish farming use and environmental protection. Systems and methods for reproduction and cultivation of traditional and new

species of hydrobionts, evaluation of their health status and well-being, as well as systems for evaluating the quality of their meat are being developed;

- Development of safe, quality and healthy foods, beverages and other food resources - research projects are aimed at developing new raw materials and products from the agro-food system, updating existing recipes, maps, technologies and instructions for production, processing and processing of plant and animal products production, incl. biomass in line with new knowledge about climate change, increasing pressure on ecosystems and their response. In the "Health and Quality of Life" direction, new methods for the analysis of tobacco, tobacco products and products containing nicotine are being developed;
- Improving living conditions in rural areas - strategies for vibrant rural areas are being developed. Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of various programs and schemes of the MAF covering rural areas is carried out.

The obtained scientific results (knowledge, innovations, technologies, products and raw materials) within the framework of all projects and programs are promptly disseminated for the benefit of science and society.

AA and its structural units continue to maintain a gene fund that includes 113,600 plant specimens and 18,867 animals of various breeds, 8 aquatic cultures and 430 strains of microorganisms.

8.1.2. Created scientific products, implemented in production

The creation and improvement of varieties is one of the most important tasks of AA. Towards the end of 2023 the total number of certificates for plant varieties and animal breeds maintained by the structural units of the AA is 293. Of these, there are 284 maintained certificates for varieties of cultural plants. List A includes 203 varieties of cereals, technical and fodder crops, and list B - 81 varieties of vegetables, vines, medical and aromatic crops. There are 9 animal breed certificates supported, all of which are for silkworm breeds and hybrids.

The scientific products that received legal protection in 2023 are 39, of which 37 certificates for new varieties of plants (cereals - 9, oilseeds - 7, fiber - 7, vine - 5, fodder - 3, essential oil - 3, vegetable - 2 and tobacco - 1) and 2 certificates for silk butterfly hybrids.

During the year, 1 patent was registered, developed by the Institute of Animal Husbandry Sciences, Kostinbrod (Multifunctional roof board for beehives) and 4 useful models developed by the Institute of Cryobiology and Food Technologies, Sofia (vegetable protein bar, lyophilized drink with probiotic activity, energizing fruit shake with berries and functional drink natural chocolate with collagen peptides).

The Standing Commission for Innovations and Technologies at the Agricultural Academy has approved as innovative several scientific developments of AA scientists: 5 technological instructions for growing garden crops, 4 technologies for growing technical and fodder crops and 2 technical solutions for increasing bee colonies.

8.1.3. Transfer of knowledge and scientific products

In 2023 the AA continues the activities of popularizing its scientific achievements and advertising the created scientific products, conducts studies on the needs of farmers and carries out marketing activities in order to analyze and improve its scientific and implementation activities.

Joint on-farm research was conducted to resolve specific production and environmental problems of agricultural producers. 10 projects financed under the Rural Development Program (RDP) for the period 2014-2020 have been implemented, under sub-measure 16.1 "Support for the formation and functioning of operational groups within the EIP" of measure 16 "Cooperation". A project by the Scientific Center for Animal Husbandry and Agriculture - Smolyan to provide advice to young farmers, funded by the 2014-2020 RDP, was also implemented. under sub-measure 2.1.1 "Consulting services for agricultural and forestry farmers" from measure 2 "Consulting services, farm management services and farm replacement services".

Demonstration activities were carried out on 10 projects financed under sub-measure 1.2. "Demonstration activities and awareness actions" from measure 1 "Knowledge transfer and awareness actions" of the RDP for the period 2014-2020 and on the project - AgroDigiRise, financed by the EC and carried out at

the National Demo Center for Digital Solutions in Agriculture of the European Digital Innovation Hub (AgroHub.BG), with demo points at the Institute of Vegetable Crops "Maritsa" - city Plovdiv.

During the reporting year, AA scientists conducted 18,425 events, which included: organization of open days, scientific-practical conferences, seminars, symposiums, round tables, anniversary celebrations and short-term courses; consultations of specialists and farmers; preparing opinions for farmers, cooperatives and departments; development of normative documents; maintenance of permanent and temporary stores and demonstratively - display fields and farms; participation in exhibitions and fairs in the country and abroad, etc.

In order to build a sustainable relationship with agricultural producers, 16 demonstration fields and farms have been created in the scientific and experimental units of the AA, which are included in the programs of 16 thematic days. Through them, farmers are introduced to new varieties of cultivated plants and breeds of farm animals. The most successful selection, plant protection, agrochemical and technological solutions and practices suitable for the climatic conditions of the various agricultural production areas in the country are demonstrated, with the varieties resistant to abiotic and biotic stress causing the greatest interest. A network of demonstration fields has been built in Pazardzhik, Yambol, Sadovo, Knezha, Pleven and Ruse, which are open to visitors permanently.

Scientists from the institutes and scientific centers of the A participated in 42 informational and educational events organized by the NAAS.

Within the international projects, contracts and memorandums of cooperation in 2023 AA scientists have participated in numerous international scientific forums and meetings. Foreign experts, scientists and doctoral students are trained at the Academy. One of the new initiatives in 2023 is the holding of a summer internship with foreign students, implemented within the framework of two of the developed international projects.

During the year at the Vocational Training Center (VTC) and the Institute of Agriculture In Stara Zagora, 943 people were trained within 5 programs and 3 training courses in various specialties from the "Farmer" and "Agroecology" professions.

8.1.4. Qualification structure of scientists and training of doctorate students

In 2023, 472 scientists worked in the AA, which unfortunately continues the downsizing trend of the last decade.

During the year, 58 PhD students were trained in the structural units of the Academy. There were 15 newly enrolled PhD students. The training of doctoral students takes place in 21 scientific institutes of the Academy under 28 doctoral programs (a total of 53 accreditations), from 8 professional fields in 4 scientific fields, approved by the National Agency for Training and Accreditation. 10 doctoral students successfully defended their dissertations.

8.1.5. Specialized scientific journals

In 2023, 1,379 scientific papers were published, of which 550 publications in impact factor and impact rank journals. There are 829 articles in foreign and Bulgarian peer-reviewed journals. The number of independent citations is over 3,393, and of cited publications in refereed and indexed journals - 2,627.

The scientific journals published by AA are: "Animal Sciences", "Agricultural Economics and Management", "Soil Science, Agrochemistry and Ecology", "Plant Sciences" and "Bulgarian Journal of Agricultural Science". During the year, 327 articles were published in these journals.

8.2. Advisory activities

The National Advice in Agriculture Service (NAAS) is a public advisory organization within the structure of the Ministry of Agriculture, whose activity is related to the implementation of state policy in the field of the System of Knowledge and Innovation in Agriculture. The office provides advisory services, up-to-date information and technical assistance to farmers for effective and competitive agriculture in the country.

NAAS carries out its activities on the territory of the whole country through the established 27 territorial regional offices (TRO) in each regional city and 28 mobile municipal offices (MMO), with territorial coverage of 96 municipalities in the country.

NAAS provides free consultations to farmers in the field of plant breeding, livestock breeding, agrarian economy, the Rural Development Program (RDP) 2014-2022 and the Strategic Plan for the Agriculture and Rural Areas of the Development of Republic of Bulgaria (SPARD) for the period 2023-2027.

The Service supports the transfer and application of scientific and practical achievements in the field of agriculture and thus helps to improve the "research - advice in agriculture - agricultural business". The events are held in person and remotely, including by conducting demonstration events with a practical orientation.

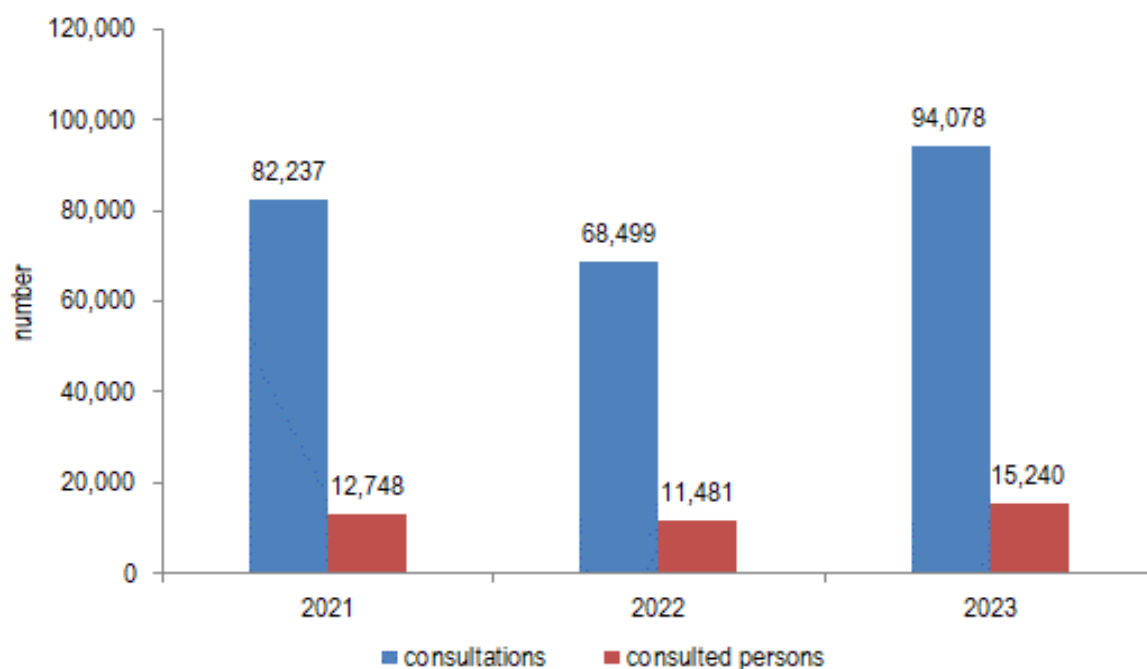
Remote reception (consultation days) are held in different settlements in the country, which are far from the regional centers, in order to facilitate the access of farmers to consulting services.

In 2023, a total of 15,240 individuals received 94,078 consultations from NAAS experts. Compared to 2022, an increase is observed in the number of consulted individuals by 33% and of consultations by 37%.

In 2023, experts from the Service made 3,998 on-site visits to agricultural holdings, which is 67% more than in 2022. During the on-site visits to their farms, the farmers received specific advice and an assessment of the conditions in which agricultural crops were grown and animals reared.

Leading place in 2023 occupy the consultations on the Strategic Plan for the Development of Agriculture and Rural Areas (SPARD) 2023-2027 - 40,762 (43% of all consultations provided). Compared to 2022, their number has increased by 27%, due to the entry into force on January 1, 2023 of the SPARD 2023-2027 and the related national regulatory framework. This includes both consultations on interventions open for admission during the year, as well as those for interventions for which admission is pending in the following period. The following interventions have caused the greatest interest among farmers: II.D.2 "Supporting very small agricultural holdings"; I.A.1 "Basic income support for sustainability"; I.C.5 "Eco scheme for ecological maintenance of permanent plantings and intervention" and I.C.3 "Eco scheme for preservation and restoration of soil potential - promotion of green fertilization and organic fertilization".

Figure V.7. Total number of consultations provided and persons consulted for the period 2021-2023



Source: NAAS

In second place are Specialized consultations with 23,223 in the following areas: agrarian economy - 5,771; crop growing (incl. organic plant growing) - 4,591; animal husbandry (incl. organic animal husbandry) - 2,968; statutory management requirements (SMR) - 2,811; conditions for maintaining the land in good agricultural and ecological condition (GAEC) - 3,752 and others - 2,960. Compared to 2022 in this group, there is a significant increase in the consultations related to GAEC and the SMR.

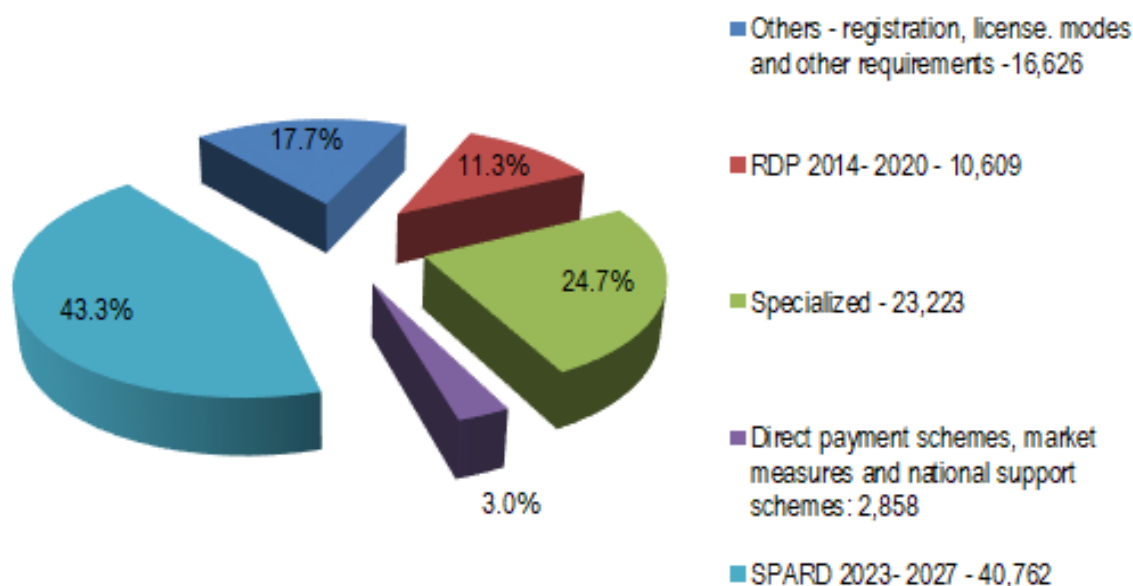
Consultations in connection with the Rural Development Program (RDP) 2014-2020. are 10,609. They are mainly related to the implementation of already approved projects on: sub-measure 6.3 "Start-up assistance for the development of small farms" - 5,041 consultations provided to 2,845 persons; sub-measure 6.1 "Start-up assistance for young farmers" - 1,783 consultations provided to 1,118 farmers; sub-measure 4.1.2 "Support for investments in agricultural holdings" from the RDP.

In 2023 NAAS experts have provided assistance to 2,125 young farmers and small farms related to the electronic submission of notifications in the Information System for the Management and Monitoring of EU Funds in BULGARIA 2020 (ISUN 2020) to change project proposals and sub-measure payment requests 6.3 "Start-up aid for the development of small farms" and sub-measure 6.1 "Start-up aid for young farmers" of RDP.

The number of consultations regarding the Direct Payment Schemes, Market Measures and National Support Schemes group was 2,858. The greatest interest in this group was shown towards consultations regarding: The National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) and other national support schemes, including state aid, transitional national aid for animals and transitional national aid for tobacco.

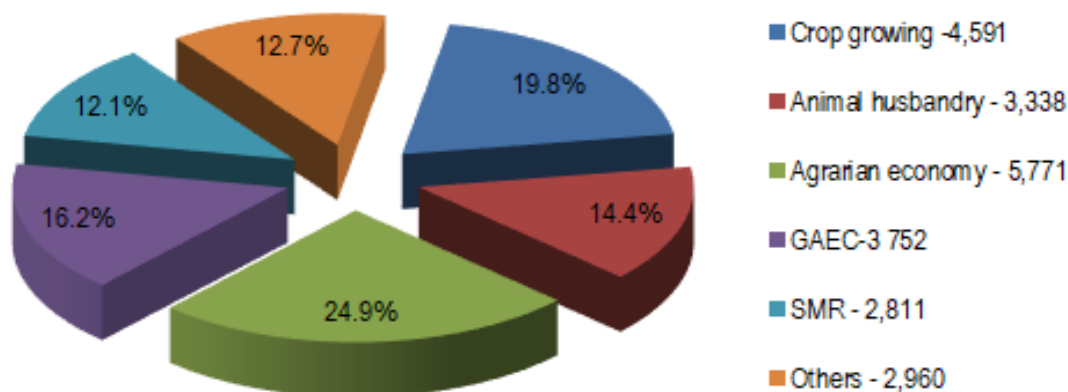
Consultations provided by the "Other" group were 16,626 in total. About 24% of them were regarding the registration and re-registration of farmers under Ordinance 3 of 1999. Most often, these consultations are of interest to people for whom agriculture has been an ancillary activity in recent years or do not have the necessary experience and want to turn agricultural production into a main activity. Next in this group are consultations for assistance in working with electronic tools, including the system for electronic services of the State Fund "Agriculture" and ISUN 2020. The consultations on the preconditions in the social sphere (the so-called "social conditionality") are related to compliance with labor and social legislation in relation to agricultural workers and the requirements for health and safety working conditions. Compliance checks with sanctions will begin after January 1, 2025, until then the social conditionality rules in Bulgaria will apply, but without sanctions for agricultural holdings. Compliance with social conditionality is one of the requirements for receiving the full amount of support from interventions in the form of direct payments or annual payments for interventions in the field of rural areas on agro-ecology, climate and organic farming .

Figure V.8. Provided consultations by type in 2023



Source: NAAS

Figure V.9. Distribution of the provided specialized consultations in 2023 by type



Source: NAAS

In 2023 NAAS experts also provided consultations related to the adaptation of agriculture and farmers to climate change (12,163 items), as well as the River Basin Management Plans, which are prepared according to the Water Framework Directive and the Water Act. 5,949 people were consulted on measures with a direct or indirect effect on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, 16% more than in 2022.

8.2.1. Vocational training

The Vocational Training Center (VTC) at the NAAS is licensed by the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET). It hosts specialized courses, seminars and trainings for both NAAS experts and farmers. The main goal is to support the professional career and individual development of farmers through high-quality, practically-oriented training in the field of agriculture. The training programs were developed by NAAS experts in accordance with the requirements of ongoing vocational training. Through the TROs of the NAAS in each province city, the Center organizes trainings for farmers at a time and place convenient for them, without having to be absent from their farms. All trainings are free of charge for farmers registered under Regulation 3/1999.

In 2023, a total of 77 people (farmers and experts) were trained at the VTC on the subject: "Environmental protection, climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity and water conservation".

8.2.2. Improving the "research - advice in agriculture - agricultural business" link

NAAS closely cooperates with various organizations to support the transfer of scientific knowledge and achievements, including the scientific institutes of the Agricultural Academy, Agricultural University - Plovdiv, Thrace University - Stara Zagora, University of Economics - Varna, Angel Kanchev University of Ruse, Forestry University - Sofia, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences - Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research, Regional Food Safety Directorates of the Bulgarian Food Safety Agency, Labour Inspectorates of the General Labour Inspectorate, territorial directorates of the National Revenue Agency, etc.

In 2023, a total of 113 information and training seminars were held - 8% more than in 2022, with over 3,100 people registering. Some of the events are also conducted online. At the seminars, specialized topics were presented, related to information about the activities of the Service, the opportunities to support farmers under the RDP 2014 - 2020 and through direct payments, as well as the Strategic Plan for the Development of Agriculture and Rural Areas of Bulgaria for the 2023 - 2027 period.

8.2.3. Information support

In 2023, NAAS experts organized 319 informational events (not including remote receptions), including: 286 seminars and information meetings, 29 demonstrations and 4 events in the form of information stand/workshop. The total number of participants in the information events was 11,836.

During the year, a total of 2,998 outsourced receptions were held (almost three and a half times more than in 2022 due to the start of the active activity of the 28 MMOs established at the end of 2022), and the number of people consulted in this way were 7,260 (almost three times more compared to 2022). During the outsourced receptions, farmers receive up-to-date information and advice in the field of agriculture, direct payment schemes, opportunities to support small farms and young farmers under the 2023-2027 SPARD.

220 pieces of Information materials (information leaflets, brochures, bulletins, farmer's calendar) on current topics and issues were prepared and disseminated to support their work with farmers.

The office also provides useful up-to-date information through its website and social media.

8.2.4. Agrochemical analyses

The areas of laboratory activity of the Analysis Lab of the NAAS are related to the requirements for improving the activity and increasing the competitiveness of farms. The Lab assists small farms in receiving advisory packages from NAAS experts. The Lab performs agrochemical analyses of soil samples for acidity, digestible phosphorus and potassium, mineral nitrogen (ammonia and nitrate), total nitrogen in soils, determination of active calcium, determination of humus and determination of the norm for liming acid soils.

In 2023, the laboratory received soil samples from 934 persons, 1,571 samples were made for 7,601 determinations (analyses). Of those, 1,543 soil samples were mainly in connection with the provision of the consulting packages under sub-measure 2.1.2 "Consulting services for small farms" under measure 2 "Consulting services, farm management services and farm replacement services" under RDP 2014- 2020, taken by TRO members during visits on site in the farms.

Based on the performed analyses, 1,094 recommendations for fertilization were prepared.

8.2.5. NAAS activity under sub-measure 2.1.2 "Consultancy services for small farmers"

In November 2022 the implementation of the project "Provision by NAAS of a consulting package to young farmers" under sub-measure 2.1.1 "Consulting services for agricultural and forestry farmers" from measure 2 "Consulting services, farm management services and farm replacement services" from RDP 2014-2020 According to the project, the experts from NAAS by providing a Advisory Package (AP) A2B, support the young farmers under sub-measure 6.1 in the submission of their project proposals and the development of their business plans. During the application period (02.11.2022 - 30.01.2023), 363 applications from young farmers were accepted for receiving an advisory package under sub-measure 2.1.1. Based on those, the Service's experts have prepared 362 business plans. 71% (or 258) of all prepared project proposals under sub-measure 6.1 are for crop farms, 22% (79) - for livestock farms and 7% (22) - for mixed productions.

In addition to the preparation of a project proposal under sub-measure 6.1, the provision of an advisory package also includes the provision of advice in relation to the operation of the farm, improving the organization of work, applying environmentally friendly practices and innovative solutions and others to improve the efficiency of the farm.

8.2.6. NAAS activity under sub-measure 2.1.2 "Consultancy services for small farmers".

At this stage, the NAAS is the only advisory organization approved by the EC to provide advisory services to small agricultural holdings under the sub-measure 2.1.2 "Advisory services for small agricultural holdings" launched in 2016 under measure 2 "Advisory services, farm management services and farm replacement services" of the RDP 2014-2020.

Under sub-measure 2.1.2, the NAAS provides six main advisory packages entirely free of charge, contributing to the economic development and the strengthening of small farms through modernization and technological renewal, as well as to improving environmental protection and combating climate change.

The provision of consultancy packages under sub-measure 2.1.2 includes on-site visits, assessment and analysis of the condition of farm holdings, as well as soil sampling for agrochemical analysis and preparation of recommendations for fertilization where applicable.

The total number of submitted applications for receiving a consulting package under the sub-measure in 2023 was 1,432, on the basis of which 1,412 written reports were prepared.

8.2.7. Activities under Sub-measure 2.2 "Establishment of Consultancy Services"

In 2023 the implementation of the activities under the concluded contract continues from 2021 between NAAS, MAF and SFA-RA for the provision of a grant under the procedure for the selection of project proposals "Expanding the territorial scope of NAAS by creating mobile municipal centers (offices) for consulting services" under sub-measure 2.2 "Establishment of consulting services" under measure 2 "Consulting services, farm management services and farm replacement services" from the 2014-2020 RDP.

During the year, 57 experts/advisors were appointed in the mobile municipal offices (MMO), of which: 50 experts in the 28 MMOs, 6 coordinators at the regional level and 1 coordinator at the central level.

The tasks of the experts from the MMOs are mainly related to the provision of consultations of farmers, including: individual consultations on measures from the RDP 2014-2020 and the interventions from the SPARD 2023-2027; specialized consultations on plant breeding, animal breeding and agricultural management; consultations related to the requirements for organic production; other consultations related to the activity of agricultural holdings.

The work of the MMOs also includes on-site visits to agricultural holdings and conducting outsourced receptions in various settlements.

The provision of an opportunity for a larger number of interested persons to receive information about the possibilities for financing under various European and national programs (such as the RDP 2014-2020 and the SPARD 2023-2027) is carried out by organizing and holding information events, as well as and by publishing information materials. In 2023 11 information materials with a total circulation of 30,000 were prepared.

8.2.8. Common Agricultural Policy 2021 - 2027

In 2023 the implementation of the Strategic Plan for the Development of Agriculture and Rural Areas of Bulgaria for the period 2023-2027 was launched. (SPARD 2023-2027). It reflects the ten main goals that the EU sets in relation to the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in the social, environmental and economic spheres, including the goal of wider use of modern technologies, knowledge and innovations. The activities for stimulating knowledge and innovation exchange are supported in the Member States through the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS), aimed at interaction between people and organizations, promotion of mutual learning, generation, sharing and use of knowledge and information related to agriculture. The systems should include a wide variety of participants - farmers, advisers, researchers, educational and training institutions, raw material suppliers, retailers, media representatives, ministries, brought together in national or regional AKIS systems to generate and/or exchange knowledge. The connection between these persons is also carried out with the help of the advisory organizations in some of the EU member states, including and in Bulgaria through the NAAS. In support of the development of AKIS in 2023 NAAS carried out a targeted information, consulting and advisory activity on the possibilities of assistance under European and national programs and schemes, especially for small farmers, which would lead to the expansion and modernization of their holdings. Advisory services, as well as sharing of knowledge and skills, are key to achieving sustainability by actors in the food system. In addition to direct contact, consultations, information and training are provided to farmers and through the use of digital communication technologies.

The future activities of the Office for the Development and Strengthening of AKIS include the transformation and expansion of the existing district-level "informal advisory councils" to the territorial offices in district advisory AKIS centers, as well as the activity of mobile municipal offices as "AKIS sensors" to identify the needs of farmers.

8.2.9. International activity

NAAS is a member of the European Association of Agricultural and Rural Advisory Service Organizations (European Forum of Agricultural and Rural Advisory Services (EUFRAS) and South Eastern Europe Advisory Service Network (SEASN)).

In 2023, the Service took part in the following projects and programs:

- project "Connecting advisers to boost interactive innovation in agriculture and forestry" (i2Connect) started in November 2019 under the Horizon 2020. The main goal of the project is the inclusion of farmers and forest users in interactive innovative processes. The project's website contains useful information on AKIS systems and interactive innovation practices;
- project "Protection of Waters against Agricultural Pollution through Establishment of a Monitoring and Reporting Methodology for the Nitrate Action Plans" under the IPARD Program for the Republic of Turkey. The aim of the project is to improve the quality of water resources from agricultural pollution in Turkey, protect the environment and increase the resilience of farms to climate change;
- project "Technical assistance on local farm advisory services. Location - northern part of Cyprus" in consortium with NIRAS IC (Poland). A concept of a pilot research and demonstration program in the field of agriculture has been developed under the project;
- project "Support to the Operational Structure of IPARD in the Republic of Serbia (Managing Authority and IPARD Agency)". The main objective of the project is to support the Agriculture and Rural Development sector of the Republic of Serbia to implement the CAP as part of its preparation for EU accession;
- project "European-wide network of pilot farmers implementing and demonstrating climate smart solutions for a carbon neutral Europe" (Climate Farm Demo) under the Horizon Europe program. The project supports the implementation of agricultural practices for climate-smart (precision) farming across the EU to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 35%. This supports the implementation of the EU's 2030 Climate Plan;
- project "Modernization of agriculture through more effective and efficient Agricultural Knowledge and Information Systems (AKIS)" under the Horizon Europe program. The project's main activities aim to improve the capacity of the participants in the AKIS to operate the system more efficiently and to implement the transition towards sustainable management and use of natural resources in agriculture and forestry;
- project "Connecting and mobilizing the EU agricultural advisory community to support the transition to Climate Smart Farming" (ClimateSmartAdvisors) under the Horizon Europe program. Its implementation started in April 2023. The main objective of the project is to strengthen and reinforce the agricultural advisory community in the EU, resulting in climate-smart (precision) farming practices.
- project "Development of an application for end users for the monitoring and analysis of agricultural crops based on satellite observations and intelligent observations" (AGROMOAPP) under the Seventh tendering procedure of the European Space Agency Cooperating Countries Support Plan. The project is developing an Internet application (Agromo) for monitoring and analysis of three pilot agricultural crops (wheat, sunflower and corn), with a module for advisory services.

9. Hail Suppression

The geographical position and orography of the country predetermine Bulgaria as one of the countries in Europe with high frequency and power of hail processes.

In recent years, there has been an increase in the frequency and severity of hazardous phenomena such as hailstorms, floods, tornadoes and lightning. Predictions based on numerical models in different climate change scenarios confirm this increase in the future. One of the geographical areas where a significant increase in extreme cases is predicted is South Eastern Europe.

Bulgaria is one of the countries in Europe where the trend of increasing the frequency and strength of

hail processes persists, despite the observed fluctuations in the degree of hail activity over the years.

The Executive Agency "Hail Safety" (HSEA) defends a territory with an area of almost 22 million decares with missile technology in the regions of Vidin, Montana, Vratsa, Pleven, Pazardzhik, Plovdiv, Stara Zagora, Haskovo and Sliven. In 2023 continues the implementation of anti-hail defense by aircraft in North Central and North-Eastern Bulgaria on a territory of about 30 million decares. The entire protected area in 2023 is approximately 52 million decares.

In 2023 through the constructed network of six dual-band meteorological Doppler radars (with a wavelength of 10 and 3 cm) and one single-band (10 cm wavelength) during the active season, real-time radar monitoring of atmospheric processes over Bulgaria is provided, necessary for a detailed analysis of the structure of hail clouds. The radar information serves for an ultra-short-term forecast of strong storms, lightning, downpours, hail and other unfavorable atmospheric phenomena over the territory of the country.

Meteorological radar information is transmitted around the clock to certain structures at the Ministry of Interior, Air Force, State-Owned Enterprise "Air Traffic Management", the National Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology, State Enterprise "Management and Maintenance of Dams" and Sofia Municipality. The Agency's website provides constant meteorological information based on radar reflectivity. The available radar network can be used to monitor both summer, autumn, winter and spring atmospheric processes and associated precipitation.

Joint teams of HSEA and the Regional Directorates of Agriculture conduct surveys for hail damage in protected areas after each impact. The Agency receives information on the sown areas, the condition and the phase of development of the crops, harvested areas, average yield, etc.

Based on weather forecasts of the HSEA and the phase of development of agricultural crops in the protected territories in 2023 the active season for hail suppression with the rocket method on the territory of the country opened on 14.4.2023 and closed on 04.10.2023.

The active season for anti-hail defense with an aircraft method started on 05.08.2023. and ends on 04.10.2023.

According to the methodology for determining the degree of hail activity, the active hail season in 2023 with a rocket method is defined as a "high degree of hail activity" for Southern and Northern Bulgaria.

9.1. Active impacts with a rocket method

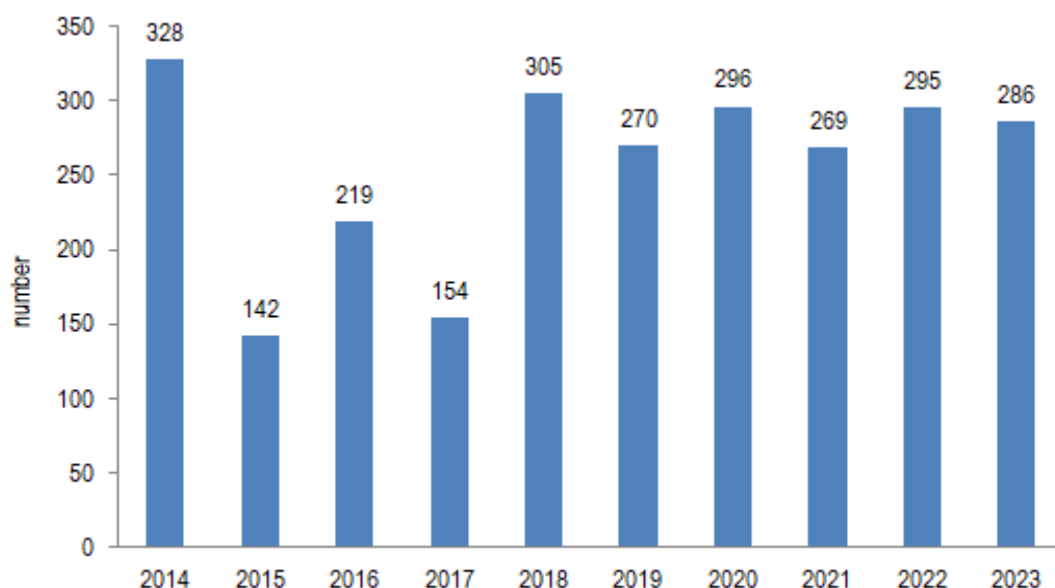
In 2023 286 impacts on city defense were carried out by rocket means in 64 days. The total number of hail clouds processed was 1,316, with a total processing time of over 237 hours. The seeding was carried out using 15,042 rockets.

In Northern Bulgaria, 127 impacts were carried out in 46 days, and 650 hail cells were processed with a total processing time of 106 hours and 59 minutes. In Southern Bulgaria, 159 impacts were carried out in 46 days and 666 hail cells were treated with a total treatment time of 130 hours and 5 minutes.

In the second half of April, the trend observed in recent years for the development of strong convective cloudiness, atypical for spring, and especially hail-threatening, is maintained. On four dates - 19, 22, 24 and 25, the impacts were carried out by the Regional Directorates "Fighting Hail" in both Southern and Northern Bulgaria. 31 actions were conducted, treating 91 hail clouds with a total treatment duration of over 15 hours.

The month of May is characterized as cooler and with more precipitation compared to previous years. hail processes developed in the second half of the month, with 76 impacts (36 in Northern Bulgaria and 40 in Southern Bulgaria) in 12 days, and 10 of the days were in the third ten-day period of the month. A total of 382 cells were processed and a total of 3,847 anti-hail missiles were fired.

Figure V.10. Actions of the hail suppression system with rockets in the period 2014 - 2023



Source: HSEA

The month of June was characterized by an atypically low for that month frequency of hailstorms. The synoptic situation over the country is dynamic. A significant part of the processes are rainy, and the period June 16-18 is characterized by greater intensity and a significant amount of precipitation in Northwestern Bulgaria. In total, for the month, 55 activities were carried out in 15 days. 239 hail hazard cells were treated for 2,479 minutes. The hail processes that developed on June 16 in Northern Bulgaria and June 20 - in Southern Bulgaria are distinguished by greater intensity.

The month of July is the strongest month in terms of the development of hail processes. The processes are characterized by a longer duration and extremely intensive development of cumulus-rain clouds compared to the same month of the previous two years. Although the days on which active impacts took place (16) are comparable to those in 2022 (15) and 2021 (13), the number of impacts is significantly higher - 73 for 2023 (at 43 for 2022 and 47 for 2021). This is an indication of the development of mass hail processes covering large territories, leading to simultaneous anti-hail activity by several regional directorates. The seeded hail cells are also significantly more - 324 with a total processing time for the whole month of 3,852 minutes. 4,878 anti-hail missiles were launched - the largest monthly amount of the year.

In the month of August 2023 hail processes are significantly less compared to the previous year, when the month was distinguished by an atypically high frequency of convective processes. Impacts were carried out in only 10 days, but the intensity of the processes remained strong. A total of 44 actions were conducted for the month on 251 hail hazard cells on 18 dates, with a treatment time of 3,052 minutes. 2,976 rockets were fired. The processes on August 6, 24, 29-30 and 31 are distinguished by their mass character, and those on August 24 and 29-30 are especially intense.

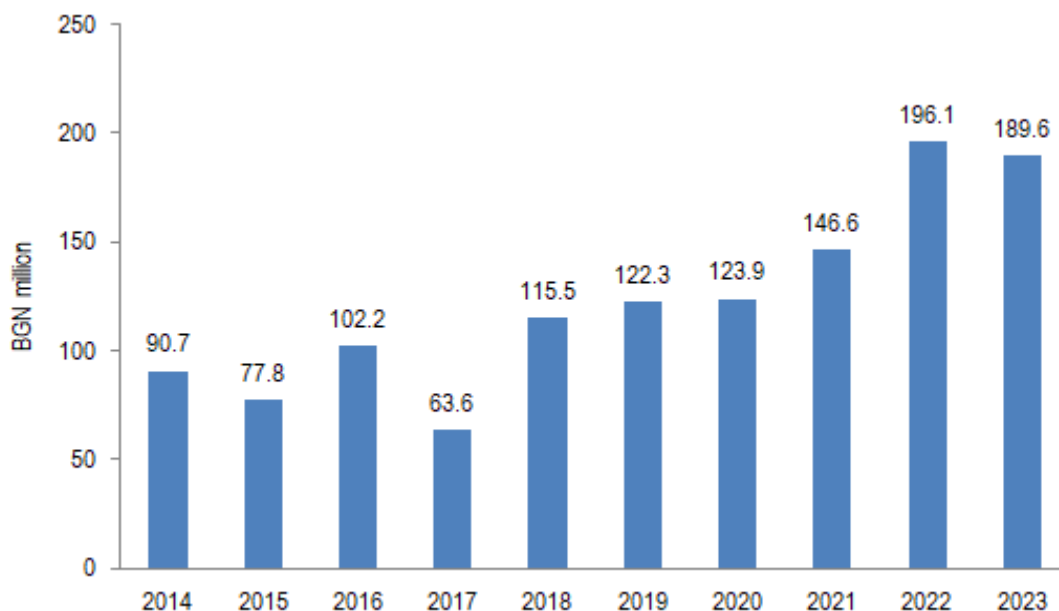
Circulation conditions in the month of September bear the character of a gradual transition from summer to autumn. 7 impacts were carried out in only three days - September 3, 6 and 24. 29 hail hazard cells were treated for 143 minutes.

No impacts were carried out in the month of October.

Throughout the season of cloud seeding, from the processed 1,316 hail hazard cells crop affecting hail occurred only from 12 processed cells. Of all 64 days in which impacts were carried out, damage to agricultural crops in the territory protected by the HSEA was registered on 9 dates - May 25 and 26; June 20; July 2, 14, 22 and 26; August 24 and 31. There was hail damage from processed hail cells to agricultural production on 10,797.38 decares with an average damage rate of 42.76%. Reduced to 100% damage, the area is 4,616.98 decares.

According to the adopted Methodology for determining the economic efficiency of hail protection, in 2023 the value of the saved production as a result of cloud seeding carried out using the rocket method by HSEA is estimated at BGN 189.6 million.

Figure V.11. Value of the production, saved from hail, during the period 2014-2023, mln BGN



Source: HSEA

The main causes of damage in territories protected with the rocket method in 2023 were:

- reduced concentration of artificial competitive ice-forming nuclei and disruption of seeding rates due to restricted firing over settlements (sectors with prohibited firing);
- insufficient seeding and interruption of treatment due to technical problems occurring at the rocket sites or command post during operation (accidents, shortage of rockets, software problems, etc.);
- insufficient amount of reagent due to the location of the seeding area being out of reach of the rocket sites.

9.2. Active impacts with the aircraft method

The radar operations center of the contractor under the contract for hail defense with aircraft is located in Sofia. The Unit for Technical and Line Maintenance of Aircrafts (consisting of engineers and technicians) and the Unit of Aircraft Pilots are located at the airport in the village Shtraklevo, Ruse region.

The Operations Center directs hail cloud seeding operations, applying an aircraft seeding methodology using analysis of storm development and structure through TITAN thunderstorm identification, tracking, analysis and ultra-short-term forecasting software. The trajectory is plotted and the altitude and flight speed of each aircraft is plotted based on the telemetry data from the aircraft's telemetry equipment. Aircraft- and ground-mounted radio communication equipment operating on a single radio frequency is used for voice communication between the radar operations center and the aircraft.

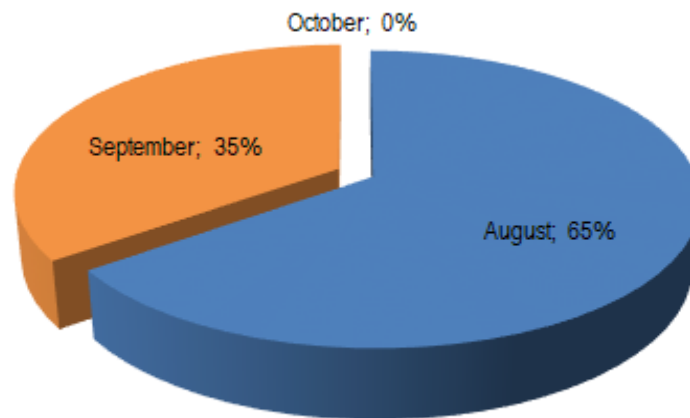
3 aircrafts are used for the implementation of the project. The aircrafts are equipped with an integral silver iodide (AgI) reagent stick ignition system located on the left and right half-wings, behind the engines. Two of the aircrafts are equipped with an AgI reagent pyropatron firing systems.

For the purpose of implementation of the anti-hail protection contract with aircraft in 2023, aircraft flights were permitted in the uncontrolled airspace up to 3,000 m, as well as the controlled airspace of the Republic of Bulgaria.

During the active season, in the territory protected by aircraft, convective processes of the multicellular type are observed - linear and clusters, with clusters prevailing.

Of the 61 days of the active airborne hail defense season (August 5 - October 4, 2023), impacts were conducted on 12 days. The most days with impacts are in m. August, when more than half of the impacts (65%) took place. A total of 80 cloud cells were seeded, with the most processed hail cells in August - 52 (65% of all processed cells).

Figure V.12. Percentage distribution of the number of seeded hail cells in months of 2023



Source: HSEA

A total of 789 sticks and 3,057 pyropatrons were used during the hail suppression period. The cost depends on the lifetime of the cloud cell in the hail-threatening stage and its power, as determined by its radar characteristics.

According to data from the regional directorates "Agriculture", there were hail damage on agricultural crops for which protocols were drawn up on 3 dates: 6, 24 and 30 August 2023. On the basis of protocols prepared in the municipal offices "Agriculture", damage caused by hail during the city defense period was found on 14,855 decares with an average damage rate of 78.03%. Taken to 100% completely destroyed areas are 11,591.36 decares. The main disruptions are on August 6, 2023, when processing is suspended due to an imposed flight ban on the approach to Varna Airport.

The main causes of the damage are:

- Restricting flights in controlled airspace that disrupts pyrotechnic handling.
- Restriction of flights and prohibition of flight in the approach for take-off and landing at Varna airport, which leads to the impossibility of correct seeding of hail cells;
- With the development of powerful hail processes everywhere, in many places distant from each other in the protected territory, it is impossible to carry out the correct processing of each hail hazard cell due to the limited number of aircrafts.
- With the emergence and rapid development of hail cells, due to the time required for the arrival of the aircraft, observing the instructions of the ATS and safety rules, the probability of late initial processing increases.
- Airplanes are certified to carry a certain number of seeding agents, which are used up in a very short time in the case of heavy fire processes. This forces the planes to land for refueling, at which time the city cells resume their natural development.

10. Reducing the Regulatory and Administrative Burden on Business

10.1. Applied Regulatory Regimes in the MAF System

In early 2024, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food made an annual review of regulatory regimes applied in the system in 2023. The review was aimed at identifying the opportunities to reduce the regulatory and administrative burden on businesses and citizens, creating better conditions for business development by improving access and improving the quality of public services, and achieving higher efficiency of public spending.

The main mechanism for achieving this goal is the elimination of unnecessary regulatory regimes and optimization of the procedures for their implementation, introduction of electronic administrative services and increasing the volume of publicly available information for business operators and citizens.

The expected results from the reduction of the regulatory burden on business are: increasing the competitiveness of Bulgarian agriculture; providing an opportunity for the business to plan the impact of regulation; stimulating the development of economic activity; ensuring equal conditions for conducting business and creating conditions for fair competition.

Following the review of the regulatory regimes in the MAF system, as of 1 January 2024, 168 regulatory regimes related to the regulation of economic activity in the field of agriculture, fisheries and forests were identified, including:

- licensing - 10;
- registration - 66;
- permits - 82;
- certificates- 3;
- notifying - 3;
- coordinating - 4.

Of the total number of regulatory regimes, 44 were administered by MAF - Central Office, and the remaining 124 - by various structures of the ministry system.

10.2. Measures Taken in 2023 to Reduce the Regulatory and Administrative Burden on Businesses

In 2023, a number of actions were taken in the MAF system aimed at easing existing regulatory regimes in order to create an optimal business environment. Amendments and supplements to regulatory acts regulating economic relations in the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors have been adopted, which have eased 10 regulatory regimes by reducing the number of required documents, reducing the number of inspections, eliminating certain requirements or switching to less burdensome regimes. Specifically:

- Ordinance amending and supplementing Ordinance No. 7 of 22.11.2018 on the conditions and procedure for recognition of fishery and aquaculture producer organizations, associations of producer organizations and interbranch organizations in the fisheries sector, and the approval of production plans and marketing eases the registration regime "Recognition of interbranch organizations in the fisheries sector".
- With an amendment to the Law on the Protection of Agricultural Lands (through the amendment and supplement act of the Law on Energy from Renewable Sources (RESL) and through the ASA of the Tax and Insurance Procedural Code) the permit regimes "Issuing a decision for sites and routes of design objects" are relaxed and "Issuance of a decision to change the purpose of agricultural land for non-agricultural needs". The changes will not be applied until the ruling of the Constitutional Court on Constitutional Case No. 18/2023, initiated at the request of the President of the Republic of Bulgaria to establish the unconstitutionality of the provisions amending the Law on the Protection of Agricultural Lands.
- Amending the Law on Tobacco and Tobacco and Related Products, published in SG No. 106 of December 22, 2023, the permit regime "Permit to purchase raw tobacco" is relaxed.

- With the amendment of the Plant Protection Act, published In the SG, Issue 102 of 8.12.2023, the licensing regime "Authorizing the placing on the market and the use of a plant protection product with low risk" is relaxed, as well as the registration regime "Entry in the register under Art. 6 para. 1 to fertilizers, soil improvers, biologically active substances and food substrates and to persons who place on the market and use fertilizers, soil improvers, biologically active substances and food substrates".
- By amending Regulation (EU) 2019/6 of the European Parliament and of the Council of December 11, 2018, 4 license regimes are relaxed: "Issuing a license for the production of veterinary medicinal products (VMP) and/or active substances", "Issuing a license for wholesale trade in VMP", "Issuing a license for retail trade in VMP" and "Issuing a license for use of VMP", which become permits. A draft of the Law on Veterinary Medical Activity has been prepared, with which the changes will be transposed into the national legislation.

11. Risk and crisis management in agriculture

In implementation of the measures set out in the Risk and Crisis Management Program in the Agriculture sector to limit the negative impact of the identified risks on the sectors of agriculture, forestry and fisheries, in 2023 actions were taken in the following main areas:

- Limiting the impact of the instability of agricultural products on the national market, the European Union market and international markets;
- Stabilization and increase of the incomes of the farmers and creation of conditions for development of efficient agricultural production;
- Limiting the potential hazards and managing the factors for outbreaks of infectious diseases in animals and plants;
- Limiting the potential risks of occurrence of floods and forest fires;
- Overcoming the harmful influence and material damages by the occurred sanitary crises in the animal husbandry and plant growing;
- Limiting the consequences and overcoming the harmful effects and losses for farmers from natural and climatic disasters, field and forest fires;
- Preservation and restoration of the biodiversity of river and sea basins and forests.

11.1. Sanitary risks

11.1.1. Specific risks in the Livestock sector

The Republic of Bulgaria, as one of the external borders of the European Union, plays an essential role in the control of a number of animal diseases in limiting their penetration and spread both within the borders of the country and on the territory of the Union. The free movement of animals, animal products, goods and people on the territory of the EU, as well as the unpredictability of a number of infections, lead to the risk of epizootics entering the territory of the country.

That is why the management of sanitary risks in the Livestock sector is of particular importance for the protection of public health. The main functions in the implementation of sanitary risk management measures in animal husbandry are related to:

- Animal health
- limiting the spread of infectious diseases in animals through infected live animals;
- limiting the spread of infectious diseases through dead animals and animal products;
- limiting the spread of infectious diseases through food of animal origin.

Sanitary risks in the Livestock sector are managed through three tools: 1) state aid; 2) measures under the Rural Development Program (RDP) 2014 - 2020, and from 2024 - The strategic plan for the development of agriculture and rural areas and 3) cross-border control when importing shipments into the EU from third countries and when shipments move between member states.

In order to prevent the spread of infectious diseases in animals, the most used instrument in Bulgaria is support to farmers through state aid, namely: "Aid to compensate farmers for costs related to implementation of measures under the State Prophylactic Program and the Programs for the Surveillance and Eradication of Animal Diseases" and "Aid to compensate for the costs of disposing and destroying of dead animals".

In 2023, a total of BGN 32,984,055 was spent on the implementation of the measures under the two state aids, of which 58.8% on state aid to compensate for the costs of farmers related to the implementation of the measures under the State Preventive Program and the Programs for Surveillance and Eradication of Animal Diseases and 41.2% - on state aid to compensate for the costs of removing and destroying dead animals. The funds spent on the state aid to compensate for the costs of removal and destruction of dead animals have been increased almost twice compared to the previous year (from BGN 7,994,559 to BGN 13,594,189), due to the fact that costs from 2022 were covered, while the costs of paying for the activities carried out under the National Program for the Prevention, Supervision and Eradication of Animal Diseases, including zoonoses in the Republic of Bulgaria, remain unchanged.

11.1.2. Specific risks in the Crop and Forestry sectors

The sanitary risks in the Crop and Forestry sectors are related to the spread of quarantine pests on plants and plant products, and diseases, pests and abiotic factors in forests.

The activities and measures for managing this risk were funded with public funds from the state budget of the Republic of Bulgaria and with funds from the state-owned enterprises in the Forests sector.

The expended financial resource for risk management in the sectors "Crop farming" and "Forestry" in 2023 is in the amount of BGN 20,253,056 - over 25% more than in the previous 2022 and 2021.

Through the measures and activities undertaken by the BFSA under the national programs for monitoring plant pests, in 2023 the introduction and distribution of quarantine pests was not allowed on the territory of the country, and funds were not spent to eliminate new outbreaks of infection, beyond those planned in the budget.

In order to limit the spread of quarantine pests and economically important pests on plants and plant products, in 2023 the ASF administered 4 state aid schemes for the Crop Growing sector, namely:

- Aid to compensate farmers for the implementation of measures under the National Program of Measures for Control of Tomato Leafminer - *Tuta absoluta* Meyrick (Lepidoptera);
- Aid to compensate farmers for the implementation of measures under the National Program of Measures for Control of Soil Pests on Potatoes from the Wireworms (Elateridae) Family;
- Aid to compensate farmers for the implementation of measures under the National Program for Pest Control in Perennials during the winter period;
- Aid for certification of holdings in the fruit and vegetables sector under the GLOBAL G.A.P. standard.

Over the past few years, there has been a trend of a gradual increase in financial resources, which are aimed at supporting farmers in the implementation of effective plant protection practices in agriculture.

11.1.3. Control during cross-border transit when importing consignments into the EU from third countries and when moving consignments between member states.

The management of the risks of infectious diseases in animals during cross-border transit when importing consignments is carried out through the implementation of:

- the monitoring programs for surveying plant pests;
- animal disease surveillance and eradication programs;
- a plan for sampling feed and food of animal and non-animal origin.

11.2. Natural and climatic risks

Climatic conditions in Bulgaria in recent years have been characterized by more and longer periods of drought, followed by serious storms and heavy floods with destruction and casualties. The snow months in the

mountains are decreasing, and thus the amount of water we have throughout the year changes. These changes in natural and climatic conditions are the main factors for the manifestation of disaster situations, which could lead to disastrous consequences for the population, agricultural production and the economy of the affected territories.

In 2023 the average annual temperature in Bulgaria was 12.9°C, making it the warmest since 1930, according to the National Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology. All seasons were warmer than usual, except for spring, when temperatures were below normal for our country.

The extreme heat has also led to an increased risk of drought, an increase in the risk of field and forest fires, a decrease in soil moisture and hence a decrease in the yields of some agricultural crops.

One of the most common reasons for the occurrence of disasters that can be detrimental to the agricultural production were natural and climatic phenomena - hail, floods, drought, etc. Based on the need to adapt to climate change, the prevention against natural risks includes a number of activities providing adequate measures to prevent and reduce the possible harmful impact to acceptable levels. These activities are aimed at building early warning systems for emerging flood hazards, fires, activating landslide areas, cleaning riverbeds, and building protective facilities.

Every year, through the country's state budget, activities are financed to limit the harmful impact of natural and climatic phenomena on agriculture. They are aimed at:

- hail suppression;
- flood prevention measures;
- limiting the harmful impact of prolonged drought on crops;
- limiting the harmful effects of forest fires.

The funds spent in 2023 for the prevention of the harmful effects of natural and climatic factors are in the amount of BGN 63,508,520, which is about 3% less compared to 2022, but 32.6% more compared to 2021.

The total amount of funds spent for the implementation of measures to prevent the negative impact of natural and climatic events in the last three years - 2021, 2022 and 2023 - was BGN 176,845,116. The largest part of the financial resources was spent on hail suppression - 95,853,906, and the smallest - on forest fire prevention - 7,221,214.

11.3. Economic risks

One of the main instruments for supporting farmers' incomes and stimulating the development of agricultural production is direct payments. The main purpose of direct payments is to improve food security by supporting farmers' incomes and creating optimal conditions for sustainable agricultural development.

The funds for financing the direct payments come from the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and the State Budget of the Republic of Bulgaria.

11.4. Overcoming the negative consequences in agricultural production caused by the global COVID - 19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine

11.4.1. Overcoming the negative consequences caused by the global COVID - 19 pandemic

Taking into account the challenges for agricultural producers and processors of agricultural products created by the health and economic crisis worldwide, in the last 2 years - 2022 and 2023, the European Commission has taken a number of measures to overcome the negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Economic Crisis Management in the Fisheries Sector

In order to support the recovery of operators in the Fisheries sector from the adverse effects of the COVID-19 epidemic, support schemes through MFP measures have been developed as follows:

- Measure 1.9 "Support for owners of fishing vessels and fishermen to overcome the economic consequences of the outbreak of COVID-19 due to temporary cessation of fishing activities".

- Measure 2.6 "Support to producers of fish and other aquatic organisms to address the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic".

In 2023 the total amount of payments made by SF "Agriculture" under the mentioned measures is BGN 704,483, of which BGN 517,258 are funds from European funds and BGN 187,225 - from the state budget.

- Managing the economic crisis in the viticulture sector

In order to overcome market disruptions in the viticulture sector, Bulgaria took timely action and implemented the crisis measure "Harvest on the Green" from the National Program to Support the Viticulture Sector (NPSVS). The measure is being implemented as an emergency under Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2023/1317 in relation to the aggravated economic situation in the sector, resulting from the slowly fading effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the subsequent inflationary risk to the economy. The measure provides financial assistance for the complete removal of grapes while they are still green, so that the yield from the claimed area is reduced to zero. This partially compensates Bulgarian grape producers who cannot market their production due to low demand for wine grapes as raw material. Measure has payments amounting to BGN 872,455.59.

11.4.2. Overcoming the negative consequences for agricultural production caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine

As a result of the emerging geopolitical crisis triggered by the Russian military aggression against Ukraine and the sanctions imposed by the EU or its international partners against Russia, significant economic uncertainty has been created in 2022 and 2023, disrupting trade flows and supply chains, leading to serious price increases for much of the agricultural input and food production.

The temporary measures taken by the EU to liberalize trade with Ukraine, supplementing the trade concessions applicable under the Association Agreement of Ukraine with the European Union, created some additional negative consequences for farmers in the Union countries bordering and near Ukraine due to increased imports of Ukrainian products at low prices. The most affected agricultural sectors in this regard are the production of cereals and oil crops.

In order to ensure food security, overcome disruptions in trade and increase the prices of production resources for the agricultural economy, the EU has taken a number of measures. They are aimed at increasing the liquidity of farmers in primary production, overcoming market imbalances and creating business continuity.

In 2023, these measures are grouped under 4 areas:

- Market measures to stabilize certain agricultural sectors. In 2023 an emergency measure was taken to support the grain and oilseed sectors in Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Hungary.
- Temporary framework of state aid measures in crises and transitions to support the economy following Russia's aggression against Ukraine;
- Extraordinary temporary support for farmers and small and medium-sized enterprises particularly affected by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, financed through RDP 2014- 2020.
- Helping operators in the Fisheries sector to mitigate the negative economic consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Paid in 2023 financial means to support farmers and small and medium-sized enterprises processing agricultural products in order to overcome the negative consequences of the Russian invasion in Ukraine, are a total of BGN 588,871,903.

Table V.17. Financial resource paid in 2023. to help farmers to overcome the negative consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine

Name of the risk	Measure	Normative basis	Utilized financial resource (BGN)	Including:	
				EU funds (BGN)	State budget (BGN)
Destabilization of certain agricultural sectors following the invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent economic crisis	Market measures to stabilize certain sectors affected by the invasion in Ukraine - providing emergency financial assistance to sunflower farmers	Implementing Regulation (EU) 2023/739 of the Commission of 4 April 2023 providing for an emergency measure to support the grain and oilseed sectors in Bulgaria, Poland and Romania; Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2023/1343 of 30 June 2023 providing for an emergency measure to support the grain and oilseeds sectors in Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Hungary.	84,620,711	51,867,816	32,752,895
Negative impact of Russian aggression against Ukraine and/or sanctions imposed or retaliatory measures taken.	Aid to support the liquidity of farmers to overcome the negative economic impact of Russian aggression against Ukraine and Aid to support the costs of water for irrigation in the cultivation of agricultural crops	Temporary framework of state aid measures in crises and transitions to support the economy following Russia's aggression against Ukraine	436,570,965		436,570,965
Rising prices of the main production resources - fertilizers, energy, feed, and uncertainty in agricultural markets.	Extraordinary temporary support for farmers and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that are particularly affected by the consequences of the Russian invasion in Ukraine through measure 22 "Extraordinary temporary support for farmers and small and medium-sized enterprises that are particularly affected by the Russian invasion in Ukraine" from the RDP 2014-2020.	Sub-measure 22.1 "Extraordinary temporary support for farmers who are particularly affected by the consequences of the Russian invasion in Ukraine"; Ordinance No. 3 of November 15, 2022 for the implementation of sub-measure 22.1 "Extraordinary temporary support for farmers who are particularly affected by the consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine" from the RDP for the period 2014-2020.	58,398,774	52,962,273	5,436,501
		Submeasure 22.2 "Extraordinary temporary support for small and medium-sized enterprises affected by the consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine"	3,909,782	3,323,315	586,467
Economic consequences for operators in the "Fisheries" sector as a result of Russian aggression against Ukraine	Support to the Fisheries sector in order to mitigate the consequences of the war in Ukraine	Amendment of MFP by Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 1 of 04.01.2023	5,441,671	4,072,564	1,369,107
TOTAL			588,941,903	112,225,968	476,715,935

Source: MAF

11.5. Measures for management of sanitation crises and crises caused by adverse climatic and natural disasters in agriculture

In 2023, the following local sanitary crises and crisis situations caused by natural disasters in the Livestock and Crop Growing sectors were declared in the country:

- Local sanitary crises have been declared for the "Livestock" sector in several areas of the country, related to the diseases avian influenza, African swine fever, brucellosis, small ruminant measles, West Nile fever, as well as a confirmed outbreak of COVID-19 on a mink farm. Among the crises in the "Livestock" sector are also described the crisis situations caused by natural disasters - unfavorable meteorological events;

- For the Crop Growing sector, crisis situations were declared in almost the entire territory of the country, caused by unfavorable climatic conditions and natural disasters - freezing, frosting, storm, pelting, torrential, continuous rain with hurricane force winds, flooding, overwetting of agricultural land, hail and drought - dry spells.

In order to overcome the crises that have arisen, in 2023 33,354,792 BGN were paid from the state budget, about 67% more than in 2022. There is a trend of gradual increase in funds over the years, which is a result of increasing adverse weather events as well as outbreaks of infectious animal diseases.

VI. FORESTRY

1. Characteristics of Forest Areas

As of 31.12.2023, the total area of forests and forest territories in Bulgaria amounted to 4,280,137 ha, of which 3,936,140 ha are forested areas (including dwarf pine).

The area of the forest territories were 3,953,595 ha, of which 2,889,898 ha (73.1%) were forest territories - state property, managed by the state enterprises under Art. 163 of the Forest Act, 172,362 ha (4.4%) state forests managed by the MoEW (including reserves and maintained reserves - 33,386 ha, Rila National Park - 53,480 ha, Pirin National Park - 40,332 ha and Central Balkan National Park - 45,164 ha), 11,269 ha (0.3%) the state forest territories provided for management of Training and Experimental Forestry Units, 441,271 ha (11.2%) forest territories - property of municipalities, 379,125 ha (9.6%) forest territories - property of individuals and 59,670 ha (1.5%) forest territories - property of legal entities, including 16,493 ha forest territories - property of religious communities).

The area of agricultural territories possessing the characteristics of a forest within the meaning of Art. 2 of the Forest Act (forests on agricultural territories) was 326,542 ha, including: 31,454 ha (9.6%) forests on agricultural territories - state property, 189,597 ha (58.1%) forests on agricultural territories - municipal property, 78,915 ha (24.2%) forests on agricultural territories - property of natural persons, 11,735 ha (3.6%) of forests on agricultural territories - property of legal entities (including 2,234 ha of forests on agricultural territories - property of religious communities) and 14,558 ha (4.5%) forests temporarily managed by the municipality. The remaining 283 ha are agricultural areas with unclear ownership.

The total forest area is 7,011 ha more compared to 2022. The forested area has increased by 10,082 ha, mainly due to newly inventoried territories that have the characteristics of a forest within the meaning of the Forestry Act. The afforested area in the forest territories 3,611,211 ha, 782 ha more compared to a year prior.

The area of forest territories is 2,195 ha less than in 2022.

The area of forests on agricultural land increased by 9,206 ha.

An increase in the area of state forest territories by 150 ha was reported, which is mainly due to the inventory of newly forested territories, purchases by state enterprises of forests owned by individuals, as well as administrative proceedings to change the intended use from agricultural to forest territory. The area of the Training and Experimental Farms remained at the level of the previous year.

The area of the municipal forest territories decreased by 587 ha, which is mainly due to the transfer of areas to agricultural territories, reflected in previous inventories as forest territories, due to unfinished administrative proceedings and lack of grounds for their inclusion in the forest territories.

The area of state forests managed by the MEW is unchanged compared to 2022.

The non-timber-producing area decreased by 705 ha to 305,881 ha. The unforested forest area decreased by 2,366 ha - from 44,777 ha to 38,116 ha, as a result of new afforestation.

Despite the emergence of self-afforested areas, the afforested area of coniferous forests was 3,326 ha less than the previous year. This is due to the logging carried out in connection with biotic and abiotic damage, mass drying of pine plantations outside the range, which are being replanted with local broadleaf species, the continuing increase in mixed coniferous-broadleaf plantations obtained after the establishment and subsequent management of coniferous plantations, as well as the implementation in recent years of the necessary natural

transformation of coniferous plantations and plantations established outside their natural distribution area. This trend will continue in the future.

Deciduous high-stemmed forests were 7,421 ha more compared to the previous year, due to the conversion of shoot stands to high stem ones, afforestation of post-fire areas, windfalls, self-afforestation of unforested forest areas, reassessment of coniferous stands and low-productivity plantations and transformation of coniferous forests into deciduous.

The coppice forests for conversion increased by 8,081 ha after newly inventoried plantations and re-evaluated coniferous crops mixed with broad-leaved coppice species.

Low-stemmed forests decreased by 2,094 ha, due to the reassessment of some of the acacia and hornbeam plantations, in which other coppice and/or high-stem tree species predominated.

The general use of regeneration loggings and thinnings for the forest territories, carried out in 2023, amounted to 6,176,068 cubic meters of standing mass, which is equal to 77% of the foreseen under the forestry plan (forest development project) 7,979,952 cubic meters of standing wood.

Of these, 3,249,391 cubic meters were from regenerative felling. The implementation of the regenerative felling compared to the planned ones according to the forestry plan (4,573,030 cubic meters) was 71%.

2,926 677 cubic meters were harvested from thinnings, which was 86% of the envisaged in the forestry plan (3,406,922 cubic meters).

The annual use in the forest territories - state property amounted to 4,755,590 cubic meters of standing mass or 77% of the 6,201,469 cubic meters of standing mass envisaged in the forestry plan (forest management project).

The sold annual use of the forests, provided to training experimental forestry units, amounted to 38,694 cubic meters of standing mass (111% of the planned); from the municipal forest territories - in the amount of 647,877 cubic meters of standing mass (64% of the planned); and that of forests - property of individuals and legal entities - in the amount of 727,633 cubic meters of standing mass (100% of the planned).

The annual use of forests on agricultural territories is in the amount of 335,450 cubic meters of standing mass.

2. Changes of Forest Areas

In 2023, the following changes took place in the forest territories of the country:

- 9 administrative acts for change of the purpose of land properties in forest territories pursuant to art. 14 of the Forest Act (repealed), with a total area of 3.02 ha, with a price for the change of BGN 418,019.00, were issued. Funds for compensatory afforestation in the amount of BGN 27,844.27 were allocated. One administrative order was issued to terminate administrative proceedings for a change of intended usage;
- 27 administrative orders were issued for preliminary approval of a change in the intended usage of land properties in forest territories, with a total area of 99.04 ha, pursuant to Art. 75 (3) of the Forest Act; 6 administrative orders were issued to terminate administrative proceedings for a change of intended usage;
- 46 administrative orders for the change of the intended usage of land properties in forest territories pursuant to art. 77 of the Forest Act, with a total area of 444.59 ha, with a price for the change of BGN 7,542,058.00, were issued. Funds for compensatory afforestation in the amount of BGN 894,651.46 were allocated. According to one of the issued decisions, the rights of the person in whose favor the purpose has been changed have been extinguished by virtue of the law, due to the lack of data on the payment of the due price for the change of purpose within the statutory period. In this regard, the administrative acts for change of use that have entered into force have a total area of 442.93 ha, with a price for change of use in the amount of BGN 7,527,687.00 and certain funds for compensatory afforestation in the amount of 894,651.46 leva;

- The purpose of 105.61 ha of forest territories was changed free of charge pursuant to art. 73, para. 5 of the Forest Act for the construction of 7 national sites and 10 municipal sites of primary importance, and 17 administrative acts establishing already existing rights and obligations, were issued. The allocated funds for compensatory afforestation for 9 of the cited areas were BGN 557,163.17;
- 8 administrative orders were issued for acquisition of the right of ownership over 0.45 ha of forest territories - private state property, representing built-up and normatively determined adjacent area of buildings, structures, networks and facilities, by the order of § 123, para. 3 of the TFP to the Act amending and supplementing the Forest Act, with a total sale price of the land properties of BGN 35,949.40 and overheads in the amount of BGN 730.90.
- 160 administrative orders for the change of the intended usage of land properties (with total area of 5,998,18 ha) from agricultural to forest territory pursuant to art. 81 of the Forest Act were issued. The change is free of charge; 1 administrative act was issued to repeal an already issued administrative act and 2 administrative acts to amend and supplement an already issued and entered into force administrative act to change the purpose of land properties from agricultural to forest territory.

3. Management of Forest Areas

The management, use and protection of forests is aimed at the formation and maintenance of living and multifunctional forest ecosystems, creating conditions for their natural regeneration and improving their sustainability.

3.1. Afforestation and Protection against Erosion and Torrential Rains

In 2023, EFA's activities in this area were focused mainly on the following areas:

- Implementation of the goals and indicators set in the EFA program and budget;
- Fulfillment of Bulgaria's obligations arising from the membership in the European Union in the field of forest reproductive materials (FRM);
- Approval and registration of basic sources for FRM, registration of FRM suppliers, testing and qualification of seeds and improving the condition of the forest seed production base;
- Maintaining a database of the performed inventories of the created forest crops; of fires, unrenewed fellings and forests destroyed by other natural impacts; of large-scale fortifications; the compensatory afforestation activities and register of forest nurseries in the country;
- Performing control activities;
- Coordination of projects for biological reclamation in forest areas, preparation of answers and opinions;
- Preparation of drafts of normative documents.

Table VI.1. Implemented activities for creation of forests in 2023

No.	Types of activities	Measure	Implementation for 2023
1.	Collected and harvested seeds by TD SF/SH	kg	47,921
2.	Produced saplings in state forest nurseries	thousand	8,447.1
3.	Afforested areas, including	ha	1,769.8
	- State-owned enterprises	ha	1,711.8
	- municipalities	ha	54.2
	- private	ha	3.8
4.	Developing stands in state forest territories	ha	955.7
5.	Growing stands in state forest territories	ha	10,964.4
6.	Average percentage of survival of planted trees		
	a) state-owned property		
	- annual	%	65.43
	- biennials	%	68.05
	- triennials	%	67.92

No.	Types of activities	Measure	Implementation for 2023
	b) municipal-owned property		
	- annual	%	59.66
	- biennials	%	38.24
	- triennials	%	67.31
	c) private property		
	- annual	%	43.19
	- biennials	%	68.46
	- triennials	%	85.07

Source: EFA

The following activities were performed in 2023:

- In State Gazette Issue 90 of 2023 was published the Ordinance amending and supplementing Ordinance No. 21 of 12.11.2012 on the conditions and procedure for determining, approving, registering and canceling the sources from the forest seed production base, the collection and extraction of forest reproductive materials, their quality, trade and import. New samples of applications for entry and for changing the circumstances entered in the public register of suppliers of forest reproductive material have been approved;
- Reports with a database regarding the conducted inventories of the created forest stands; of existing post-fire areas, unrestored clearings and forests destroyed by other natural impacts; the available large-scale strengthenings were prepared and recommendations to eliminate the omissions and errors were given;
- The price of the compensatory afforestation was determined and orders were issued by the Minister of Agriculture and Food and the Executive Director of the EFA;
- 8 projects for reclamation of disturbed terrains in forest territories were approved;
- The public register of forest nurseries in the country was updated;
- The National list of approved and registered sources for production of FRM was updated;
- 2 information documents were prepared for the movement of forest reproductive materials for trade from the Republic of Bulgaria to the Republic of Austria;
- 13 new basic sources in category "selected" for the production of FRM over an area of 192.6 ha, meeting the minimum requirements of Directive 1999/105/EU were approved and registered and 11 basic sources were revoked over an area of 175 ha;
- 613 control checks of the condition and the conducted activities in the registered basic sources for FRM were performed by FSCS experts over an area of 4,810 ha;
- 278 certificates for identification of the FRM origin were issued by RDFs and FSCS;
- In the seed control laboratories of the FSC stations in Sofia and Plovdiv 207 seed control certificates were issued for batches of seeds of deciduous and coniferous species;
- 1,038.4 kg of seeds from 227 batches of coniferous and 9 batches of deciduous species were stored in the long-term seed storage facility in Plovdiv FSCS;
- Sofia FSCS kept 220.62 kg of seeds of different origins from 44 tree and shrub species as a seed collection for its bank. 18.5 kg of 7 tree species were stored in Plovdiv FSCS;
- Specialists from Plovdiv FSCS conducted soil surveys of 4 forest nurseries throughout the country, and prepared soil maps and dossiers with precepts for improving soil fertility in the surveyed nurseries;
- Specialists from Plovdiv FSCS help the construction of a vegetative seed production garden made of black pine on the territory of Panagyurishte SHU". In 2023 grafting of cuttings was carried out on 66 saplings.

428.1 ha of anti-erosion afforestation was carried out to protect the forest territories from erosion and torrential rains.

BGN 28.6 million was spent on afforestation measures and protection from erosion and heavy rains in state forest territories.

3.2. Logging in Forests

In 2023, thinnings were carried out on an area of 38,351.3 ha in state forests, which represents 58% of the FEP/FMP projections, to regulate the tree composition and to improve the growing conditions. Of the performed thinnings, 44.8% were in coniferous forests, 36.3% in deciduous high stem forests and 18.9% in coppice forests for conversion to seed. The execution of thinnings without material extraction on an area of 2,409 ha was 110.1% of the FEP/FMP projections. By types of thinnings, the implementation of FEP/FMP was 106.8% for clearing, 66.3% for pruning, 46.3% for spacing and 62.7% for selective cutting.

During the year, selective felling was carried out on an area of 572.3 ha, thus fulfilling the FEP/FMP projections at 51.3%.

Two control inspections of the marking and selection fellings in seed production plantations on a total area of 1,520 ha were carried out by FSCS experts;

Within the framework of 2023, thinnings were carried out in non-state-owned forests on an area of 8,055 ha, of which: 5,333.5 ha in municipal forests, 2,317.1 ha in forests - owned by individuals, 290 ha in forests - property of legal entities and 114.4 ha in forests - property of religious organizations.

Pruning of standing trees was carried out in state forests to improve the wood produced and to support the process of natural self-pruning of the stands on 1,860 ha, which was 76.4 ha more than the activity reported in 2023. The natural regeneration on an area of 14,446.6 ha (119.4% of the foreseen of the forest management plans) was supported, which was 5,489.8 ha more than the implementation in the previous year. A logging fund in the amount of 5,100,495 cubic meters of standing wood or 303,756 cubic meters less than in 2022 was marked.

4. Use of Wood and Non-wood Forest Products

4.1. Use of Wood

In 2023, the EFA and the Regional Forest Directorates carried out constant control of the issued felling permits and the drawn up protocols for certification of felling sites through the EFA information system. During the year, logging permits were issued for 7,740,465 cubic meters of standing wood, and the actual felled standing wood from forest territories is 5,234,937 cubic meters.

In 2023, the state enterprises under Art. 163 of the Forest Act have sold a total of 3,972,318 cubic meters of wood from forest areas - state property or 86% of the planned amount. The sold wood was 902 thousand cubic meters less than in 2022.

The sold wood, affected by abiotic and biotic factors, amounted to 330 thousand cubic meters, or 8% of all sales.

The total revenues from the sale of wood in 2023 amounted to BGN 418.4 million, 7% more on an annual basis. The total costs for the use of wood amounted to BGN 128.3 million, 27.8% more than the reported in 2022, and they included deductions from the selling price of wood to the fund "Investments in Forests" in the amount of BGN 17.4 million.

In 2023, 62% of the total quantities of wood were sold through warehouse wood. The remaining 38% was sold through the sale of standing wood to individuals for personal use and to legal entities after tendering. In order to meet the needs of individuals, a total of 709 thousand cubic meters of wood mainly firewood, were sold according to a price list, which was 81 thousand cubic meters or 9% less than in 2022.

Figure VI.1. Planned and reported wood sold from the forest territories - state property for the period 2019 - 2023, thousand cubic meters



Source: MAF

The volume of wood provided in 2023 under long-term contracts concluded by state enterprises was 300.9 thousand cubic meters of standing wood and 115.4 thousand cubic meters of harvested wood, and the total amount was 11% of sold wood, remaining around the same level from the previous year.

After electronic tendering, sales for a total of 1,823 thousand cubic meters of wood from state forests were realized during the year, 305 thousand cubic meters more than in 2022.

The weighted average reported selling prices of wood from the forest territories - state property, from warehouses and as standing wood, were respectively 127.19 BGN/cubic meter and 72.11 BGN/cubic meter, increasing by 17% (18.93 BGN/cubic meter) and by 23% (13.61 BGN/cub.m.), respectively. Average costs for wood extraction increased by 9.48 BGN/cubic meter.

According to the financial plans of the state-owned enterprise for 2024, the total use of wood is expected to be 4,601,908 cubic meters.

Table VI.2. Use of wood from forest areas provided for management by the State Enterprise and sales revenues in 2023

Method of use and sale	2022		2023.			
	Quantity (cubic meters)	Value (BGN thousand)	Quantity		Value	
			cubic meters	Change versus 2022 (%)	thousand BGN	Change versus 2022 (%)
I. Income from the sale of wood (1+2+3+4):	4,874,379	391,299	3,972,318	-19%	418,395	7%
1. Sale of standing wood	2,659,938	155,601	1,504,318	-43%	108,475	-30%
1.1. including. according to a price list to individuals for personal use	268,257	4,726	187,606	-30%	4,747	0.40%
2. Sale of harvested wood	2,138,843	231,546	2,390,538	12%	304,053	31%
2.1. including. according to a price list to individuals for personal use	522,220	43,894	520,804	-0.30%	57,347	31%

Method of use and sale	2022		2023.			
	Quantity (cubic meters)	Value (BGN thousand)	Quantity		Value	
			cubic meters	Change versus 2022 (%)	thousand BGN	Change versus 2022 (%)
3. Use of wood under Art. 116b of the FA	5,587	x	7,318	31%	x	x
4. Use of wood under Art. 193 of the FA	70,010	2,401	70,143	0.20%	3,059	27%
II. Total costs, quantity (I.1.+ II.1.), value II.(1+2+3):	x	100,419	x	x	128,310	28%
1. Costs for wood harvesting - total:	2,262,196	67,373	2,510,469	11%	98,569	46%
2. Costs for construction of roads and current repairs of forest roads	1,527	933	263	-83%	1,273	36%
3. Deductions for the Forest Investment Fund	x	2,168	x	x	1,744	-20%

Source: MAF

4.2. Auxiliary Activities and Use of Non-Wood Forest Products

For 2023, state-owned enterprises report a total of BGN 20.8 million in revenues from side activities and non-timber forest products and corresponding costs of BGN 15.4 million (with almost 1.5 million BGN more than in 2022).

5. Protection of Forest Territories

5.1. Protection of Forest Territories from Diseases, Pests and Other Damages

In 2023 forest protection measures are planned for 48% of the surveyed damaged forest areas by the end of November 2022. The overall implementation of the forecast is within 89%. It was also planned to carry out aerial application on a total area of 1,389.9 ha, including 1,227.9 ha against pine processionary moth and 162 ha against rusty pine leaf wasp.

Over the year, ground chemical treatment was carried out on a total area of 211.4 ha in forest nurseries and poplar crops, which was 64% more than planned. The over-execution is due to damages caused by insect pests and diseases of poplars, willows and alders, to weeds and parasitic vegetation, as well as to health problems that arose during the year in the forest nurseries.

The implementation of the planned mechanical control is 53% more than planned for 2023. Of the reported areas, 10% are against biotic damage in poplar, willow, alder and other broadleaf forests and plantations, 21% - against damage from game, rodents and domestic animals, 57% - against pine processionary moth in forest crops, 1% - after flood damage and 11% - in forest nurseries.

Sanitary and forced fellings were carried out on an area of 16,005.9 ha. Of these, 77% were in coniferous forests and 23% in deciduous forests. The largest share of the sanitary and forced fellings were conducted in forests damaged by phytopathogenic fungi (62%), abiotic factors (32%), stem insects (4%) and fires (3%).

The costs for performing the activities for protection against diseases, pests and other damages in the forest territories, managed by the state enterprises under art. 163 of the Forest Act, amounted to BGN 281 thousand.

Table VI.3. Conducted forest protection measures in 2023

Measure	Forecast 2023 (ha)	Report 2023 (ha)	Implementation (%)
Air combat	1,389.9	1,618.6	116%
Biological warfare	574.8	574.8	100%
Ground chemical treatment, incl.	331.6	543.0	164%
<i>in forest nurseries</i>	81.8	112.9	138%
<i>in cultures</i>	249.8	430.1	172%
Mechanical treatment	263.1	403.3	153%
Integrated treatment	0	0	-
Sanitary felling	18,906.3	16,005.9	85%
Total:	21,465.7	19,145.6	89%

Source: EFA

5.2. Forest Fire Protection

In 2023, a total of 448 fires occurred in the forest territories of the country, affecting 6,388.3 ha. Of these, 689.6 ha were burned by crown fires.

The number of forest fires recorded in 2023 is 9 more than the average for the past 10 years, and the burned forest areas are 1,776.3 ha more than the average for the past 10 years.

The main reasons for the occurrence of forest fires continue to be related to human negligence - over 56% of the forest fires that have occurred, followed by unknown - 32.6% of the fires that occurred in forest areas. About 3.8% of forest fires are intentional and only 6.9% - as a result of natural causes (lightning).

In 2023 the largest forest fire occurred in the land of the village Mladinovo, TU SFR Svilengrad, where 741 ha of forest territories were burned. Other large fires occurred in the "Sredets" TU SFR and the TU SFR "Topolovgrad".

During the year, the State Enterprises spent funds in the amount of BGN 1.391 million for the implementation of the activities for protection of the forest territories from fires. The main part of the reported costs were for the implementation of preventive activities, including the construction and maintenance of 1,916,463 meters of mineralized strips, 1,905,778 meters of forest barriers and 958,710 meters of barrier walls.

6. Protected Areas

According to the Protected Areas Act (PAA), there are 6 categories of protected areas in the country, and for 3 of them (nature park, natural landmark and protected area) management is shared between MAFF - EFA, MoEW and municipalities, and for the remaining 3 (reserve, maintained reserve and national park) - the administration and management is conducted by MoEW and its respective regional subdivisions, including the national parks directorates (Central Balkan NPD, Rila NPD and Pirin NPD) and regional environmental and water inspections.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the Forestry Executive Agency, as well as natural and legal persons and municipalities - owners of forests, lands and water areas in the protected territories of the categories: "nature park", "natural landmark", and "protected area" carry out their management, preservation, and protection, as per the provisions of the Environmental Protection Act and other special laws.

11 directorates have been established for the management of the nature parks - specialized territorial units at EFA: Belasitsa Nature Park, Bulgarka Nature Park, Vitosha Nature Park, Vrachanski Nature National Park, Golden Sands Nature Park, Persina Nature Park, Sinite Kamani Nature Park, Strandzha Nature Park, Rusenski Lom Nature Park Rila Monastery and Shumen Plateau Nature Park.

The MoEW and its regional bodies conduct and carry out control in the protected areas in relation to the activities of the owners or users of forests, lands and water areas and in compliance with the regimes established under the order of the Environmental Protection Act, the declaration order and the management plan of the respective protected area.

The control on the compliance with the regimes in the protected areas is also carried out by the directors of the regional forest administrations, state forestry farms, state hunting farms, and directorates of nature parks, as well as the mayors of municipalities.

The activities for the management of forest territories in protected areas and natural landmarks were carried out by the state forestry and hunting farms, depending on their territorial scope.

In 2023, the directorates of nature parks and state-owned enterprises carried out joint activities on the basis of concluded cooperation agreements and plans for joint activities. Such agreements have been concluded between Blagoevgrad SWSE and Belasitsa NPD, Vitosha NPD and Rila Monastery NPD, between the NESE Shumen and NPD "Shumensko Plato" and NPD "Golden Sands", as well as between SESE Sliven, NPD "Sinite Kamani" and NPD "Strandzha". The purpose of joint action agreements is to resolve issues of mutual interest in the following areas: sustainable management and protection of natural resources; protection of ecosystems and biodiversity; environmentally friendly land management in protected areas and protected areas under the Biodiversity Act; staff training; preparation, application and implementation of projects related to forests and protected areas.

Repair and restoration works were carried out on the existing tourist infrastructure - bridges, interpretive trails, shelters, gazebos, recreation areas, fountains, etc. Information boards, marking of hiking trails, etc. were renewed and restored.

On the territory of the "Rusenski Lom" NPD, together with volunteers from Ruse and Koshov, a tourist shelter has been restored in the "Gramovets" area. Above the shelter is the "Gramovets" rock monastery, and the steps and railings to it have been repaired and restored by the "Akademik" Sports, Tourism and Nature Protection Association. Ruse. Repair works on 3 bridges on the Beli Lom River in the Rusenski Lom NPD have been completed. Regular bird monitoring was carried out, which included checking known occupied nests of birds of prey, locating new territories occupied by birds of prey and scavengers and searching for new nests (Lesser spotted eagle, Egyptian vulture, Long-legged buzzard, Booted eagle), the occupancy of artificial nests was checked for Lesser spotted eagle; all known nests of Black storks were checked and inspections of new ones were conducted. The Park Directorate is also responsible for maintaining the optimal water level in the Kalimok-Brushlen Protected Area.

The Golden Sands Park Directorate, in partnership with the Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation, has organized a Green Day. The volunteers took part in renewing 8 km of tourist markings in the "Golden Sands" park. In 2023 the rehabilitation of the tourist infrastructure was carried out, including the repair of pipes passing through the paths and a 40 m long ditch, repair of the fence around the "Aladzha Monastery" center, repair of the bridge to the metal gazebo under the lodge "Aladzha", repair of 4 panels of the limiting railing along the path from "Malko Vodno Ogledalo" to the "Yubileyna" fountain, 6 benches at the constructed recreation areas were also repaired, as well as 32 panels of a decorative wooden fence marking the border of the park. A photo album "The wealth of Golden Sands Natural Park" was printed, with educational content, including photo and text material of all described plant species in the park - endangered, protected and medicinal, of 11 types of habitats, of the most common types of mushrooms, reptiles, insects and birds, as well as in characteristic places in the park during the four seasons of the year.

On the territory of the Shumensko Plato NPD, a large-scale two-day action was held with the Kresliv Orel scout club, cleaning part of the Relax route and renewing the markings. During student practices, the graduates of Traiko Simeonov Secondary School Shumen, volunteered to repaint the benches in the Kyoshkovete forest park and cleaned the path to the Biserna cave and the Dendrological trail. The extraordinary interest in "Biserna" cave, which in 2023 is visited by more than 4,500 tourists during the spring and autumn access periods for visits, which is a record number of visitors to the natural phenomenon since it was opened to tourists.

Activities related to cleaning and renovation of the tourist infrastructure, installation of information boards and signs, "Vitosha type" tables, etc., were carried out on the territory of the "Vitosha" NP. Repair of 5 wooden bridges along tourist route lodge "Aleko" - m. Romanski - Final house "Vitoshko Lale"; partial repair of a wooden bridge along tourist route lodge "Aleko" - m. Goli Vrah; repair of a children's playground at the "Beli Brezi" children eco center. 63 metal plates with numbering of the winter tourist marking from the village Bosnek to Mecha Cheshma shelter have been renewed. Many of the activities were carried out with the help of volunteers. In 2023, a total of 40 volunteer actions were organized with the participation of more than 1,000 people. With the help of volunteers, illegal dumps were cleaned and removed, collecting more than 30 m³ of waste; the park infrastructure has been refreshed (over 200 lacquered tables, benches, gazebos, grill bridges, etc.); more than 5,000 liters were cleaned in ditches/gutters along tourist paths and pathways; 10 wooden grids of drains were replaced. 10 wooden bridges, 3 information boards, 9 tables with benches "Vitoska type", 3 regulated fireplaces (concrete rings) were built. 16 forest first aid kits have been repaired and filled with first aid materials.

In 2023 NPD "Persina" applied for and won first prize in the initiative The Living Danube 24, with the project proposal "The wetlands restoration brings Danube habitats back to life and forms the Danube nature's treasures on the Danube". The construction of a new module 3D model of floodplain forest habitat 91E0* Alluvial forests in real size has started in the visitor center. The module will be built under the "Danube Wild Islands, Corridor of Habitats" project.

The employees of the Sinite Kamani NPD carried out repair work on elements of the infrastructure on the territory of the nature park. Directional and warning signs have been placed. In addition to the regular activities to maintain the diversity of ecosystems and biodiversity conservation in the park, the Directorate of the "Blue stones" park has continued its activities to provide first aid to wild birds, turtles, hedgehogs and others, after which it moves them to the "Wildlife Rescue Center" in Stara Zagora.

On the territory of the "Rila Monastery" Nature Park, activities were carried out to refresh the infrastructure of the park by the forest inspectors, together with a group of scouts from Belgium. An eco-action "Let's clean up the "Rila Monastery" Nature Park" was organized together with the "Rila" Tourism Society, city of Rila.

Within the long-standing project "Restoring the rock partridge population", Vrachanski Balkan NPD relocated (autumn) 116 birds and a spring survey was conducted of the population status (transect method), an autumn survey (telemetry), and a winter survey (phototraps and feeders). Currently, there are 64 birds for the main flock in 2024. A methodology and technology for the production and resettlement of birds was developed. The park continued its activities to feed the Egyptian vulture and to reintroduce the griffon vulture. In 2023, over 80 griffon vultures were observed monthly in the area. A total of 17 pairs were formed, from which 15 griffon vultures hatched. 10 black vultures were brought into the aviary in G. Ozirvo, and a pair of black vultures have made a nest and raised a young one. 9 interpretive routes were repaired on the territory of Vrachanski Balkan NPD, the markings on 12 tourist routes were renewed, 1 information point and 5 recreation areas were repaired. Monitoring under a project for reintroduction of a European ground squirrel was also carried out.

In the reproduction base for rare and endangered plant species of the Bulgarka NPD in Potok village and in the gene bank for orchard species, activities were carried out throughout the year on maintaining the material base, collecting seeds, preparing the grounds, planting activities, care during vegetation, pruning and pest control for fruit species. Together with NCSE - Gabrovo, stocking with Balkan trout was carried out for another year in two of the mountain rivers on the territory of the "Bulgarka" park.

In 2023 NPD "Strandzha" has supported the natural regeneration of local species, reintroduction of flora and fauna species (trout, relict species of plants from the Specialized Nursery), and measures have been taken to limit the spread of invasive species (through mechanical removal). The Park Directorate also conducted a regular survey of the most sensitive and damaged coastal dune habitats and riparian wetlands.

Vrachanski Balkan NPD has successfully completed the activities under the DiGiPARKS project" an innovative and integrated cross-border tourist product between 'Vrachanski Balkan' and 'Iron Gate' natural parks". Objectives at creating an innovative integrated tourism product between the Vrachanski Balkan and Iron Gate Nature Parks. The project was financed within the framework of the INTERREG V - Romania-Bulgaria Program for transborder cooperation.

In 2023 the team of NP "Golden Sands" has successfully completed activities under the project "Improving the nature protection status of species and types of natural habitats on the territory of the Natura 2000 network, falling into the "Golden Sands" nature park", regulation No. BG16M10P002-3.007-0003 under OP "Environment 2014-2020.

NPD "Sinite Kamani" is a partner in the international project "Life for the Bearded Vulture" (project #101113869 LIFE22-NAT-BG-Bearded Vulture LIFE), which started in 2023.

NPD "Persina" has implemented and reported 3 projects.

In 2023 on the part of EFA, opinions were prepared and submitted to the MEW on the basis of Art. 36, para. 2 of the Protected Areas Act (PAA) on procedures for declaring new protected areas affecting forest areas, incl. according to procedures for declaring 3 natural parks, 27 protected areas and 3 natural landmarks to the MEW.

- "Western Balkan" Nature Park (Western Stara Planina), falling in parts of the territories of Vidin, Montana and Sofia regions;
- Chernatitsa Nature Park, falling within parts of the territories of Asenovgrad, Kuklen, Rodopi and Perushtitsa municipalities, Plovdiv region;
- Natural Park "Byala Reka - Muglenik", falling in parts of the territories of the municipalities of Krumovgrad and Ivaylovgrad;
- "Petrohan" Protected Area on the territory of the village of Gintsi, Godech Municipality, Sofia District;
- Protected area "Izvorat" of the river Vacha, falling in the lands of Trigrad village, Devin municipality and Kozhari village, Borino municipality;
- Protected area "Mecha Polyana", falling on the land of Mugla village, Smolyan municipality;
- Protected area "Tursunski vrah", falling in the lands of Devin municipality, Borino municipality and Smolyan municipality, Smolyan region;
- Protected area "Maritsa - Stamboliyski", falling within the territory of Tsalapitsa village, Rodopi municipality and Stamboliyski town, Stamboliyski municipality, Plovdiv region;
- Protected area "Zlatishka beech forest", falling within the territory of the town of Zlatitsa, Zlatitsa municipality, Sofia region;
- Protected area "Smilyan", falling within the land of Plovdivtsi village, Rudozem municipality, Smolyan district;
- "Snyagovo" Protected Area on the territory of the village of Snyagovo, Ruen Municipality, Burgas District;
- "Izvorat na Belonogata" Protected Area on the territory of the village of Rogozinovo, Harmanli Municipality, Haskovo District;
- "Luda Reka" protected area, falling within the lands of the villages of Gorno Lukovo, Mandritsa, Medenbuk, Ivaylovgrad municipality, Haskovo district;
- "Sladun" Protected Area in the territory of Sladun village, Municipality of Svilengrad, District of Haskovo;
- "Marinov Dol" Protected Area on the territory of the village of Bunovo, Mirkovo Municipality, Sofia District;
- Protected area "Zabanova Padina", falling within the lands of the village of Burziya, Berkovitsa municipality, Montana region;
- "Todorini Kukli" protected area, falling within the lands of the village of Burziya, Berkovitsa municipality, Montana region;

- Protected area "Raykovtsi", falling within the land of the village of Raykovtsi, Veliko Tarnovo municipality, Veliko Tarnovo district;
- "Sredets" Protected Area on the territory of the village of Bogdanovo, Sredets Municipality, Burgas District;
- Protected area "Deposit of Vagenitsova cornflower, village Valcha Polyana", falling within the lands of Valcha Polyana village, Elhovo municipality, Yambol region;
- Protected area "Márzyan", falling in the lands of Chepintsi village, Rudozem municipality, Smolyan region and in the lands of village Erma Reka, Zlatograd municipality, Smolyan region;
- Protected area "Tsigansko gradishte", falling on the land of the village of Plovdivtsi, Rudozem municipality, Smolyan district;
- Protected area "Dolen", falling in the lands of the village of Dolen, Zlatograd municipality, Smolyan region and in the land of the town of Zlatograd, Zlatograd municipality, Smolyan region;
- Protected area "Martolets", falling within the land of the village of Musina, Veliko Pavlikeni municipality, Veliko Tarnovo district;
- A protected area for the protection of forests, in the composition of which the Parnar species participates, falling within the territory of the village of Kalimantsi and the village of Petrovo, Sandanski municipality;
- Protected area "Gora Varbinyaka", falling within the land of the village of Yoakim Gruevo, Stamboliyski Municipality and the town of Perushtitsa, Perushtitsa Municipality, Plovdiv Region;
- Protected area "Field of Urum tulip in the town of "Lalikoto", falling in the lands of Terziysko village, Sungurlare municipality, Burgas region and Venets village, Karnobat municipality, Burgas region;
- Protected area "Vishovgrad Plateau", falling within the lands of the village of Vishovgrad and the town of Byala Cherkva, Pavlikeni municipality, Veliko Tarnovo district;
- Protected area "Studen Kladenets" ("Boynik Planina"), falling within the lands of the villages of Boynik, Studen Kladenets, Gurgulitsa, Momchilgrad Municipality, Kardzhali Region;
- Protected area "Maglenishki rid", falling within the lands of the villages of Strazhets, Gorni Yurutsi and Chernichevo, Krumovgrad municipality, Kardzhali district;
- Komatinski Skali Natural Landmark, in the territory of Brestovo village, Municipality of Simitli, District of Blagoevgrad;
- Natural landmark "Field of spiny Astragalus" in the "Trite Bratya" and "Kazanite" localities, falling within the territory of the town of Aytos, Aytos municipality, Burgas region;
- A natural landmark (rock bridge) falling on the land of Uglen village, Lukovit municipality, Lovech district.

7. Forest certification

The certified forest areas in Bulgaria have a FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) certificate. According to the official data of the FSC, the area of certified forest territories as of 21.02.2024 is 2,356,416.9 ha, which represents 60% of the total forest territory in the country, and the certified units are 30. 406 certified units have a FSC - Chain of custody certificate.

The area of the certified state forest territories managed by the state-owned enterprises was 2,336,868.9 ha, equal to 81% of the total territory managed by them in the country, and the certified units were 28.

According to the electronic information portal of PEFC (Program for Endorsement of Forest Certification), 90 certified units have a PEFC - Chain of custody.

8. Inventory and planning in forest areas

In 2023, the following major activities were carried out in this direction:

- Meetings of the commissions under Art. 34, para. 1 of Ordinance No. 18/07.10.2015 for carrying out an inventory of the forest territories and drawing up forest management plans, forestry maps, hunting management plans and plans for the activities to protect the forest territories from fires, in 2023/24 for territorial divisions of state forestry farms "Yakoruda", "Belitsa", "Karlovo", "Ardino", "Haskovo", "Karnobat" (only for the part of the merged TU SFR Sungurlare), "Burgas", "Vratsa", "Lesidren", "Lovech", "Botevgrad", "Samokov", Forestry Management "Borovets" to TU SFR Samokov, "Elena", "Tutrakan", "Provadia", "Targovishte", "Pazardzhik", Karnobat (without the merged TU SFR Sungurlare) and for the territorial divisions of the state hunting farms "Iskar" and "Rositsa" (without the TU SHR Sevlievo), and hunting district "Trankovo" to TU SFR "Mazalat";
- Expert advice was held to accept assignments in connection with the upcoming inventory of forest territories in 2024/25 and the joint production of forestry maps, forestry plans, hunting management plans and plans for the activities to protect forest territories from fires for the territorial divisions of state forestry farms "Pleven", "Breznik", "Zlatograd", "Belovo", "Etropole", "Svoge", "Gorna Oryahovitsa", "Svilengrad", "Gabrovo", "General Toshevo", "Suvorovo", "Ticha", "Dobrich", "Kipilovo" and "Rila Monastery" for the territory owned by the "Rila Holy Monastery", for the territorial division of the state hunting farm "Karakuz" and the educational and experimental forestry "Petrohan";
- Tasks have been approved for conducting open procedures for public procurement for carrying out an inventory of forest territories and the preparation of forestry plans, forestry maps, hunting plans and plans of activities for the protection of forest territories from fires in the period 2024/25 for territorial divisions of the SFR "Pleven", "Breznik", "Zlatograd", "Belovo", "Etropole", "Svoge", "Gorna Oryahovitsa", "Svilengrad", "Gabrovo", "General Toshevo", "Suvorovo", "Ticha", "Dobrich", "Kipilovo" and "Rila Monastery" for the territory owned by the "Rila Holy Monastery", for the territorial division of the state hunting farm "Karakuz";
- Expert advice was held to accept the economic classes and the amount of annual use based on the inventory carried out and the forest management plans for 2022/23 for territorial divisions of state forestry holdings "Razlog", "Batak", "Vidin", "Seslav", "Omurtag", "Byala", "Bolyarka", "Cherni Osam", "Ivaylovgrad", "Nevestino" and for territorial divisions SHR "Chepino" (without TU SHR "Chehlovo") "Aramliets", "Vitinya", "Izvor", "Voden-Iri Hisar", "Zhenda" (without TU SFR "Kardzhali") and "Topolovgrad";
- Meetings of the commissions under Art. 37, para. 3 of Ordinance No. 18/07.10.2015 on inventory and planning in forest territories for acceptance of the inventory of forest territories and the prepared forestry plans, forestry maps, hunting plans and plans for the protection of forest territories from fires in 2022/23. for territorial divisions of state forestry farms "Razlog", "Batak", "Vidin", "Seslav", "Omurtag", "Byala", "Bolyarka", "Cherni Osam", "Ivaylovgrad", "Nevestino" and for territorial divisions state hunting farms "Chehlovo" (closed, transferred to SHR "Chepino"), "Aramliets", "Vitinya", "Izvor" (without TU SFR "Devin"), "Voden-Iri Hisar", "Zhenda" (without TU SFR "Kardjali") and "Topolovgrad";
- Expert consultations were held for acceptance of the minutes of the meetings of the commissions under Art. 37 (3) of Ordinance No. 18/07.10.2015 for inventory and planning in forest areas, for acceptance of the carried out inventory of forest areas and prepared forest management plans, hunting management plans and plans for activities to protect forest areas from fires in 2022/23 for territorial divisions of the following SFR: "Cherni Osam", "Kazanlak", "Razgrad", "Montana", "Teteven", "Mihalkovo", "Novi Pazar", "Eleshnitsa", "Buynovtsi", "Panagyurishte", "Tran" and for TU SHR "Ropotamo", "Palamara" and "Mazalat";
- A report by the Minister of Agriculture and Food on the sites for inventory in 2025/26 has been approved. and production of forestry maps, forestry plans, plans for hunting activities and forest protection activities for the Stara Zagora TU SFR, Montana (for the merged TU SFR Lom), Belogradchik (together with TU SFR: Midzhur), "Oryahovo", "Gotse Delchev", "Tsarevo", "Acad. Nikolay Haitov"

(without TU SFR Chepelare", "Klisura" (without TU SFR Rozino), "Nikopol", "Selishte", "Svishtov", "Madzharovo" and for TU SHR "Kormisosh", "Chepino" (for the "Chehlovo" TU SFR), "Balchik", "Zhenda" (for the "Kardzhali" TU SFR), "Sherba" (for the TU SFR "Staro Oryahovo");

- A digital orthophoto map was provided to the companies performing the inventory of forest territories and producing forest management plans, forest management maps, hunting management plans and plans of activities for protection of forest areas from fires for the period 2023/24;
- A digital model was provided of the map of the restored property and the cadastral map for the territorial scope of activity of the state forestry and hunting units;
- 2 orders were issued under Art. 83, Para. 9 of the Forest Act for the inclusion in forest territories of 0.613 ha. Pursuant to § 17 of the TFP to the Act amending and supplementing the Agricultural Land Protection Act, 47 orders were issued for inclusion in the state forest areas of 2,628.64 ha.

9. Hunting Units

In 2023, the following important activities, related to the management and use of game in the country, were carried out with the participation of EFA:

- Participated in a major audit of the European Commission regarding measures to combat African wild boar disease;
- Participation was taken in a National Conference regarding amendments and additions to the Law on Hunting and Game Protection;
- Participation was taken in various meetings of interdepartmental working groups together with the MEW, municipalities, NGOs and the Directorate General National Police;
- A meeting was held with the experts on hunting industry from EFA, RDF, MAF, SE, LTU, the National Hunting and Fishing Association "Union of the Hunters and Fishermen in Bulgaria" (NHFA - UHFB), Bulgarian Hunting and Fishing Union (BHFU) and the Bulgarian Bird Protection Society (BBPS).
- An amendment and supplement to Ordinance No. 6 of 2007 on the conditions and procedures for pasture breeding of pigs of the Eastern Balkan breed and its crossbreeds has been developed;
- The exhibition "Nature, Hunting, Fishing" - 2023 was organized in the city of Plovdiv;
- Joint trainings were conducted with the RFD and BFSA among hunters on limiting the spread of African swine fever and compliance with biosecurity measures;
- Participation was taken in a national meeting, organized by the NHFA - UHFB, with the experts in hunting industry from EFA, RDF, SE and the hunting associations in the city of Plovdiv, where the problems with poaching in the country were discussed;
- 2 meetings of the Hunting Council were held;
- Checks were carried out on the implementation of the contracts, providing the management and use of the game to the hunting associations, the allotted game breeding areas and the concluded contracts for joint activity in SHUs;
- Examinations for acquiring the right to hunt were conducted in the hunting associations;
- Thematic and specialized inspections on the implementation of hunting activities and the implementation of contracts in hunting associations were carried out;
- Field inspections and expert consultations for admission of Hunting Development Projects were carried out;
- 8 permits were issued for scientific research activity, 22 for categorization of hunting bases in SHR, SFR and game breeding grounds, 26 permits for use of grouse, 11 permits for shooting brown bear, 7 permits for trapping and relocation and 1 refusal to issue shooting permit.

The total revenues from hunting activity in the forest territories - state property, reported in 2023, amounted to BGN 10.2 million, which is 1.3 mln BGN more compared to 2022. The revenues from organized hunting and other types of tourism amounted to BGN 5.2 million, about BGN 700 thousand above the level of the previous year. Revenues from contracts concluded under HGPA in the form of annual installments for game management in game breeding areas and annual rental prices of hunting tourism facilities of SHU amounted to BGN 3.8 million, an increase of BGN 387 thousand compared to 2022. BGN 19 million were spent for implementation of the planned hunting and fishing activities during the year.

10. Protection of Forest Territories and Control

In 2023, the employees of RDF and SE under Art. 163 of the Forest Act performed a total of 612,171 inspections, including of: 127,942 of timber production sites, 25,410 of sites under Art. 206 of the Forest Act, 169,227 of vehicles, 142,247 of hunters, 14,931 of fishermen, and 132,414 of other persons.

Based on an analysis of the activity of the RDF, instructions were given aimed at improving and increasing the control activities on the protection of forest areas on which timber production is carried out.

Inspections of incoming wood were carried out at the facilities under Article 206 of the Forestry Act, which process over 20,000 cubic meters of wood per year, as well as inspections of transportation tickets issued outside forest territories.

Automated data processing mechanisms have been optimized in the EFA information system to monitor the issuance of subsequent tickets in violation of the order for determining the model of transport tickets, transport of timber without vehicle tracking devices, issuance of transport tickets with tree species not

Cross-checks between RDFs were carried out in 2023. 152 sites under Article 206 of the Forestry Act were inspected, 381 sites for timber extraction, 269 motor vehicles, 73 individuals. 1,615 finding reports and 22 AEAV were drawn up.

Established violations

In 2023, a total of 16,884 violations of forest legislation were found, 687 fewer than in 2022. 10,574 acts establishing administrative violations were drawn up, reporting a decrease of 2,022 compared to 2022. The perpetrators of 2,258 violations were not found, and 4,052 violations were found with a finding protocol, and in accordance with the deadlines under the AOPA, it is planned to draw up AEAVs in 2024.

The most violations established by acts were found in Ruse RDF - 1,196, Berkovitsa RDF - 1,099, Sliven RDF - 901, Sofia RDF - 821 and Burgas RDF - 802. The regional directorates with the least number of citations were Smolyan RDF - 86, Blagoevgrad RDF - 331, Shumen RDF - 455, Pazardzhik RDF - 464 and Veliko Tarnovo RDF - 478.

According to the ownership of the forest territories, 3,214 violations in state-owned property, 276 violations in municipal property, 1,209 violations in property of individuals and legal entities were established

The RDF employees drew up 120 citations for violations by employees of the territorial units of SFR/SHU, 238 citations to foresters practicing private forestry practices, and 19 citations to people involved in management and protection of municipality-owned forest areas.

In 2023, 31 coercive administrative measures were imposed pursuant to Art. 253 from the Forest Act, 15 less than 2022.

Activity of the regional forestry directorates

In 2023, the forest inspectors in the RDFs carried out 324,469 inspections, of which 24,816 in sites under Art.206 of the FA, 40,594 in sites for timber extraction, 100,381 of motor vehicles, 43,771 of hunters, 14,170 of fishermen and 100,737 of individuals. 5,537 citations were drawn up.

Illegally cut wood and disposal actions with wood, without documents proving its legal origin, in the amount of 14,400 cubic meters, were found.

Activity of the teams at EFA

In 2023, a total of 5,676 inspections were carried out, of which 594 at sites under Art. 206 of the Forest

Act, 998 in timber extraction sites, 1,945 of motor vehicles, 927 of hunters, 7 of fishermen and 1,205 of individuals. 169 acts were drawn up and 409 prescriptions to the RFDs for undertaking additional actions and drawing up acts were made.

Illegally cut wood and disposal actions with wood, without documents proving its legal origin, in the amount of 6,574 cubic meters, were found.

Activity of the state-owned enterprise under Art. 163 of the Forest Act

In 2023, a total of 265,767 inspections were carried out by employees of the state-owned enterprise and their divisions, of which 80,761 were carried out at logging sites, 60,586 of motor vehicles, 97,367 of hunters, 306 of fishermen, and 26,747 of natural persons. 4,372 CEAVs, 1,775 statements of findings to an unknown perpetrator, and 476 statements of findings without CEAVs were drawn up.

Illegally cut wood and disposal actions with wood, without documents proving its legal origin, in the amount of 11,478 cubic meters, were found.

Implementation of Regulation 995/2010

In 2023, EFA participated in two meetings related to the implementation of Regulation (EU) No. 995/2010.

For implementation of effective control, during the year the RFDs carried out 1,029 inspections, 47 less than in 2022.

Interaction with other institutions

As a result of the concluded agreements for cooperation and interaction and the annual plan of the Ministry of Interior for counteracting the violations related to forest, game and fish resources, in 2023 a total of 20,937 joint inspections were carried out, which is 6,012 more than in 2022. 798 sites under Art. 206 of the Forest Act, 761 sites for timber extraction, 3,179 vehicles, 9,270 hunters, 775 fishermen and 6154 individuals were inspected.

188 statements of findings and 723 citations were drawn up, of which 704 under the Forest Act, 18 under HGPA and 1 under other laws.

66 inspections with EAFA employees, 41 with employees of the Executive Agency "Labor Inspection", 86 with employees of the National Revenue Agency, 56 with employees of the MoEW, 31 with representatives of NGOs and 103 with other institutions, were carried out.

11. Strategic Planning, Improvement of the Regulatory framework and International Activities

The following regulatory documents were prepared in 2023:

- Resolution of the Council of Ministers amending and supplementing the Regulations for the Implementation of the Hunting and Game Preservation Act (promulgated, SG, issue 18 of 2023);
- Draft Decree of the Council of Ministers for adoption of the Tariff for the fees collected in the system of the Executive Agency for Forests under the Law on Forests and under the Law on State Fees;
- Draft Decree of the Council of Ministers amending and supplementing the Fee Tariff under the Hunting and Game Preservation Act;
- Ordinance amending and supplementing Ordinance No. 21 of 12.11.2012 on the conditions and procedure for determining, approving, registering and canceling the sources from the forest seed production base, the collection and extraction of forest reproductive materials, their quality, trade and import (promulgated SG No. 90 of October 27, 2023);
- Ordinance amending Ordinance No. 8 of 2011 on deforestation (promulgated SG No. 91 of October 31, 2023);
- Ordinance for amending and supplementing Ordinance No. 9 of 6.11.2020 on determining the type, distinguishing signs, conditions and procedure for obtaining, terms for wearing out the representative

uniform and field uniform clothing by the EFA employees, its structures and state enterprises under Art. 163 of the Forest (Promulgated in. SG No 9 of 27.01.2023 r.).

Implementation of strategic activities and priorities in the forest sector through projects funded by the EU and other international donors

In 2023, at the meetings of the Commission and the Standing Working Group to discuss project ideas and project proposals in EFA, a total of 10 project ideas/proposals were considered, of which 3 were in the process of evaluation, 5 were approved and 1 was not approved.

Several project proposals have been developed:

- "Priority actions for the protection of the grouse population and its habitats in the Balkans", LIFE FOR CAPERCAILLI under the LIFE program of the European Union;
- "Action plans for the sustainable management of forest genetic resources and for the development of sustainable and modern forest protection activities in Bulgaria";
- "Towards climate-smart forest connectivity for large carnivores in the Balkan-Carpathian region (ForestsConnect)", with leading partner WWF Bulgaria, under the Interreg "Danube Region" Program 2021-2027.

In 2023, the following projects are currently being implemented:

- "Measures for the protection of the Lesser Spotted Eagle and its habitats in Bulgaria" under the LIFE program of the European Union;
- "Empowering the Central and Eastern European Countries to Develop Bioeconomy Strategies and Action Plans" - CEE2ACT under the Horizon Europe program of the European Union in the field of bioeconomy;
- "Harnessing forest genetic resources for increasing options in the face of environmental and societal challenges", funded by the EU Horizon Europe program.

12. Financing and investments in forest areas

12.1. Executive Forest Agency

In 2023, the Executive Forest Agency reported revenues totaling BGN 9,165,000.

The costs of the EFA set for 2023 for the implementation of the Budget Program "Specialized Activities in Forest Territories" and the Budget Program "Planning, Protection from Encroachments, Fires and Forest Protection" amounted to BGN 34,674,300.

The approved final budget of EFA for 2023 amounts to BGN 39,768,251, with total expenditure of BGN 39,768,251 being reported.

During the year, investments (capital expenditures) in the amount of BGN 1,589,589 were made as follows:

- Acquisition of tangible fixed assets - BGN 1,550,349;
- Acquisition of computers and hardware - BGN 97,839;
- Acquisition of other equipment, machines and facilities - BGN 242,128;
- Acquisition of vehicles - BGN 1,202,382;
- Acquisition of software products and licenses for software products - BGN 39,240.

12.2. State-owned forest enterprises

The reported revenues from the overall activity of the state-owned enterprises for 2023 are BGN 510 mln, and the total expenses - BGN 502 mln. Compared to 2022, the revenues of enterprises increased by 8% and the costs by 13%.

The total financial result of SEs from their operating activities in 2023 was positive in the amount of BGN 7.8 million after taxation.

The investments made by the six SE in the year amounted to BGN 71.092 million, 33.258 million more than the previous year. Of these, BGN 30,640 million (43%) were implemented with funds from the Forest Investment Fund - BGN 6.235 million more than in 2022, for the implementation of the following activities:

- design of 36.1 km construction of new roads and overhaul of existing forest roads - 0.382 million BGN;
- construction and overhaul of forest roads and transport technical infrastructure - BGN 23.2 million;
- for afforestation activities - BGN 4.9 million;
- purchase of forest territories– BGN 2.138 million.

27 buildings, 97 vehicles and 281 specialized equipment were purchased with funds from the economic activity amounting to BGN 40.443 million and major repairs of 50 buildings and equipment were carried out. .

13. Administrative service

In 2023, 19 meetings of the Commission for consideration of applications for entry of individuals and traders in the public registers of EFA under Art. 235 and Art. 241 of the Forest Act, as a result of which certificates were registered and issued to 279 individuals for forestry practice. Certificates of 277 traders for carrying out activities in the forest territories have been registered and issued.

During the year 44 merchants were deregistered from the public register under Art. 241 (1) of the Forest Act, and 40 natural persons were deregistered under Art. 235 of the Forest Act. 4 natural persons were refused entry in the public registers of EFA.

As of 31.12.2023, the total number of natural persons registered for forestry practice is 12,500, and of registered traders - 4,687.

38 tests were organized and conducted in accordance with Art. 236a of the Forest Act, for which a total of 438 candidates appeared, of which 175 passed.

Numerous consultations were held with owners, private foresters and other interested persons by phone, e-mail, in the reception of the MAF, and during the field inspections.

VII. FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE

1. Catch and production of fish and other aquatic organisms

Catch of fish and other aquatic organisms

According to data from the Executive Agency for Fisheries and Aquaculture (EAFA), in 2023 the total catch of fish and other aquatic organisms from commercial fishing in the country amounted to 6,704.1 tons - 19.8% more on an annual basis, of which 6,667.1 tons in the Black Sea and 37 tons in the Danube River. Compared to 2022, the catch in the Black Sea increased by 20.2%, and that in the Danube River decreased by 22.7%.

Table VII.1. Total catch of fish and other aquatic organisms in the country per water basins, tons

	2020	2021	2022	2023	Change 2023/2022
Catch in the Black Sea - total, including:	6,228.1	8,920.5	5,546.5	6,667.1	20.2%
- saltwater species	3,418.7	5,875.1	2,812.6	4,085.3	45.2%
- diadromous fishes, Pontic shad	15.8	22.6	6.8	5.0	-26.8%
- veined rapa whelk, mussels and shrimps	2,794.5	3,022.3	2,727.0	2,576.8	-5.5%
Catch in the Danube River - total, including:	69.2	89.8	47.8	37.0	-22.7%
- freshwater fish	67.2	86.4	47.0	36.7	-21.8%

	2020	2021	2022	2023	Change 2023/2022
- diadromous fishes, Pontic shad	0.7	1.9	0.8	0.3	-68.9%
- other aquatic organisms	1.4	1.5	0.0	0.0	-
Total catch of fish and other aquatic organisms	6,297.3	9,010.3	5,594.3	6,704.1	19.8%

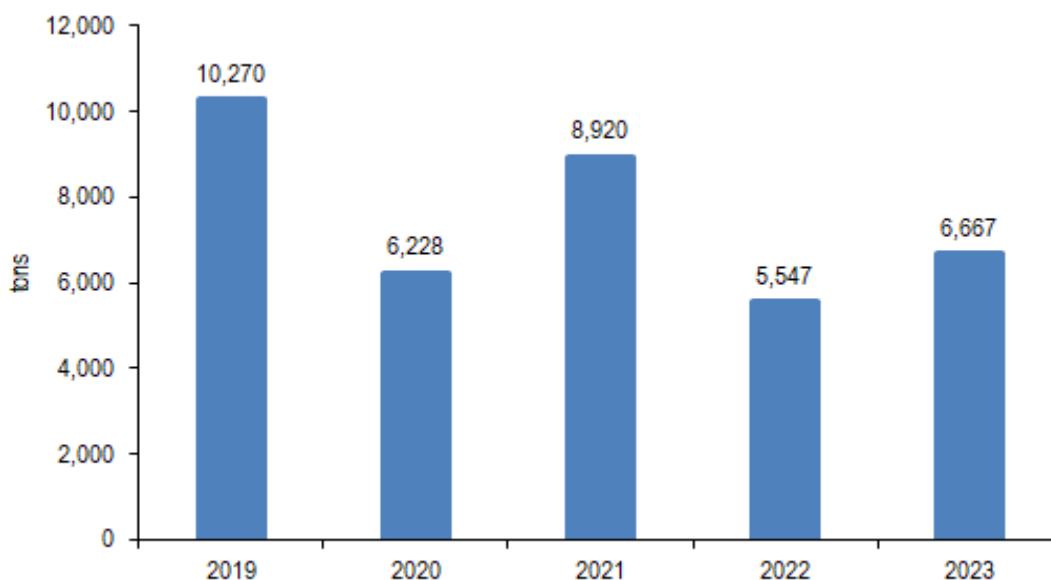
Source: EAFA

The total amount of marine fish species caught in 2023 amounted to 4,085.3 tons, 1,272.7 tons or 45.2% more than in 2022. Traditionally, the most significant catch was sprat (salmon, bream, sprat), amounting to 3,264.3 tons, which increased by 55.1% (or about 1,703.3 tons) compared to the previous year. Among other Black Sea fish species, the catch of saffron is more significant - 373 tons and Black Sea mullet - 241.2 tons, respectively twice and by 33.3% more on an annual basis. The turbot catch was 84.4 tonnes, which is 29.5 tonnes above the 2022 level, due to the carryover of the unachieved quota in 2021 to the fishing opportunities of the Republic of Bulgaria in 2023. Therefore, the turbot catch quota in 2023 is in the amount of 92.14 tons. At the same time, a serious decrease was observed in catches of atherine - by 97.4%, leper - by 93.6% and anchovy - by 95.8%.

In 2023, the catches of rapana, which account for the bulk of catches of aquatic organisms in the Black Sea, amounted to 2,290.4 tons, which is 5.8% more than the previous year. The catch of white sand clam fell by 54.6% year-on-year, and that of the black sea clam - by 40.6%.

The amount of fish species caught in the Black Sea in 2023 shrinks by 26.8% compared to the previous year, to 5 tons.

Figure VII.1. Catch of fish and other aquatic organisms in the Black Sea, tons



Source: EAFA

The total catch in the Danube in 2023 includes 36.7 tons of freshwater fish 0.3 tons - diadromous fish species - shad.

Compared to the previous year, there was a decrease in the total catches of freshwater fish by around 22%. Significant decline from 2022 is accounted for in the caught quantities of white barbel - by 60.1%, white fish /sulka/ - by 56.8% and silver carp - by 50%. The biggest catch is carp - 6 tons, silver carp - 5.1 tons, European catfish - 3.4 tons, spotted flounder - 3.7 tons.

The catch of passage fish (shad) in the Danube River in 2023 was 68.9% below the previous year's level.

The reported total farm catch of fish and other aquatic organisms in the first six months of 2024 amounted to 3,821.3 tons, marking an increase of 21% compared to the same period in 2023.

Table VII.2. Catch of fish and other aquatic organisms from commercial fishing bodies in 2023

	Type of fish/aquatic species	Quantity (tons)
A. The Danube River		
1	Danube bleak / <i>Chalcalburnus chalcoides</i> /	0.040
2	Grass carp / <i>Ctenopharingodon idella</i> /	2.994
3	Silver carp / <i>Hypophthalmichthys molitrix</i> /	3.040
4	White barbel / <i>Barbus barbus</i> /	2.174
5	Zander / <i>Sander lucioperca</i> / <i>Stizostedion lucioperca</i> /	1.068
6	Crucian carp / <i>Carassius carassius</i> /	0.000
7	Pontic shad, Danube mackerel / <i>Caspialosa pontica</i> / <i>Alosa pontica</i> /	0.264
8	Common roach (<i>Rutilus rutilus</i>)	0.002
9	Vimba bream / <i>Vimba vimba</i> /	2.815
10	Burbot / <i>Urophycis spp</i> /	0.003
11	Ide / <i>Leuciscus idus</i> /	0.000
12	Pound-scaled barbel / <i>Barbus cyclolepis</i> /	0.000
13	Common bream / <i>Abramis brama</i> /	2.824
14	Bighead carp / <i>Aristichthys nobilis</i> /	3.665
15	Goby / <i>Gobiidae</i> /	0.021
16	Asp box / <i>Aspius aspius</i> /	0.789
17	Chub / <i>Leuciscus cephalus</i> /	0.016
18	European perch / <i>Perca fluviatilis</i> /	0.000
19	Common nase / <i>Chondrostoma nasus</i> /	0.610
20	European catfish / <i>Sillurus glanis</i> /	3.413
21	Sabrefish / <i>Pelecus cultratus</i> /	0.000
22	Prussian carp / <i>Carassius sp.</i> /	5.076
23	Bleak / <i>Alburnus alburnus</i> /	2.050
24	Common rudd / <i>Scardinius erythrophthalmus</i> /	0.023
25	Carp / <i>Cyprinus carpio</i> /	6.008
26	Blue bream (<i>Abramis ballerus</i>)	0.005
27	Pike / <i>Esox lucius</i> /	0.104
	Total for the Danube river	36.98
B. Black Sea		
1	Atherina / <i>Atherina spp.</i> /	0.408
2	White sand mussel / <i>Mya arenaria</i> /	152.860
3	Deep sea worm	0.005
4	Garpiki (Belone belone)	2.243
5	Leaping mullet / <i>Liza saliens</i> /	1.146
6	Turbot / <i>Psetta maxima</i> /	84.383
7	Pontic shad, Danube mackerel / <i>Caspialosa pontica</i> / <i>Alosa pontica</i> /	5.000
8	So-iuy mullet (<i>Mugil soiyu</i>)	0.087
9	Sea bass / <i>Dicentrarchus labrax</i> / <i>Morone labrax</i> /	0.060
10	Bluefish / <i>Pomatomus saltatrix</i> /	35.950
11	Common stingray / <i>Dasyatis pastinaca</i> /	0.350
12	Thornback ray / <i>Raja clavata</i> /	22.724
13	Monkfish / <i>Lophius piscatorius</i> /	0.887
14	Snouted sole / <i>Solea solea</i> /	0.000
15	Flathead mullet / <i>Mugil cephalus</i> /	2.660
16	Common prawn / <i>Leander spp.</i> /	0.323
17	Yellow crab / <i>Eriphia verrucosa</i> /	0.161

	Type of fish/aquatic species	Quantity (tons)
18	Atlantic bonito /Sarda sarda/	1.298
19	Flounder /Platichthys flesus luscus/	0.036
20	Golden grey mullet/ Liza aurata /	0.392
21	Family Goby /Gobiidae/	13.021
22	Sand shrimp / Crangon sp./	0.687
23	Rapa whelk /Rapana spp./	2,290.376
24	Scad /Trachurus mediterraneus ponticus/	372.96
25	European pilchard	0.015
26	Spicara	0.025
27	Anchovy /Engraulis encrasicolus ponticus/	6.451
28	Sprat /Sprattus sprattus sulinus/	3,264.269
29	Black mussel /Mytilus galloprovincialis/	133.260
30	Black Sea Mullet /Mullus barbatus ponticus/	241.170
31	Spiny dogfish /Squalus acanthias/	11.653
32	Black Sea whiting /Merlangius merlangus euxinus/	22.095
33	Black Sea mackerel	0.000
34	Other	0.167
	Total for the Black Sea	6,667.12
	Total for the Black Sea and the Danube River	6,704.10

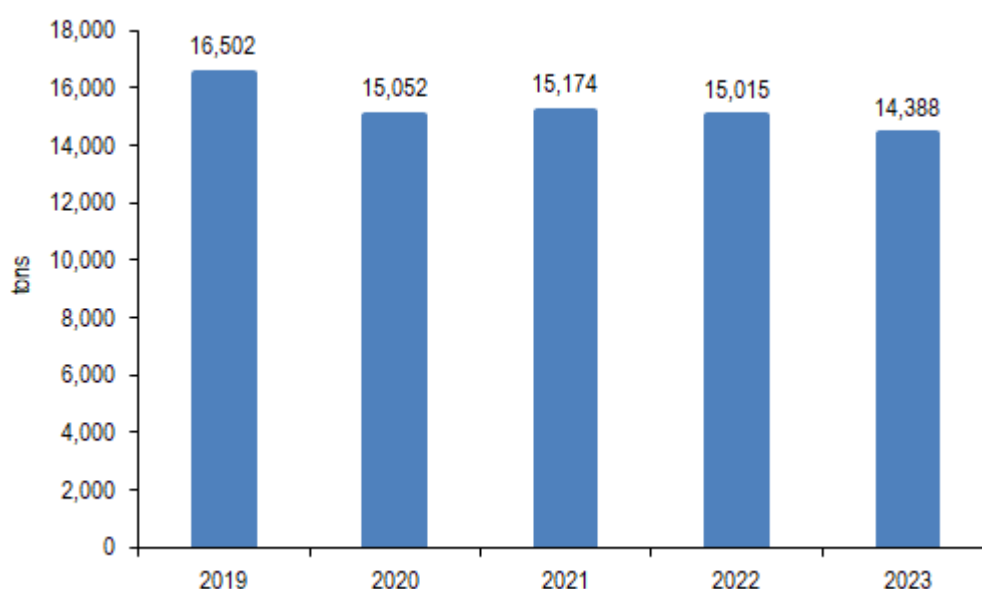
Source: EAFA

Production of fish and other aquatic organisms

According to EAFA data, by the end of 2023, the total number of active fish farms in the country was 740. Of these 719 were for freshwater aquaculture and 21 - for marine aquaculture.

Within 2023 in specialized fish farms, a total of 14,387.65 tons of aquaculture (stocking material, fish and other aquatic organisms for consumption) were produced, which is 4.2% less on an annual basis.

Figure VII.2. Production of fish and other organisms in specialized fish farms for the period 2019 - 2023, tons



Source: EAFA (data for 2023 as of 30.06.2024)

The total reported production of stocking material in fish farms is 1,413.8 tons. The quantity marked a decrease of 41.5% compared to the previous year, due to a decrease in the production of stocking material from some of the main types of fish grown in fish farms - African catfish by 94.6%, Balkan river trout - by 91.5%, pike -

with 70.1%, rainbow trout - with 60.7% and carp - with 41.8%. At the same time, the stocking material produced from Russian sturgeon - by 70.1%, paddlefish - by 48.6%, white fish - by 21.1% and catfish - by 13.3% increased.

In 2023, the production of fish and other aquatic organisms for consumption amounted to 12,937.9 tons - 2.7% more on an annual basis. Traditionally, the production of fish for consumption from the rainbow trout, carp and bighead carp species was the largest. Compared to the previous year, there was an increase in the production of fish for consumption of the following species: grayling - by more than three times, catfish - by 48.1%, white fish - by 36.2%, river (Balkan) trout - by 20.7%, carp - by 14.8%, rainbow trout - by 10, 8%.

The production of fish species that are by-catches in extensive and semi-intensive hot water farms - bream, bleak, perch and red perch was reported during the year. These species are not subject to targeted breeding and rearing in aquaculture.

The main species of marine aquaculture grown in the coastal waters of the country is the black mussel. In 2023, its consumption output reached 2,551.5 tons, 5.3% above the previous year's level.

Table VII.3. Production of fish stocking material, fish and aquatic organisms in fish farms, tons

No.	Common and local names	Fish stocking material		Fish for human consumption		Total weight	
		2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023
1	Brown (Balkan) trout	37.13	3.15	9.87	11.91	47.00	15.06
2	Rainbow trout	764.40	300.79	4,259.31	4,718.64	5,023.71	5,019.43
3	Brook trout	1.18	0.00	0.10	0.34	1.28	0.34
4	Pike	4.99	1.49	11.99	9.02	16.98	10.51
5	Tench	0.09	0.02	0.69	0.22	0.77	0.24
6	Bleak (Danube bleak)	0.00	0.00	7.84	0.52	7.84	0.52
7	Bream	0.00	0.00	6.13	2.92	6.13	2.92
8	Carp	959.53	558.48	3,016.36	3,463.43	3,975.89	4,021.91
9	Crucian carp	0.00	0.00	2.25	2.02	2.25	2.02
10	Prussian carp	2.65	5.38	258.60	241.53	261.25	246.90
11	Silver carp	61.12	30.28	107.80	83.54	168.92	113.82
12	Bighead carp	262.98	246.01	994.71	931.13	1,257.69	1,177.13
13	Grass carp	164.44	152.21	211.41	149.64	375.85	301.85
14	Black carp	0.75	0.00	0.52	0.32	1.27	0.32
15	Catfish	28.87	32.71	136.22	201.62	165.09	234.33
16	Channel (American) catfish	0.00	0.10	11.05	4.51	11.05	4.61
17	Zander	7.50	9.08	43.74	59.58	51.24	68.66
18	European perch	0.00	0.00	1.86	0.12	1.86	0.12
19	Sterlet	0.00	0.00	0.41	3.62	0.41	3.62
20	Beluga sturgeon	0.00	0.00	59.28	22.89	59.28	22.89
21	Starry sturgeon	0.00	0.00	0.25	0.30	0.25	0.30
22	Russian sturgeon	1.54	2.62	595.03	255.52	596.57	258.14
23	Black mussel	0.00	0.00	2,422.11	2,551.52	2,422.11	2,551.52
24	Other hybrids of the Sturgeon family	0.71	0.43	59.57	41.87	60.28	42.26
25	Paddlefish	44.15	65.60	126.25	72.19	170.39	137.79
26	Green algae	0.00	0.00	10.32	10.97	10.32	10.97
27	Rudd	0.00	0.00	12.15	0.35	12.15	0.35
28	African catfish	73.78	3.99	168.75	35.84	242.52	39.83

No.	Common and local names	Fish stocking material		Fish for human consumption		Total weight	
29	Siberian sturgeon	0.00	0.00	31.02	54.75	31.02	54.75
30	Lake crab	0.01	0.01	5.30	1.40	5.31	1.41
31	River crab	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.20	0.00	0.20
32	Bester	0.00	0.00	0.30	16.72	0.30	16.72
33	Common prawn	0.00	0.00	22.51	22.61	22.51	22.61
34	Tilapia	0.06	1.43	0.25	0.15	0.31	1.58
35	Common Roach	0.00	0.00	2.40	0.00	2.40	0.00
36	Nase	0.00	0.00	0.91	0.00	0.91	0.00
37	Pacific oyster	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.00	2.00
38	Other	0.00	0.02	1.60	0.00	1.60	0.02
	Total	2,415.88	1,413.80	12,598.66	12,937.91	15,014.71	14,387.65

Source: EAFA (data for 2023 as of 30.06.2024)

In 2024, an increase in the number of fish farms and, accordingly, in aquaculture production is expected. The construction of new farms, as well as the modernization and increase of production capacities contribute to the development of the sector.

2. Import and export of fish and fish products

Import

According to NSI data, in 2023, a total of 40,402 tons of fish and fish products were imported into the country, 8.6% less on an annual basis. Compared to the previous year, there was a decrease in the import of frozen fish, fresh and chilled fish, crustaceans and other aquatic invertebrates and an increase in that of live fish, frozen fillets, salted and dried fish, molluscs (live, fresh, chilled, frozen, dried) and preserved crustaceans and molluscs.

Table VII.4. Import of fish, other aquatic organisms and fish products, tons

Products	2022	2023	Change 2023/2022
Fish, other aquatic organisms and fish products - total, including:	44,208	40,402	-8.6%
Live fish - freshwater and saltwater	534	623	16.8%
Fish, fresh or chilled, excluding fillets	6,219	5,719	-8.0%
Fish - frozen, excluding fillets	19,333	16,034	-17.1%
Fish fillets and other fish meat, fresh or chilled, frozen	4,053	4,189	3.4%
Fish - dried, salted, smoked	470	514	9.5%
Crustaceans	4,323	3,908	-9.6%
Mollusks*	2,905	3,055	5.2%
Aquatic invertebrates other than crustaceans and mollusks	639	594	-6.9%
Ready foods and canned fish; caviar	4,430	4,431	0.01%
Crustaceans and mollusks, tinned	1,302	1,334	2.4%

Source: NSI data and MAF calculations

*It also includes some terrestrial molluscs that cannot be distinguished.

The quantities of fish and fish products supplied from EU Member States during the year amounted to 27,317 tons, 6.1% less on an annual basis, with the main partners being Spain (5.1 thousand tons), Greece (4.8 thousand tons), the Netherlands (3.9 thousand tons) and Denmark (3.1 thousand tons), followed by Romania (1.8 thousand tons), Poland (1.5 thousand tons) and others.

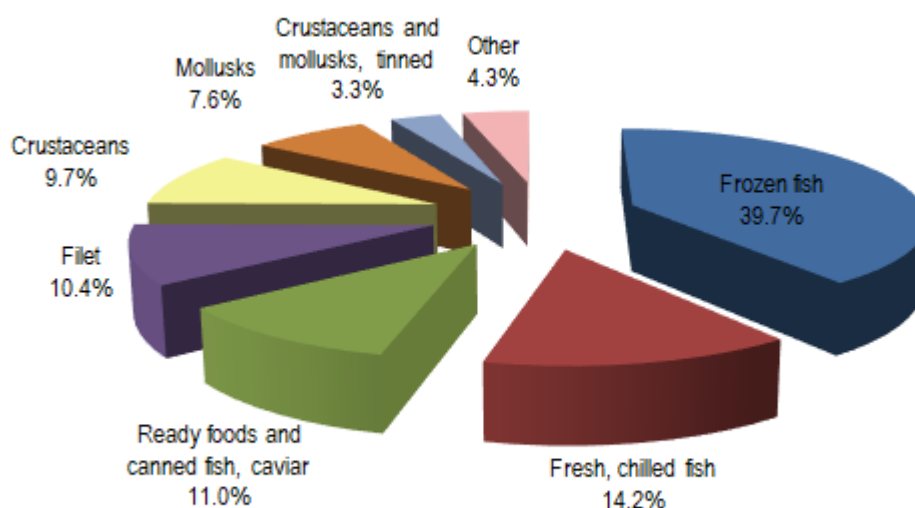
Figure VII.3. Import of fish and fish products from the EU and third countries, tonnes



Source: NSI

The import of fish and fish products from third countries decreased by 13.5% compared to the previous year, to 13,085 tons. The most significant is the import from Norway (3.2 thousand tons), Morocco (1.7 thousand tons), China (1.5 thousand tons), Canada (1.3 thousand tons), Turkey and Iceland (with just over a thousand tons each).

Figure VII.4. Structure of import of fish and fishery products in 2023



Source: NSI data and MAF calculations

Traditionally, frozen fish had the largest share in total imports of fish, aquatic organisms and fish products. In 2023, 16,034 tons of frozen fish, excluding fillets, were imported, which is 17.1% below the previous year's level. Although it decreased by 12.2% on an annual basis, the import of frozen mackerel remained the most significant - 7,839 tons. The deliveries of frozen fish of the following varieties were also relatively large:

hake - 1,337 tons, sprats - 1,043 tons, sardines - 632 tons, cod - 1,006 tons, herring - 301 tons, salmon - 201 tons, horse mackerel - 72 tons and trout - 255 tons.

A decrease compared to the previous year was also recorded in the supply of crustaceans - by 9.6%, fresh and chilled fish - by 8% and aquatic invertebrates other than crustaceans and molluscs - by 6.9%. At the same time, imports of live fish, frozen fillets, salted and dried fish, molluscs (live, fresh, chilled, frozen, dried) and canned crustaceans and molluscs increased by between 2.4% and 16.8%. The imported amount of ready-made food and canned fish has not changed significantly.

Preliminary data for the first six months of 2024 point to a decrease in the import of fish, other aquatic organisms and processed fish products by 11.8% on an annual basis, to 16,726 tons. This included 11,534 tonnes from the EU and 5,192 tonnes from third countries, respectively 3.8% and 25.6% below the year-ago level.

Export

According to NSI data, in 2023 a total of 14,650 tons of fish, other aquatic organisms and fish products were exported. The amount is 1.9% less compared to the previous year, due to a decrease in the export of ready-made food and canned fish (by 25.8%), salted and dried fish (by 23.8%) and canned crustaceans and molluscs (with 8.4%). During the year, the export of aquatic invertebrates other than crustaceans and molluscs in the amount of 0.058 tons was realized, in the absence of such in the previous year. In the case of other types of fish products, growth from 4.7% (fresh and chilled fish) to 43.7% (crustaceans) is reported.

Table VII.5. Export of fish, other aquatic organisms and fish products, tonnes

Products	2022	2023	Change 2023/2022
Fish, other aquatic organisms and fish products - total, including:	14,928	14,650	-1.9%
Live fish - freshwater and saltwater	982	1,105	12.5%
Fish, fresh or chilled, excluding fillets	2,212	2,316	4.7%
Fish - frozen, excluding fillets	1,539	2,100	36.4%
Fish fillets and other fish meat, fresh or chilled, frozen	657	929	41.4%
Fish - dried, salted, smoked	949	723	-23.8%
Crustaceans	85	122	43.7%
Mollusks*	1,471	1,780	21.0%
Aquatic invertebrates other than crustaceans and mollusks	-	0.058	-
Ready foods and canned fish; caviar	4,987	3,702	-25.8%
Crustaceans and mollusks, tinned	2,046	1,874	-8.4%

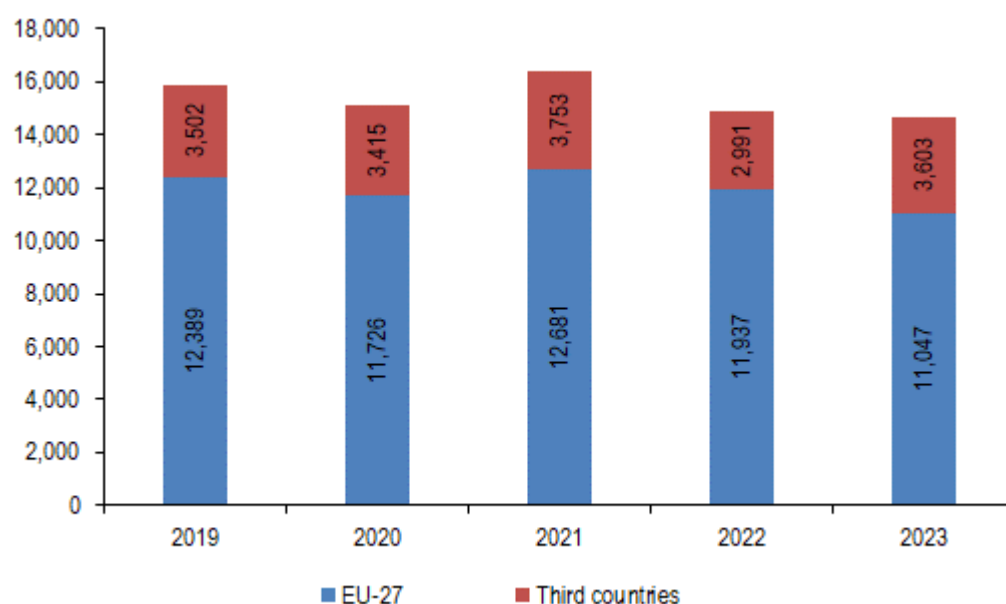
Source: NSI data and MAF calculations

*It also includes some terrestrial molluscs, which cannot be distinguished.

In 2023 the export of fish and fish products to the EU decreased by 7.5% compared to the previous year, to 11,407 tons (75.4% of the total export). The most significant quantities are directed to Romania (5,942 tons) and Sweden (2,159 tons), followed by those to Belgium (537 tons), Germany (470 tons), Greece (464 tons), Spain (403 tons), etc.

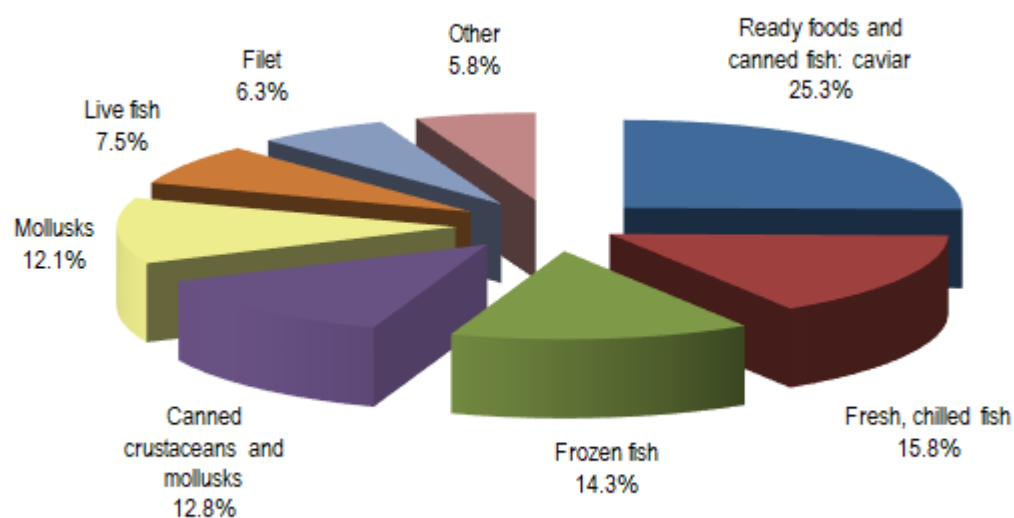
Exports of fish and fish products to third countries amounted to 3,603 tons - 20.5% more than in 2022. Shipments were mainly made to Serbia (1,665 tons), Bosnia and Herzegovina (631 tons), South Korea (383 tons), Japan (338 tons), the United Kingdom (162 tons), Ukraine (83 tons) and Moldova (73 tons).

Figure VII.5. Exports of fish, other aquatic organisms and fishery products to the EU and third countries, tons



Source: NSI

Figure VII.6. Structure of exports of fish and fishery products in 2023



Source: NSI data and MAF calculations

According to preliminary data, in the first half of 2024 6,415 tons of fish, aquatic organisms and processed fish products were exported from the country. The total amount is 4% less compared to the same period of 2023, with a similar decrease in percentage terms of exports both to the EU - to 4,755 tons, and to third countries - to 1,660 tons.

3. Maritime and Fisheries Program 2014 - 2020 and Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Program 2021 - 2027

In 2023 efforts have been made for the successful implementation and completion of the Maritime and Fisheries Program 2014 - 2020 (MFP). The unstable economic environment led to the impossibility of some of the beneficiaries to fulfill their commitments under the Program, which is why an increase in the number of terminated contracts is reported.

During the year, measures were taken to reduce the risk of loss of funds under MFP, through intensive communication with beneficiaries, introduced electronic contracts and simplified costs, shortened terms for assessment, subsequent control, verification and payment.

In order to minimize the negative consequences for the sector of Russia's war against Ukraine (related to an increase in costs and trade disruptions), already at the end of 2022 call is open for compensation of fishing operators under measure 1.9. "Temporary cessation of fishing activities due to the Russian war in Ukraine that threatens the security of fishing activities or impedes the economic viability of fishing operations". At the beginning of 2023 the first calls under measure 5.3 "Measures for market supply" for compensation of all sub-sectors - Fishing, Aquaculture and Processing - have also been announced.

In September 2023 The Maritime and Fisheries Program has been amended to provide an additional financial resource for a second intake of compensatory measures to mitigate the consequences of Russia's war against Ukraine.

The co-financed activities achieving the objectives of the CFP through the modernization of the existing fishing ports, the construction of moorings, including investments in infrastructure necessary to facilitate the fulfillment of the obligation to land landings and the implementation of catch control have a total value of 46,403,793 BGN (23,726,247 EUR).

In 2023, events organized by the National Fisheries Network (NFN) continue being implemented, some of them being held online in order to reach more participants.

Under the Maritime and Fisheries Program 2014 - 2020, 231 contracts were concluded in 2023, and the implementation of the Program according to EU priorities is as follows:

Union priority 1: Promoting environmentally sustainable, innovative, competitive and knowledge-based, resource-efficient fisheries

Main achievements under UP 1 - 65 administrative contracts for granting financial aid (AGC) were concluded.

Calls announced under measures:

- 1.8 "Fishing ports, landing piers, fish markets and marinas", sector "Investments aimed at construction and/or modernization of marinas";
- 1.9 "Temporary cessation of fishing activities due to the Russian war in Ukraine that threatens the security of fishing activities or impedes the economic viability of fishing operations".

In 2023 under Measure 1.8, a call with a budget of 6 mln. BGN grant (3,067,798 euros), aimed solely at the construction and/or modernization of marinas.

In connection with the established high interest, with the amendment of MFP in 2023 funds in the amount of 2,084,944 Euros were transferred to it.

7 contracts worth BGN 4,613,185 (EUR 2,358,720) in grants were concluded in 2023.

At the end of 2022 call under Measure 1.9 "Temporary suspension of fishing activity as a result of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, which threatens the security of fishing activities or hinders the economic viability of fishing operations", is announced, with acceptance of projects until March 9, 2023. A total of 58 projects were received under this call, and in 2023 39 contracts worth BGN 850,573 (EUR 434,898) in grants were concluded. In connection with the ongoing hostilities, in order to compensate for the sector's losses, the MA announced a second call of the measure at the end of 2023.

The contracted funds in 2023 amounted to BGN 6,121,372 (EUR 3,129 856) in grants. The total progress under FP1 in terms of public expenditures paid to beneficiaries in the year amounted to BGN 2,288,705 (EUR 1,170,214).

The certified funds in 2023 amount to BGN 1,869,543 (EUR 955,897) EMFF (the amount of certified expenditure also includes those contracted in previous years).

The total agreed funds until 31.12.2023 amount to 39,029,362 BGN (19,955,702 EUR) of grants or 92% of the priority budget.

The total funds disbursed by 31.12.2023 amount to 31,390,346 leva (16,049,875 euros) in grants or 74% of the priority budget.

The total certified funds by 31.12.2023 amount to BGN 22,135,373 EMFF (EUR 11,317,810) or 52% of the priority budget.

Union priority 2: Fostering environmentally sustainable, innovative, competitive and knowledge-based resource-efficient aquaculture

Main achievements under UP 2 in 2023 - 7 AGC were concluded.

In 2023 there are no open measures under this priority and no calls have been announced.

The overall progress under UP 2 in terms of contracted funds in 2023 amounted to BGN 1,335,433 (EUR 682,807) in grants.

The total progress under FP2 in terms of public expenditures paid to beneficiaries in 2023 amounted to BGN 3,153,638 (EUR 1,612,454) in grants.

The certified funds in 2023 amounted to EUR 763,452 EMFF or (the amount of certified expenditure includes certificated contracts in previous years.)

The total funds contracted by the end of 2023 amount to 45,909,738 leva (23,473,636 euros) in grants or 126% of the priority budget.

The total funds disbursed amount to 29,169,695 leva (14,914,457 euros) in grants or 80% of the priority budget.

The total certified funds by the EC by the end of 2023 amounted to BGN 21,109,712 (EUR 10,793,390) EMFF or 77% of the priority budget.

Union Priority 3: Promoting the implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy

2 measures are set at Program level under Union Priority 3. The implementation of the approved project proposals, which are implemented by a specific beneficiary, the Executive Agency for Fisheries and Aquaculture, continues to be a priority.

Main achievements under UP 3 in 2023 - 3 AGC were concluded.

Measures opened for calls:

- 3.1 "Control and enforcement" (the call started in 2017 and has a deadline in 2023);
- 3.2 "Data collection under the National Program for Data Collection and Management of the Fisheries Sector 2017 - 2019" (the started in 2017 and has a deadline in 2023).

3 contracts worth BGN 1,752 979 (EUR 896,298) in grants were concluded in 2023.

A total of 30 contracts worth 15,862,442 BGN (8,110,462 EUR) or 94% of the measure's budget have been concluded under the measure.

The current budget under Measure 3.2 "Data Collection" is BGN 5,622,916 (EUR 2,874,995 EUR) in grants.

In 2023, no contracts were concluded under the measure 3.2.

So far, 5 contracts were concluded worth BGN 5,857 003 (EUR 2,994,684) in grants or 104% of the

measure's budget. The total progress under UP 3 in terms of contracted funds in 2023 amounted to BGN 1,752,979 (EUR 896,298) in grants or 8% of the priority budget.

The paid funds in 2023 amounted to BGN 4,395,123 (EUR 2,247,225) in grants or 119.6% of the priority budget.

The certified funds in 2023 amounted to BGN 3,304,426 (EUR 1,689,552) EMFF or 17% of the priority budget.

The total funds contracted by the end of 2023 amount to 21,719,445 leva (11,105,146 euros) in grants or 97% of the priority budget.

The total funds paid by the end of 2023 amount to 17,184,498 leva (8,786,429 euros) in grants or 77% of the priority budget.

The total certified funds by the EC by the end of 2023 amounted to BGN 12,164,563 (EUR 6,219,737) EMFF or 63% of the priority budget.

Union Priority 4: Increasing Employment and Territorial Cohesion

In 2023 in connection with building the capacity of the Local Fishery Initiative Groups for the 2021-2027 program period, the Managing Authority of the MFP with the assistance of the National Fisheries Network held three information events.

The implementation of the strategies under CLLD in 2023 is in its final phase. During the year, the number of announced procedures under the measures and of concluded contracts decreased, given the end of the program period. The focus is on submitting requests for final payments, verifying and certifying expenses.

Main achievements under UP 4 - In 2023, 46 administrative contracts for grants under the approved 9 CLLD strategies of the Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) were concluded.

Total by the end of 2023 217 contracts were concluded, including projects on preparatory assistance, projects under the strategies of the FLAG and ongoing expenses of the FLAG.

In 2023 4 procedures have been announced for acceptance of measures from the approved 9 strategies for CLLD of FLAG with a total budget of BGN 1,345,158 (EUR 687,779) BFP.

The overall progress under UP 4 in terms of contracted funds in 2023 amounted to BGN 7,729,409 (EUR 3,952,045) in grants or 21% of the priority budget.

The total progress under UP 4 in terms of public expenditure paid to the beneficiaries in 2023 amounted to BGN 12,719,315 (EUR 6,503,382) in grants or 35% of the priority budget.

The certified funds in 2023 amounted to BGN 5,444,486 (EUR 2,783,764) EMFF or 17% of the priority budget.

The total agreed funds for projects from the FLAG strategies until the end of 2023 are in the amount of BGN 36,824,156 (EUR 18,828,181) grants, incl. preparatory assistance and running costs of the FLAG or 100% of the priority budget.

The total funds paid by the end of 2023 amount to 21,851,864 leva (11,172,852 euros) in grants or 59% of the priority budget.

The total certified funds by the EC by the end of 2023 amounted to BGN 9,474,507 EMFF or 59% of the priority budget.

Union Priority 5: Fostering marketing and processing

Main achievements under UP 5 - 103 administrative contracts for grants were concluded in 2023

Measures opened for calls:

- 5.3 "Marketing measures" - sector "Fishing", sector "Aquaculture", sector "Processing of fishing and aquaculture products" under Article 68, paragraph 3 of Reg. (EU) 508/2014 amended with Reg. (EU) 2022/1278 financial compensation for operators in the sector related to the military situation in Ukraine.

According to Measure 5.3 Market supply measures - "Fishing" sector, 2 calls have been announced in 2023. The first call is announced in the 1st quarter of 2023 with a budget of BGN 2,467,506 (EUR 1,261,635) in grants. 14 contracts have been concluded for the provision of grants worth 211,752 BGN (108,269 EUR) in grants or 1% of the total budget of the measure. The second call is announced in the 4th quarter of 2023 with a budget of BGN 2,467,506 (EUR 1,261,635) in grants. As of 31.12.2023 11 project proposals have been received, which are in the process of evaluation and no contracts have yet been concluded.

According to Measure 5.3 Market supply measures - Aquaculture sector, 2 calls have been announced in 2023. The first call is announced in the 1st quarter of 2023 with a budget of BGN 4,693,920 (EUR 2,400,000) in grants. 51 contracts have been concluded for the provision of grants worth 2,974,619 BGN (1,520,922 EUR) in grants or 14% of the total budget of the measure. The second call is announced in the 4th quarter of 2023 with a budget of BGN 4,693,920 (EUR 2,400,000) in grants. As of 31.12.2023 23 project proposals have been received, which are in the process of evaluation and no contracts have yet been concluded.

According to Measure 5.3 Market supply measures - sector "Processing of fishing and aquaculture products", 2 calls have been announced in 2023. The first call is announced in the 1st quarter of 2023 with a budget of BGN 4,661,270 (EUR 2,383,306) in grants. 31 contracts have been concluded for the provision of grants worth 4,393,030 BGN (2,246,155 EUR) in grants or 21% of the total budget of the measure. The second call is announced in the 4th quarter of 2023 with a budget of BGN 3,510,426 (EUR 1,794,880) in grants. As of 31.12.2023 31 project proposals have been received, which are in the process of evaluation and no contracts have yet been concluded.

The agreed funds under UP5 in 2023 amounted to BGN 9,946,980 (EUR 5,085,888) in grants or 12% of the priority budget.

BGN 5,541,489 (EUR 2,833,362) of grants were paid in 2023.

The certified funds in amount to BGN 4,133,255 (EUR 2,066,627) EMFF or 12% of the UP5 budget.

The total funds contracted amount to 32,996,027 leva (16,870,859 euros) or 71% of the UP5 budget.

The total funds disbursed amount to 25,127,356 leva (12,847,610 EUR) in grants or 54% of the UP5 budget.

In total, BGN 18,345,001 (EUR 9,379,794) of the EFMD or 39% of the budget of PS 5 have been certified.

Union Priority 6: Integrated Maritime Policy

Main achievements under UP 6 - a total of 9 contracts are being implemented.

Measures opened for calls:

In 2023, a call was announced under Measure 6.3 "Raising awareness of the marine environment" under UP 6 with a budget of BGN 300,000 in grants. 1 contract was concluded with a total value of BGN 515,288 (EUR 263,467) in grants. The total number of contracts concluded under measure 6.3 by the end of 2023 is 8.

The total funds contracted under UP6 amount to 6,188,063 leva (3,163,955 euros) in grants or 115% of the priority budget.

The total funds disbursed amount to 4,648,479 leva (2,376,766 euros) in grants or 86% of the priority budget.

The total certified funds by the EC by the end of the reporting period amounted to BGN 3,486,361 (EUR 1,782,575) EMFF or 86% of the priority budget.

Pursuant to the Agreement for Delegation of Functions for Implementation of the RDP 2014 - 2020, the SFA - Paying Agency, as the Intermediate Body of the Managing Authority, verifies the expenditures upon submission of a request for payment.

In 2023, payment requests according to the table below were accepted, verified and paid through UMIS 2020.

Table VII.6. Projects paid under measures of the MFP 2014 - 2020 for the period 01.01.2023 - 31.12.2023 (BGN)

Measure	Number of projects	Amount paid	National funding	European funding
1. 6. Conservation and restoration of marine biodiversity and ecosystems and compensation regimes in the framework of sustainable fishing activities	2	269,174.65	71,977.31	197,197.34
1.8. Investments for improvement of the infrastructure in the fishing ports, investments for improvement of unloading berths. Construction or modernization of boat docks	8	2,109,554.49	564,094.87	1,545,459.62
1. 9. Support for owners of fishing vessels and fishermen to overcome the economic consequences of the outbreak of COVID-19 due to temporary cessation of fishing activities	16	638,171.22	170,646.99	467,524.23
1.9.Temporary suspension of fishing activity (Ukraine)	17	499,382.00	133,534.75	365,847.25
2. 2. Productive investments in aquaculture	5	1,331,958.77	320,662.24	1,011,296.53
2.3. Fostering new aquaculture producers, developing sustainable aquaculture	1	78,933.53	19,733.39	59,200.15
2. 5. Aquaculture providing environmental services	4	362,250.08	90,562.52	271,687.57
2. 6. Support to producers of fish and other aquatic organisms to address the economic consequences of the COVID19 pandemic	1	66,311.86	16,577.97	49,733.89
3. 1. Control and enforcement	8	2,688,889.11	268,888.91	2,420,000.20
4.2. Implementation of community led local development strategies	95	7,374,234.06	1,106,134.98	6,268,099.08
5.1. Plans for production and marketing	1	71,603.40	17,900.85	53,702.55
5.3. Measures for market supply - Ukraine	45	4,942,288.87	1,235,572.22	3,706,716.65
5.4 Processing of fishing and aquaculture products	3	466,634.14	116,658.53	349,975.61
6.1 Fostering the implementation of the CFP	1	664,352.58	166,088.15	498,264.43
6. 3. Raising awareness of the marine environment	2	394,818.96	98,704.74	296,114.22
7. 1. Technical assistance	7	565,185.93	141,296.50	423,889.43
Total:	216	22,523,743.65	4,539,034.91	17,984,708.74

Source: SFA

Overall progress in the implementation of the Maritime and Fisheries Program 2014 - 2020 as of 14.06.2024

Priority 1: Promoting environmentally sustainable, innovative, competitive and knowledge-based, resource-efficient fisheries

Measure 1.1. "Diversification and new forms of income" - one payment has been made with a total value of the grant of BGN 131,027.

Measure 1.2. "Investments for improvement of hygiene, health, safety and working conditions on board or of individual equipment, provided that those investments exceed the requirements under Union or national law." Payments made - 2 with a total value of the grant of BGN 15,762.40.

Measure 1.3. "Permanent cessation of fishing activities" - payments made - 8 with a total value of the grant of BGN 483,173.09.

Measure 1.6. "Conservation and restoration of marine biodiversity and ecosystems and compensation regimes" - payments made - 7 with a total value of the grant of BGN 781,216.53.

Measure 1.7. "Added value, product quality and use of unwanted catches" - payments made - 4 with a total value of the grant of BGN 359,673.00.

Measure 1.8. "Investments for improvement of the infrastructure in fishing ports, investments for improvement of the unloading berths. Construction or modernization of boat docks" - payments made - 33 with a total value of the grant of BGN 28,278,399.42.

Measure 1.9. "Support for owners of fishing vessels and fishermen to overcome the economic consequences of the outbreak of COVID-19 due to temporary cessation of fishing activities" - payments made - 188 with a total value of the grant of BGN 5,566,006.34.

Priority 2 "Fostering environmentally sustainable, innovative, competitive and knowledge-based resource-efficient aquaculture"

Measure 2.2. "Productive investments in aquaculture" - payments made - 105 with a total value of the grant of BGN 21,124,315.51.

Measure 2.3. "Fostering new aquaculture producers, developing sustainable aquaculture" - payments made - 22 with a total value of the grant of BGN 5,756,217.08.

Measure 2.5. "Aquaculture providing environmental services" - payments made - 14 with a total value of the grant of BGN 1,136,593.57.

Measure 2.6. "Support for producers of fish and other aquatic organisms to address the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic" - payments made - 105 with a total value of the grant of BGN 3,598,249.03.

Priority 3 "Fostering the implementation of the CFP"

Measure 3.1. "Control and enforcement" - payments made - 48 with a total value of the grant of BGN 14,308,464.21.

Measure 3.2. "Data collection" - payments made - 11 with a total value of the grant of BGN 5,513,152.91.

Priority 4 "Increasing employment and territorial cohesion"

Measure 4.1 "Preparatory support for CLLD strategies, including the establishment of a National Fisheries Network". 13 payments have been made with a total value of the grant of BGN 506,393.76.

Measure 4.2. "Implementation of community-led local development strategies" - payments made - 461 with a total value of the grant of BGN 30,231,436.76.

Priority 5 Fostering marketing and processing

Measure 5.1. "Plans for production and marketing"- two payments have been made with a total value of the grant of BGN 121,523.40.

Measure 5.3. "Establishment of producer organizations, of associations of producer organizations or of interbranch organizations. Searching for new markets and improving marketing conditions for fisheries and aquaculture products" - 108 payments have been made with a total value of the grant of BGN 9,307,347.75.

Measure 5.4. "Processing of fishery and aquaculture products" - payments made - 83 with a total value of the grant of BGN 20,626,328.60.

Priority 6 "Fostering the implementation of the Integrated Maritime Policy"

Measure 6.1. "Integrated maritime surveillance" - payments made - 4 with a total value of the grant of BGN 2,959,679.76.

Measure 6.3. "Raising awareness of the marine environment" - payments made - 8 with a total value of the grant of BGN 1,688,801.58.

Priority 7 "Technical Assistance"

83 payments have been made with a total value of the grant of BGN 11,981,322.61.

Table VII.7. Projects paid under measures of the MFP 2014 - 2020 for the period 01.01.2024 - 14.06.2024 (BGN)

Measure	Number of projects	Amount paid	National funding	European funding
1.8. Investments for improvement of the infrastructure in the fishing ports, investments for improvement of unloading berths. Construction or modernization of boat docks	5	2,581,375.15	690,259.72	1,891,115.43
1.9. Support for owners of fishing vessels and fishermen to overcome the economic consequences of the outbreak of COVID-19 due to temporary cessation of fishing activities	24	369,082.70	98,692.71	270,389.99
2.2. Productive investments in aquaculture	6	1,588,217.16	397,054.30	1,191,162.86
2.3. Fostering new aquaculture producers, developing sustainable aquaculture	1	108,079.77	27,019.94	81,059.83
3.1. Control and enforcement	4	1,272,191.63	127,219.16	1,144,972.47
3.2. Data collection	1	470,773.79	94,154.76	376,619.03
4. 2. Implementation of community-led local development strategies	64	6,438,887.96	965,833.24	5,473,054.72
5.3. Market supply measures - Ukraine	54	3,088,856.15	772,214.02	2,316,642.13
5. 4. Processing of fishing and aquaculture products	7	1,711,704.16	427,926.07	1,283,778.09
7.1. Technical assistance	7	861,425.16	215,356.29	646,068.87
Total:	173	18,490,593.63	3,815,730.21	14,674,863.42

Source: SFA

Monitoring

According to Art. 2 of the Agreement for Delegation of Functions for Implementation of the 2014-2020 MFP, the inspections completed for the implementation of the beneficiaries' production programs, for the use of the financed assets for their intended purpose, as well as inspections for the implementation of the monitoring result indicators for the previous year 2022. In 2023, 204 projects falling under a monitoring period after the final payment of the grant were selected for administrative and on-site inspections on the basis of risk analysis. The results of the inspections were summarized and reported to the MA of the MFP.

Expected data for 2024

Table VII.8. Forecast for payments under the MFP 2014 - 2020 for 2024 (BGN)

Union priorities	Measures under the Union priorities	EMFF	National co-financing	Total financial resources
Priority 1. "Promoting environmentally sustainable, innovative, competitive and knowledge-based, resource-efficient fisheries"	Measure 1.6. Conservation and restoration of marine biodiversity and ecosystems and compensation regimes in the framework of sustainable fishing activities - 73,2633125515726%	401,685.77	146,591.07	548,276.84
	Measure 1.7 Added value, product quality and use of unwanted catches	2,429.27	886.54	3,315.81

Union priorities	Measures under the Union priorities	EMFF	National co-financing	Total financial resources
	Measure 1.8. Investments for improvement of the infrastructure in the fishing ports, investments for improvement of unloading berths. Construction or modernization of boat docks -73,2633125515726 %	3,527,430.20	1,287,299.14	4,814,729.34
	Measure 1.9. Temporary cessation of fishing activities, Ukraine	919,398.64	335,525.02	1,254,923.66
Priority 2 "Fostering environmentally sustainable, innovative, competitive and knowledge-based resource-efficient aquaculture"	Measure 2.2. Productive investments in aquaculture - 75% sector "Small projects" and sector "Recycling systems and construction of new ones, as well as expansion and modernization of existing aquaculture farms"	2,400,000.00	800,000.00	3,200,000.00
	Measure 2.3. Fostering new aquaculture producers developing sustainable aquaculture - 75%	1,350,000.00	450,000.00	1,800,000.00
	Measure 2.5. Aquaculture providing environmental services	320,977.49	106,992.50	427,969.99
Priority 3 "Fostering the implementation of the CFP"	Measure 3.1. Support for monitoring, control and implementation, increasing institutional capacity	1,686,914.90	562,304.97	2,249,219.86
	3. 2. Data collection under the National Program for the Collection and Management of Data from the Fisheries Sector	580,811.31	193,603.77	774,415.08
Priority 4 "Increasing employment and territorial cohesion"	Measure 4.2. Implementation of community led local development strategies - 85%	8,202,789.24	2,734,263.08	10,937,052.32
Priority 5 "Fostering of marketing and processing"	Measure 5.3. Measures for market supply	138,681.74	46,227.25	184,908.98
	Measure 5.3. Measures for market supply - Financial compensation for operators from Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine	8,386,183.28	2,795,394.43	11,181,577.71
	Measure 5.4. Processing of fishery and aquaculture products - 75%	3,097,001.32	1,032,333.77	4,129,335.09
	Measure "Support for processing enterprises of fishery and aquaculture products to address the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic".	65,503.90	21,834.63	87,338.53
Priority 6 "Integrated Maritime Policy"	Fostering the implementation of the IMP - Article 80 (1.1) of Reg. 508/2014 IMP	19,699.21	6,566.40	26,265.61
	Fostering the implementation of the IMP - Art. 80, item 1, para. 3 of Reg. 508/2014 Knowledge of the marine environment	920,222.82	306,740.94	1,226,963.76
Total:		36,741,757.29	12,400,572.89	49,142,330.18

Source: MAF, Maritime and Fisheries Directorate

Table VII.9. Forecast for payments under the MFAP 2021 - 2027 for 2024 (BGN)

Union priorities	Types of activities by priority	EMFF	National co-financing	Total financial resources
Priority 1 "Promoting sustainable fisheries and the restoration and conservation of aquatic biological resources"	Collection and processing of data for fisheries and aquaculture for scientific purposes	1,661,348.44	712,006.48	2,373,354.92
	Control and enforcement	3,322,696.89	1,424,012.95	4,746,709.84
	Permanent cessation of fishing activities	1,629,833.10	698,499.90	2,328,333.00
Priority 3 "Creating the prerequisites for the growth of a sustainable blue economy and stimulating the development of communities engaged in fisheries and aquaculture in coastal and inland areas"	Capacity building and preparatory activities to support the development and future implementation of Community-led local development strategies	486,016.30	208,292.70	694,309.00
Total:		3,986,016.30	1,708,292.70	5,694,309.00

Source: MAF, Maritime and Fisheries Directorate

Table VII.10. Calls under the MFAP 2021 - 2027 for 2024 (BGN)

Item No.	Name of the procedure	Objectives of the grant ² provided under the procedure	Total amount of the grant under the procedure	Date of announcement of the procedure	Name of the procedure
Priority 1 "Promoting sustainable fisheries and the restoration and conservation of aquatic biological resources"					
1	Permanent cessation of fishing activities	Support for permanent cessation will contribute to the adaptation of the fishing fleet to fish stocks. The aim is to achieve a balanced fleet for sustainable use of the available resources.	6,985,000	2nd quarter	60 days from the date of announcement of the procedure
2	Support to improve the economic and social status of fishing operators	The support is aimed at supporting the improvement of the economic and social condition of operators from the Fisheries sector.	3,538,601	3rd quarter	60 days from the date of announcement of the procedure
3	Specific equipment of the fishing vessel, activities and innovations aimed at protecting the environment and biodiversity	The support is aimed at supporting operations related to supporting the acquisition of specific equipment for the fishing vessel, activities and innovations aimed at protecting the environment and biodiversity.	4,888,382	4th quarter	60 days from the date of announcement of the procedure

Item No.	Name of the procedure	Objectives of the grant ² provided under the procedure	Total amount of the grant under the procedure	Date of announcement of the procedure	Name of the procedure
4	Improving the infrastructure of fishing ports, fish markets, landing sites and marinas to facilitate the landing and storage of unwanted catches	Improving the infrastructure of fishing ports, fish markets, landing sites and marinas to facilitate the landing and storage of unwanted catches.	18,161,000	2nd quarter	First term 90 days from the date of announcement of the procedure Second term 60 days after the end of the first term
Priority 2 “Promoting sustainable aquaculture activities and the processing and marketing of fisheries and aquaculture products thus contributing to the food security in the Union”					
5	Aquaculture providing environmental services - “compensation for Natura 2000 farms” sector	Promote aquaculture production that ensures a high level of environmental protection, animal health and welfare, as well as public health and safety.	4,920,000	2nd quarter	First term 90 days from the date of announcement of the procedure; Second term 60 days after the end of the first term;
6	Productive investments and innovations in aquaculture	The investments will increase competitiveness and achieve sustainable growth of aquaculture in Bulgaria. The new jobs created and the raised qualifications of the employed will support the economic development of the sector and its associated areas.	20,000,000	1st quarter	First term 90 days from the date of announcement of the procedure Second term 60 days after the end of the first term; Third term 60 days after the end of the second term;
7	Processing of fishing and aquaculture products	The aim is to establish and modernize the country's processing plants by improving their energy efficiency and decarbonization, which will lead to a reduction in the negative environmental impact associated with the Green Transition.	15,000,000	1st quarter	First term 90 days from the date of announcement of the procedure; Second term 60 days after the end of the first term; Third term 60 days after the end of the second term;
8	Marketing	Activities to promote local products from fishing, aquaculture and processing will lead to an increase in consumption in the country of Bulgarian production. Conducting communication campaigns will motivate consumers to make informed, healthy food choices.	1,000,000.00	2nd quarter	90 days from the date of announcement of the procedure
9	Plans for production and marketing	Preparation and implementation of plans for production and marketing of producer organizations and associations of producer organizations.	586,740.00	2nd quarter	60 days from the date of announcement of the procedure

Item No.	Name of the procedure	Objectives of the grant ² provided under the procedure	Total amount of the grant under the procedure	Date of announcement of the procedure	Name of the procedure
Priority 3 "Creating the prerequisites for the growth of a sustainable blue economy and stimulating the development of communities engaged in fisheries and aquaculture in coastal and inland areas"					
10	Implementation of Community-led local development strategies	Increasing the quality of life of people in communities dependent on fisheries and aquaculture through a sustainable blue economy, using and strengthening environmental, cultural, social and human resources.	35,079,592.02	2nd quarter	90 days from the date of announcement of the procedure
11	Running costs and promotion activities in the territory	Provision of activities for the functioning of LAGs under EMFF and promotion of the territory.	11,693,197.34	4th quarter	90 days from the date of announcement of the procedure
Priority 4 "Strengthening the international governance of the oceans and ensuring conditions for safety, security, cleanliness and sustainable management of the seas and oceans"					
12	Marine surveillance	Achieving the objectives of the Common Environment for EU Maritime Information Exchange.	2,794,000.00	2nd quarter	2024-2027
13	Technical assistance	To ensure the expedient implementation of MFAP by applying the principles of good timely implementation of the program.	2,200,000.00	1st quarter	90 days from the date of announcement of the procedure

Source: MAF, Maritime and Fisheries Directorate

4. Common Fisheries Policy

The Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) aims to create the conditions for the sustainable development of the Fisheries sector, including commercial and recreational fisheries, aquacultures, trade and processing of fisheries and aquaculture products.

One of the elements of the CFP is the common organization of the markets (CMO) in fisheries and aquaculture products, which aims to protect producers and ensure environmental sustainability and economic viability of the fisheries and aquaculture products market. A major factor in achieving the CMO objectives is fishery and/or aquaculture producer organizations, associations of producer organizations, and interbranch organizations in the Fishery sector.

In 2023, Ordinance No. 7 of 2018 on the conditions and procedure for the recognition of producer organisations of fishery and aquaculture products, associations of producer organisations and interbranch organisations in the fisheries sector and for the approval of production and marketing plans (Regulation No. 7 of 2018) was amended and supplemented, creating conditions for a more effective implementation of the common organisation of the markets in fishery and aquaculture products of the EU. It is expected that this will have a positive impact on the operators in the Fisheries sector, encourage their association in professional organizations and ease the mechanism for carrying out control over their activities.

In connection with the exercise of control over professional organizations in the fisheries sector, recognized under the Fisheries and Aquaculture Act (FAA) and Regulation No. 7 of 2018, in 2023 periodic inspections have been carried out to establish their compliance with the requirements of the regulatory framework and to ascertain the degree of implementation of the Production and Marketing Plans of the two recognized producer organizations - Black Sea Sunrise Association and Black Sea Clam Producers Association. The Standing Committee for the recognition of producer organizations of fishery and/or aquaculture products, associations of producer organizations and interbranch organizations in the fisheries sector and to exercise control over their activity) conducted a total of 7 inspections and held 5 meetings during the year. A Production and Marketing Plan for the period 2023-2025 has been approved. of "Black Sea Sunrise" association.

In order to protect the populations of fish and other aquatic organisms, a number of restrictions and temporary prohibitions on fishing in natural and artificial water bodies throughout the country were introduced in 2023. Conditions were created for protection of aquatic organisms during their breeding season and in certain

reservoirs and/or areas thereof. Measures have been introduced to regulate the use of fishery resources during the dark hours of the day and for stocking in certain reservoirs.

In 2023 the Consultative Council on Fish and Fish Products to the Minister of Agriculture and Food was established as a sectoral council that includes representatives of the entire food chain in the fisheries sector. The main participants are producers of fish and other aquatic organisms from fisheries and aquaculture, fish processors, operators in terms of first sale, wholesalers and retailers, as well as representatives of consumer organizations. The subject of discussion is a number of current problems in the sector, and the goal is to achieve a more sustainable food system in the Fisheries sector. Creating a sustainable food chain will help to build a positive image in the sector, optimize employment by improving working conditions, attract investors, increase productivity and reduce costs for operators, as well as ensure high quality fish products for the market, building healthy eating habits and increasing consumer awareness of the benefits of consuming fish and fish products.

In recent years, the Fisheries sector has been significantly affected by the crisis caused by the spread of COVID-19, facing a number of challenges and difficulties related to the contracted market and demand, the increased prices of used electricity, fuels, feed, oxygen and raw materials. The Bulgarian fishing fleet was also faced with additional difficulties due to the complicated political situation and the war in Ukraine, which led to a decline in fishing activities. This has worsened the economic performance of operators in the sector. In order to mitigate the consequences, in 2023 a request was made to preserve the applied levels of the total allowable catch and quota for turbot, as well as to transfer of the unused in 2022 quantities to Bulgaria's fishing opportunities for 2024.

At the 16th annual session of the Compliance Committee of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), the transfer of the unutilized by Bulgaria in 2022 turbot catch quota (in the amount of 20 tons) to the fishing opportunities for 2024 was accepted as permissible and action has been taken to maintain TAC levels and turbot catch quotas in 2024 (for Bulgaria - 75 tons). As a result, Bulgaria's total turbot fishing opportunities in 2024 are set at 95 tonnes.

Within the framework of the 46th annual meeting of the GFCM, various topics related to the conservation of marine biological resources and the management of marine fisheries and aquaculture in the Mediterranean and Black Seas were discussed, regarding the main conclusions and management advice arising from the 24th session of the The Scientific Advisory Committee on Fisheries (SAC), the 14th meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Aquaculture (CAQ) and the 16th session of the Compliance Committee of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (CoC). Of essential importance for Bulgaria are the adopted recommendations for amending the multi-year management plan for turbot fishing in the Black Sea, extending the application of the specified levels of total allowable catch and quotas for the species (150 tons for the EU), extending the effect of the measures on management for sustainable fishing of Black Sea spiny shark, on the regional research program for black sea rapa whelk, on management measures for sustainable exploitation of sprats in the Black Sea, on mitigation measures on the impact of fishing on sturgeon fish species in the Black Sea, to establish a regional plan for fishing capacity, to establish a permanent catch documentation scheme (CDS) for turbot in the Black Sea, etc.

In connection with Bulgaria's candidacy for membership in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), an in-depth technical review was conducted in the field of fisheries. The final report on fisheries is expected to be considered and adopted during a meeting of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in November 2024.

In connection with the preparation of a national Roadmap for the implementation of the measures and actions foreseen in the European Union Action Plan for the protection and restoration of marine ecosystems for sustainable and shock-resistant fisheries (Marine Plan), the first meeting of the Joint special enforcement and monitoring group, a national position is presented on possible actions to mitigate or eliminate bycatch of mutkur (*Phocoena phocoena*) in the Black Sea.

In order to provide consumers with accessible and comprehensible information on marketed fishery and aquaculture products for sale to the final consumer or to caterers, regardless of their origin and method of supply, in 2023 the national list of used commercial designations of fishery and aquaculture products has been updated and supplemented, which contains the scientific name of each species, the commercial designation, the

name of the species in the official language, as well as another name or names adopted at the local or regional level.

Planned activities in 2024

The following is foreseen in 2024:

- Designation of fishery sites permitted for recreational fishing during the dark part of the day;
- Designation of water bodies for stocking, according to Art. 22a (5) of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Act;
- Introduction of a ban on fishing at the fisheries sites under Art. 3 (1.1) and (1.2) of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Act during the breeding period of fish;
- Approval of Annual Reports on the implemented activities under the Plans for production and marketing of the recognized producer organizations in the fisheries sector;
- Approval of a new Production and Marketing Plan of the producers' organization - Black Sea Clam Producers Association.
- Participation in technical meetings with the EC and in meetings with the GFCM, with the aim of agreeing on the levels of total allowable catch and quotas for turbot, as well as the adoption by the GFCM of conservation and management measures for other economically valuable species, subject to fishing by Bulgarian vessels in the Black Sea.
- Participation in the 17th meeting of the GFCM Compliance Committee, the 10th meeting of the Work Group for Black Sea (WGBS) and the 47th annual meeting of the GFCM in order to protect Bulgaria's interests in decision-making on the management of fisheries in the Black Sea;
- Carrying out annual checks to establish the compliance of the recognized professional organizations in the fisheries sector with the conditions for recognition;
- Implementation of activities related to Bulgaria's accession to the OECD;
- Approval of the Roadmap for the implementation of the EU Action Plan: Protection and restoration of marine ecosystems for sustainable and flexible fisheries (Marine Plan) and undertaking activities to implement the measures laid down in it.

VIII. PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AGRICULTURAL POLICY DOCUMENTS FROM THE NATIONAL STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK IN 2023.

- **The National Development Program Bulgaria 2030** is the main strategic document setting the framework of policies for the development of the agrarian sector.

Within the framework of **Priority 6 "Sustainable agriculture"** of the Program, sub-priorities and areas of impact are formulated, aimed at the development of an intelligent, sustainable and diversified agricultural sector, which would guarantee the country's food security.

Under **Priority 9 "Local Development"** of the Program, sub-priorities and areas of impact aimed at preserving the viability and accelerating the economic development of rural areas are set.

In order to achieve the goals set in the National Development Program Bulgaria 2030 in the fields of agriculture, fisheries, forests and rural areas, a complex of measures is set and their implementation is monitored in the three-year action plans under the Program. The possibilities of various instruments are used - schemes for direct payments, schemes for state aid, the Program for the Development of Agriculture and Rural Areas 2014-2020, the Strategic Plan for the Development of Agriculture and Rural Areas 2023-2027 (SPARD 2023-2027), the EU Recovery and Resilience Mechanism, the Maritime and Fisheries Program 2014-2020, the Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Program 2021-2027 (*data on the application of these tools are presented in subsection IV. SUPPORTING THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR of this Report*).

The progress in the implementation of the planned measures and the achievement of the goals in the agrarian sphere is reflected in the Action Plan for the implementation of the National Development Program Bulgaria 2030 for the period 2025-2028.

- **General strategy for the management and development of hydromeliorations and protection from the harmful effects of water**

The document calls for the restoration of an effective and efficient hydromelioration sector for economically viable, competitive agriculture, resilient to the impacts of climate change and providing protection from the harmful effects of water.

In fulfillment of the objectives of the strategy in 2023 progress is reported regarding the implementation of investments (financed under the RDP 2014-2020) related to the reconstruction and modernization of sites from the hydromelioration fund, as well as projects for the efficient use of water in agricultural holdings. 27 projects for the rehabilitation of hydromelioration facilities for irrigation and protection from the harmful effects of water are in the process of implementation. For the period 2021-2023 under the RDP, 196 contracts were concluded to support irrigation investments in farms, with a target of 37 supported projects set for 2025.

More specific data on the activities carried out in the field of hydromelioration and protection from the harmful effects of water in 2023. are set out in subsection III. AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION ACTIVITIES, item 2. Hydromeliorations of this Report.

- **Strategy for digitization of agriculture and rural areas of the Republic of Bulgaria**

In implementation of the Strategy, a single information system of electronic registers for the purposes of the specialized administration (ERSA) was built in the ministry.

The project "Digitalization of processes from the farm to the fork", included in the National Plan for Recovery and Resilience is being implemented. The investment project, with term for implementation 2023-2025, envisages the construction of an Electronic Information System in agriculture for the exchange of data between the public administration and economic entities in the sector, which will ensure integration and compatibility of data from various information systems, registers and databases, in and outside the Agriculture sector. The purpose is digitization and unification of information resources in agriculture, creation of conditions for monitoring the progress of the implementation of the objectives of the green deal in the field of agriculture, optimization of the business environment and reduction of the administrative burden.

With funds under the 2014-2020 RDP and NRRP, measures from the Strategy aimed at technological modernization and digitization in agriculture are implemented. According to the project "Fund to promote the technological and ecological transition of agriculture" of the NRRP in 2023 call for project proposals was held and in 2024 Investment support contracts were concluded with 1,437 farmers.

According to the RDP 2014-2020 the increase of the innovation capacity of the Agriculture sector is stimulated by supporting the cooperation between business and science (research and innovation, partnership for the exchange and transfer of innovations, development of infrastructure for experimentation and access to it). By mid-2024 under sub-measure 16.1 "Support for the formation and functioning of operational groups within the framework of the European Partnership for Innovation" from the RDP 2014-2020 contracts were concluded for financial support of the activities of 26 operational groups under the EIP.

Trainings and consultations are held to develop the digital skills and qualification of those employed in agriculture. Training events were held on topics related to precision agriculture, systems for electronic process management, the possibilities of using blockchain technologies in agriculture.

- **Updated National Action Plan for Sustainable Use of Pesticides in the Republic of Bulgaria (NAPSUP)**

The progress in the implementation of the NAPSUP is reported in annually prepared Annual Reports on the monitoring and control of the implementation of the Updated National Action Plan for the Sustainable Use of Pesticides in the Republic of Bulgaria (NAPSUP). The reports are published on the website of the Bulgarian Food Safety Agency.

In 2024 the Annual Report on the implementation of the Plan in 2022 has been published. The analysis of the results shows that progress has been made in the implementation of the set goals, set measures, activities and indicators for their implementation. A reduction in the risks and impact of pesticide use on human health and

the environment has been achieved; alternative approaches and methods of plant protection are encouraged; control over the use of plant protection products is improved.

The preparation of the Annual Report for 2023 for NAPSUP is pending.

Data on completed activities under the 2023 Plan are presented in subsection III. AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION ACTIVITIES, item 3. Plant protection and phytosanitary control of the Agricultural report.

- **National Strategy for the Development of the viticulture and winemaking in the Republic of Bulgaria 2005– 2025**

In the conditions of membership in the EU and implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy, the development of the Viticulture and Winemaking subsector is stimulated through the implementation of National Programs to support the viticulture and winemaking sector.

According to the National program for supporting the viticulture and winemaking sector for the period 2008-2013 1,820 ha of wine vineyards were restructured and management techniques were improved on 5,574 ha.

With the financial support under the National Program to Support the Viticulture and Winemaking Sector for the period 2014-2018 3,715 ha of wine vineyards were restructured and the management techniques of 2,930 ha of vine plantations were improved.

In 2023 the implementation of the National Program to Support the Viticulture and Winemaking Sector 2019-2023 has ended. The implementation of the activities provided for in it contributed to the achievement of the set indicators for the implementation of the relevant measures in the NDP Bulgaria 2030. For the period 2021-2023 4,578.9 ha of wine vineyards have been restructured, which represents 14.2% of the area with grape plantations in agricultural holdings in 2023 (32,178 ha), with a set target value of 8%.

In October 2023, the implementation of the interventions in the viticulture and winemaking sector from the Strategic Plan for the Development of Agriculture and Rural Areas 2023-2027 (SPARD) began. For the financial year 2024 nearly 200 contracts for financial support were concluded.

Data on the state of the viticulture and winemaking sector in 2023 are presented in subsection II. DEVELOPMENT OF THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR IN 2023 AND FORECASTS FOR 2024, item 2.5. Viticulture and wine production of the Report.

- **National Program for Prevention and Reduction of Food Loss 2021 - 2026**

The national program for the prevention and reduction of food loss in Bulgaria has been prepared in accordance with national and European commitments to reduce food waste. The main objective of the program is to create and develop measures and mechanisms to reduce food loss in the production, commercial and consumer spheres, as well as to encourage food donation.

In implementation of the measures of the Program in 2023 a guide was developed for the redistribution of the surplus of edible food to needy persons, an information material was prepared for students on the prevention of food waste. Consultations related to the creation of a National Platform on Food Losses were held with the participation of industry associations, unions and stakeholder organizations.

The applied agrarian policy contributes to the maintenance of stable macro-indicators of the sector. At the same time, it is faced with a number of challenges that have been increasing in recent years - increasingly visible manifestations of extreme weather events that have a direct negative effect on agricultural production, worsening international relations and foreign political instability, instability of international markets for agricultural products, deepening demographic problems. In the context of the emerging trends and challenges, in the implementation of the policy in the agrarian area, emphasis is placed on risk management, the development of high-tech production, ensuring not only the country's food security, but also the necessary protection from climate change. The focus is also on the implementation of innovative solutions in production and the fuller use of scientific achievements, the use and protection of natural resources, the strengthening of the market positions of agricultural producers, the creation of new jobs and the provision of employment in agriculture.

SECTION B

PROGRAM FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN 2025

The state policy in the agricultural sector is aimed at increasing the competitiveness of Bulgarian agriculture, sustainable development of the fisheries and forestry improving working conditions and quality of life in rural areas, sustainable management of natural resources and compliance with high safety standards in the food production and supply chain. The priorities and objectives of the policy in the agricultural sector and the measures for their achievement in 2025, set in this section, are in compliance with the National Development Programme BULGARIA 2030. In 2025, the Strategic Plan for Development of Agriculture and Rural A 2023-2027 (CAP Strategic Plan) and the Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Program 2021- 2027 (MFAP), which provide for interventions in support of the sector financed by European agricultural and fisheries funds, will be implemented. Activities will be carried out to implement the National Plan for Recovery and Resilience of the Republic of Bulgaria (NRRP), including investments to increase the sustainability and competitiveness of the sector and its readiness to meet the challenges of the green and digital transition.

PRIORITY 1: STRUCTURAL AND SECTORAL BALANCE OF AGRICULTURE

AREA OF IMPACT 1 - PLANT GROWING:

OBJECTIVE: INCREASING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF VULNERABLE SECTORS AND CONTINUING THE POLICIES OF BALANCED AND DIVERSIFIED DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLANT SUBSECTION

MEASURES:

1. Improving the competitiveness and sustainability of vulnerable crop sectors through coupled support schemes (for fruit, vegetables, protein crops and special payment for cotton) under the CAP Strategic Plan financed by the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund
2. Support for tobacco producers' incomes through transitional national decoupled tobacco aid
3. Increasing the sustainability and competitiveness of the viticulture and winemaking sector by implementing interventions under the CAP Strategic Plan
4. Improving relations in the field of ownership, use, management and protection of agricultural land by preparing legislative changes

AREA OF IMPACT 2– ANIMAL HUSBANDRY:

OBJECTIVE: IMPROVING THE SUSTAINABILITY, EFFICIENCY AND PROFITABILITY OF LIVESTOCK FARMS

MEASURES:

1. Improving the competitiveness and sustainability of vulnerable livestock sectors through coupled support schemes (dairy cows, beef cows, ewes and goats, buffaloes) under the CAP Strategic Plan
2. Support for livestock farmers' incomes through transitional national aid (for cattle, buffalo, ewes and she-goats)
3. Improving the competitiveness of the Beekeeping sector through interventions set out in the CAP Strategic Plan
4. Promoting animal welfare and the conservation of genetic resources in livestock husbandry with funds from the national budget and the CAP Strategic Plan

5. Conservation and management of genetic resources in animal breeding, constant monitoring of their condition

AREA OF IMPACT 3 - ECONOMIC POTENTIAL OF SMALL AGRICULTURAL HOLDINGS:

TARGET: INCREASING SUSTAINABILITY AND IMPROVING THE COMPETITIVENESS OF SMALL AGRICULTURAL HOLDINGS TO REDUCE DISPROPORTIONS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ECONOMIC STRUCTURES IN AGRICULTURE

MEASURES:

1. Supplementing the incomes and increasing the economic potential of small farmers through payments for small farmers under the CAP Strategic Plan financed by the EAGF
2. Increasing the financial sustainability of small and medium-sized farms and a fairer distribution of support for them through additional redistributive income support for sustainability under the CAP Strategic Plan
3. Support for the sustainable development and viability of small farms under an intervention from the CAP Strategic Plan, financed by the EAFRD

AREA OF IMPACT 4 - AGE STRUCTURE OF FARMERS:

OBJECTIVE: ATTRACTING AND RETAINING YOUNG PEOPLE IN AGRICULTURE

MEASURES:

1. Facilitating the renewal of generations in agriculture through additional income support for young farmers under the CAP Strategic Plan, financed by the EAGF
2. Encouraging the entry and retention of young farmers in agriculture through support under the CAP Strategic Plan intervention funded by the EAFRD

AREA OF IMPACT 5 - AREAS WITH NATURAL OR OTHER CONSTRAINTS:

OBJECTIVE: PRESERVATION OF AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND HOLDINGS IN AREAS WITH NATURAL AND OTHER CONSTRAINTS

MEASURE:

1. Encouraging the carrying out of agricultural activities in areas with natural and other specific limitations and strengthening the viability of agricultural holdings in these areas, by implementing an intervention included in the scope of the CAP Strategic Plan

PRIORITY 2: "GUARANTEEING FAIR AND STABLE INCOME FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS":

SCOPE 1 - DIRECT SUPPORT MECHANISMS

OBJECTIVE: MAXIMUM UTILIZATION OF THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR DIRECT SUPPORT TO GUARANTEE THE ECONOMIC SECURITY OF AGRICULTURAL HOLDINGS AND SUSTAINABILITY

MEASURES:

1. Preparation of an intervention under the Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Development for basic income support for sustainability

SCOPE 2 - RISK MANAGEMENT IN AGRICULTURE:

OBJECTIVE: MITIGATING THE IMPACT OF RISKS IN AGRICULTURE ON THE ACTIVITY AND INCOME OF EMPLOYEES IN THE INDUSTRY

MEASURES:

1. Support for risk and crisis management in agriculture through funds from the national budget
2. Expanding and strengthening the capacity of the hail protection system by implementing a diversification of the hail prevention methods

PRIORITY 3: AGRICULTURAL COMPETITIVENESS

AREA OF IMPACT 1 - MODERNIZATION, INNOVATION AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN AGRICULTURAL HOLDINGS

OBJECTIVE: MODERNIZED AND TECHNOLOGICALLY RENOVATED FARMS AND ENTERPRISES. ACCELERATED INTRODUCTION OF INNOVATION AND DIGITALIZATION IN AGRICULTURAL PRACTICE

MEASURES:

1. Fostering the investment processes in agricultural holdings by financing projects under Sub-measure 4.1 "Investments in agricultural holdings" of the RDP 2014-2020/interventions under the CAP Strategic Plan
2. Fostering the investment process for modernization and technological renewal in the processing and marketing of agricultural products to create higher added value of the industry by financing projects under Sub-measure 4.2 "Investment in processing/marketing of agricultural products" of the RDP 2014- 2020/interventions under the CAP Strategic Plan
3. Increasing the innovation capacity of the Agriculture sector by stimulating cooperation between business and science - implementation of Sub-measure 16.1 "Support for establishment and functioning of operational groups within the EMI" of the RDP 2014-2020 / applying interventions under the CAP Strategic Plan
4. Giving investment support under the National Recovery and Resilience Plan through the Fund for Promotion of the Technological and Ecological Transition of Agriculture

OBJECTIVE: INCREASING THE INNOVATIVENESS OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

MEASURES:

1. Creation of new scientific products related to sustainable development of competitive agriculture, conservation and efficient use of natural and genetic resources for mitigation and adaptation to climate change, transition to bioeconomy, and circular economy
2. Building partnerships, incl. public-private, for the transfer of scientific knowledge, implementation of good practices and innovations in the Bulgarian agriculture.
3. Sustainable development of scientific potential in the agricultural sector

OBJECTIVE: ENSURING TRANSPARENT, ACCESSIBLE, OBJECTIVE AND EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSES THROUGH THEIR ELECTRONIZATION TO REDUCE THE ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN AND IMPROVE THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

MEASURE:

1. Development of electronic management and improvement of administrative services in the system of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food through:
 - Creating conditions for electronic data exchange between the public administration and farmers to monitor the progress in implementing the objectives of the Green Deal - implementation of activities under the Digitization of the Farm-to-Fork Processes project of the NRRP
 - Expanding the range of administrative services provided by the structures of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food electronically
 - Improving the access to information collected and summarized in the system of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food
 - Publication of information and datasets on the Open Data Portal
 - Development of the Integrated Information System of the BFSA, VetIS, with the aim of increasing the awareness of farmers and facilitating their activities, assisting veterinarians in the implementation of the National Program for the Prevention, Control, and Eradication of Animal Diseases and Zoonoses and reflecting the results of their practice

AREA OF IMPACT 2 - MARKET POSITION OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS:

TARGET: STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS IN THE FOOD SUPPLY CHAIN

MEASURES:

1. Improving the functioning of the supply chains of agricultural products and foods by stimulating the cooperation between the economic entities under Sub-measure 16.4. Support for horizontal and vertical cooperation between the participants in the supply chain of the RDP 2014-2020 / interventions under the CAP Strategic plan
2. Improving market access conditions for small farms producing fruit, vegetables, milk and dairy products by supporting operational programs of recognized producer organizations and associations of producer organizations in the Fruit and Vegetables and Milk and Dairy products sectors under the CAP Strategic Plan.

AREA OF IMPACT 3 - QUALIFICATION AND KNOWLEDGE OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS:

OBJECTIVE: DEVELOPMENT AND STRENGTHENING OF THE AGRICULTURAL KNOWLEDGE AND INNOVATION SYSTEM (AKIS) TO GENERATE INNOVATIVE POLICIES IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR AND AN INTELLECTUAL CENTER OF BULGARIAN AGRICULTURE ACCESSIBLE TO BUSINESS

MEASURES:

1. Organizing and conducting specialized trainings for farmers and other persons involved in the agricultural and forestry sector
2. Organizing and conducting information seminars to increase the knowledge of those involved in the agriculture and forestry sector on specific topics

3. Supporting the transfer of innovative technologies and practices by disseminating the outputs of research projects and developing new products and techniques
4. Dissemination of important agricultural information and innovations in the field of agriculture among farmers through the organization of information and training events of the National Agricultural Advisory Service with the participation of scientific institutes, applied research organizations and other institutions and experts
5. Providing specialized advice to farmers in various areas - technologies in crop and livestock production, establishment and management of the farm, implementation of national legislation and EC standards, integrated plant protection, climate and environment, etc. Active use of various communication channels, including through mobile municipal offices. Enhancing the use of e-services, social media and various digital tools to provide advisory services
6. Successful implementation of projects under the Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe programs, contributing to increasing and improving the exchange of knowledge and skills between researchers, advisors, farmers and food processing enterprises, including dissemination of results and good practices
7. Increasing the activity and contribution of the established "farmers' circles" to the regional offices of the NAAS, with the participation of active farmers, in the process of disseminating useful information in the field of agriculture and promoting good practices in applying for and implementing RDP projects
8. Active functioning and confirmation of the informal advisory councils to the territorial regional offices of the NAAS as regional centers of AKIS, with the participation of representatives from the NAAS, the regional structures of the MAF, universities, scientific institutes, non-governmental organizations, processing enterprises in the field of foods and agricultural owners
9. Facilitating and expanding access to agricultural advice for farmers, especially those in settlements remote from district centers, by increasing the capacity of the National Agricultural Advisory Service, including at municipal level, by developing the capacity of the newly established in 2022 mobile municipal offices
10. Development of the created 2023-2027 SPARD interactive online information platform (<https://www.sp2023.bg/index.php/bg/akis>) to build a network of experts related to AKIS and to create a database of available innovations, scientific developments and other knowledge in the field of agriculture, forestry and food industry.
11. Active functioning of the AKIS advisory group created with the help of the Horizon Europe program project "Modernization of agriculture through more effective and efficient Knowledge and Innovation Systems in Agriculture (AKIS)" (modernAKIS), including representatives of agricultural scientific organizations and universities, NAAS, organizations of farmers and processing enterprises in the field of foods, public bodies related to knowledge and innovation in agriculture etc.
12. Improving interconnections at AKIS by organizing and conducting thematic working groups, round tables, conferences, seminars, workshops and others, within which to involve farmers, scientific representatives, food processing enterprises, training and branch organizations, etc.

PRIORITY 4: ROLE OF THE AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

AREA OF IMPACT 1 - AGRI-ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITMENTS:

OBJECTIVE: AGRICULTURAL COMMITMENTS AND SERVICES, RELATED TO THE ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

MEASURES:

1. Applying interventions under the CAP Strategic Plan contributing to European and national goals in the field of climate, environment and biodiversity

AREA OF IMPACT 2 - ORGANIC PRODUCTION:

OBJECTIVE: INCREASING THE PRODUCTION AND SUPPLY OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

MEASURES:

1. Stabilizing the income of organic farmers through the implementation of the direct payment system
2. Development of bottom-up local economic initiatives and improvement of cooperative attitudes among organic producers with support under the Rural Development Program / CAP Strategic Plan
3. Creating more favorable conditions for the development of the farms of very small, small and medium-sized enterprises/producers — improving the production environment, optimizing costs through new energy-saving machines, increasing mobile processing facilities (slaughterhouses, mills, copper mining equipment etc.) with support under the Rural Development Program / CAP Strategic Plan
4. Creating better conditions for access to markets by encouraging the creation of associations to organize, conduct, and participate in markets, exhibitions and fairs for organic products
5. Stimulating the consumption of organic products in kindergartens and schools through the implementation of market support schemes "School Fruit" and "School Milk"
6. Promoting the use of varieties and breeds suitable for organic production, increasing yields, developing effective plant protection measures and innovative solutions to improve the environmental well-being and biodiversity.
7. Encouraging local processing of organic products by providing support for investment in enterprise modernization, including for innovation, and the use of digital technologies
8. Raising awareness (conducting information campaigns on the benefits of consuming organic products) and consumer confidence in the quality of Bulgarian organic products in order to expand their consumption
9. Creating more favorable conditions for increasing knowledge and skills to establish, develop and maintain organic farming, through appropriate training, exchange of information on research and innovation in organic farming, stimulating research and innovation under Horizon Europe to promote the development of a smart organic industry.

AREA OF IMPACT 3 - IRRIGATED AGRICULTURE

OBJECTIVE: IMPROVING THE USE OF WATER RESOURCES IN AGRICULTURE

MEASURES:

1. Implementation of investment projects for irrigation in agricultural holdings under sub-measure 4.1 "Investments in agricultural holdings" of the RDP 2014- 2020/intervention under the CAP Strategic Plan
2. Improving the management of water resources through investments in the national hydro-ameliorative fund under sub-measure 4.3 "Investments in infrastructure" to measure 4 "Investments in tangible assets" of the RDP 2014- 2020.
3. Implementation of the intervention "Investments in irrigation infrastructure" under the CAP Strategic Plan

AREA OF IMPACT 4 - FOREST RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

OBJECTIVE: SUSTAINABLE MAINTENANCE, PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT OF FOREST RESOURCES IN THE COUNTRY

MEASURES:

1. Priority implementation of sanitary and protective forestry measures to maintain good health in the forests
2. Increasing the investment and forestry care to restore the vulnerable and damaged forest areas and supporting the processes of difficult natural regeneration of forests through afforestation
3. Increasing the investments of the state forest enterprises for the development of new and the maintenance of the existing forest road network.

OBJECTIVE: SUSTAINABLE AND COMPETITIVE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FOREST SECTOR IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF MULTIFUNCTIONAL FOREST TERRITORY MANAGEMENT

MEASURE:

1. Development of strategic documents for the development of the forestry sector in the Republic of Bulgaria until 2030:
 - Adoption of the National Strategy for the Development of the Forestry Sector in the Republic of Bulgaria to 2030

OBJECTIVE: IMPROVING AND PROTECTING THE HEALTH CONDITION OF FORESTS, CONTROLLING THE USE OF WOOD AND NON-WOOD PRODUCTS FROM FORESTS

MEASURES:

1. Maintaining the health of forests:
 - Making a reliable forecast of expected disease and pest attacks
 - Timely issuance and implementation of guidelines for the implementation of sanitary and forest protection measures and activities
2. Increasing the effectiveness of prevention and combating illegal activities in forests through:
 - Reviewing and, if necessary, updating the existing agreements for joint activities with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, EAFA, the National Revenue Agency, the Main Labor Inspectorate, the Road Infrastructure Agency, and other institutions for the control and prevention of illegal actions in the forest territories
 - Conducting an information campaign to introduce wood users to the legal requirements regarding the need to have and store the transport tickets for the purchased wood, as well as the ways to verify the authenticity of the submitted documents
 - Strengthening the control of incoming wood in large users
 - Planning specific actions with the interested institutions to effectively counter the crimes committed in the areas with a high concentration of crimes
 - Taking actions for the establishment of an electronic system for the authorization, control and tracking of the extraction, trade and transport of non-timber forest products (NTFPs), as well as improving controls, including joint inspections on the legal origin and storage of NTFPs purchased at the relevant points.
 - Monitoring of the use of wood and biomass from wood for energy production, as well as exercising control by the EFA and its structures on compliance with forest legislation in relation to the origin of woody biomass used for energy production, including the obligation to build a video surveillance

system under the amendments to Art. 260, para. 1, item 3 of the Forest Law, in force since 02.02.2023.

OBJECTIVE: INCREASING TRANSPARENCY IN THE WORK OF THE FOREST SECTOR AND PUBLIC AWARENESS OF THE IMPORTANCE AND ACTIVITIES OF FORESTS

MEASURE:

1. Active participation of the society and the interested parties in relation to forest activities:
 - Visualization of the forests in the existing information environment - update and expansion of the created geographic portal for forests
 - Ensuring levels of access to the developed system in order to ensure more active participation of the society and the institutions in terms of the control on the forest activities.

PRIORITY 5: HIGH LEVEL OF PROTECTION OF HUMAN HEALTH AND CONSUMER INTERESTS RELATING TO FOOD AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FOOD SECTOR

OBJECTIVE: INCREASING THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN HEALTH AND CONSUMER INTERESTS RELATING TO FOOD BY IMPLEMENTING A SINGLE OFFICIAL FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY CONTROL COVERING ALL UNITS AND STAGES OF THE FOOD CHAIN

MEASURES:

1. Using high standards in the control of the field of food safety and quality, food additives and beverages, veterinary medicine and animal welfare, plant protection and fertilizers, phytosanitary control, feed, border control, etc.
2. Drafting laws and by-laws in the field of food safety continues, with the aim of achieving a high level of consumer health protection by marketing quality and safe food and improving market access for small producers;
3. Implementation of a consistent policy for cooperation with branch organizations in the country to develop standards that aim to increase the quality of basic food products
4. Improving the quality of the services offered by the administration, by preparing information materials, introducing good practices, developing procedures, instructions and manuals, oriented to the authorities of official control and business, by introducing electronic registers
5. Cooperation with the European Food Safety Authority, with all European Union structures pertaining to the activities related to food safety, plant and animal health, and the food safety authorities in EU Member States and third countries
6. Conducting an in-depth scientific analysis of problems related to the risks in the agri-food chain and to provide this information to stakeholders (producers, processors, traders, consumers, scientific organizations under Art. 36 of Regulation (EU) No. 178/2002, the competent risk management bodies, ministries, parliament)
7. Strengthening state laboratory control - expanding its scope, including GMO analyses and improving the capacity for carrying out laboratory control
8. Implementation of effective control of the market of seeds and planting material in accordance with the provisions of the Law on seeds and planting material (SPML) and the law on genetically modified organisms;
9. Activities related to the control of:
 - The quantities of actually applied products that contain substances that are hazardous to human health and aquatic organisms when released into the aquatic environment;

- The quality of sludge from sewage treatment plants, which are used for fertilization and control of the concentration of biogenic substances, incl. nitrates, in the soil and waters of the areas, fertilization with sediments and the reflection of the quality of the production of these areas;
 - Fertilization in nitrate vulnerable areas to reduce nitrate pressure on surface and groundwater and protect drinking water
10. Activities related to the identification of areas in Bulgaria where there would be a need for agricultural irrigation with reuse of treated wastewater from Urban Wastewater Treatment Plants and actions to justify exemptions for the application of the Regulation in certain areas, in relation to Regulation (EU) 2020/741 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 May 2020 on minimum requirements for water reuse.

OBJECTIVE: LIMITING THE SPREAD AND ELIMINATING ECONOMICLY IMPORTANT ANIMAL DISEASES TO GUARANTEE THEIR GOOD HEALTH STATUS AND THE SAFETY OF ANIMAL PRODUCTS PRODUCED

MEASURES:

1. Applying an integrated approach to combating zoonoses and antimicrobial resistance, reduced and reasonable use of antimicrobials and setting higher standards for animal welfare - fulfillment of the principles and objectives set out in the European Union Strategies "One Health" and " From farm to fork"
2. Building on the results achieved to limit the spread and economic losses from the African swine fever disease and its gradual eradication, proving and acquiring the status of a disease-free country/region - implementation of the Plan to control and prevent the spread of the African swine fever disease in the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2024 - 2026
3. Limiting the spread and economic losses caused by the highly pathogenic avian influenza disease, protecting people's health through prevention measures in the poultry sector and a coordinated approach to fight the disease with the participation of all interested parties - implementation of the Plan for the control and prevention of the spread of the highly pathogenic avian influenza disease avian influenza in the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2024-2026.
4. Applying a high level of control regarding compliance with the requirements of the legislation and the implementation of the measures set out in the National Program for the Prevention, Control, Supervision of Animal Diseases and Zoonoses for the period 2025-2027, and updating the measures if necessary in accordance with the epizootological situation and applicable legislation;
5. Participation in the development and preparation of ongoing changes to EU delegated and implementing acts in the field of animal health and veterinary medicinal products. Changes to national legislation to ensure the application of EU legislation.

OBJECTIVE: LIMITING THE SPREAD OF PLANT PESTS, THE RISKS AND THE USE OF PLANT PROTECTION PRODUCTS AND THE TRANSITION TOWARDS ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE THROUGH ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES

MEASURES:

1. Promotion of integrated production of plants and plant products
2. Development and use of non-chemical alternatives to chemical plant protection products
3. Encouraging the use of essential substances, biological agents for pest control and plant extracts
4. Development of guidelines for integrated pest management by crop groups/species
5. Promoting the correct and sustainable use of plant protection products through the principles of good plant protection practice and integrated pest management

6. Priority authorization for placing on the market and for use of low-risk plant protection products and plant protection products containing active substances-microorganisms
7. Restriction or withdrawal of authorization (in cases of withdrawal of approval of active substances candidates for replacement at the "EU" level) and the use of plant protection products containing candidates for replacement
8. Limiting the use of plant protection products that are total herbicides and plant protection products that are of the first professional category of use
9. Implementation and use of systems for advice, forecasting, signaling and monitoring of the development of economically important pests in Bulgaria's main agricultural crops
10. Control of the implementation of the objectives set out in the revised National Action Plan of the Republic of Bulgaria for the sustainable use of pesticides to reduce the risks and impact of the use of pesticides
11. Control of the maximum permissible limits of pesticide residues in final plant products
12. Carrying out an evaluation of plant protection products in accordance with the requirements of Regulation (EC) No. 1107/2009, Regulation (EC) No. 396/2005, collecting, processing and providing information to the European Food Safety Authority on the approved Good Agricultural Practices of the permitted PPPs in Bulgaria for the purposes of reviewing maximum residue limits.

OBJECTIVE: PREVENTION AND REDUCTION OF FOOD LOSS

MEASURES:

1. Implementation of the National Program for Prevention and Reduction of Food Loss (2021-2026)
2. Raising awareness on food waste prevention

PRIORITY 6: "FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE MANAGEMENT"

AREA OF IMPACT 1 - "FISHERIES AND AQUATIC BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES":

OBJECTIVE: CONSERVATION AND RECOVERY OF FISHING RESOURCES AND AQUATIC ECOSYSTEMS

MEASURES:

1. Providing and managing reliable biological, environmental, technical and socio-economic data for the Fisheries sector with financial support under the Maritime and Fisheries Program 2014- 2020 and the Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Program (MFAP)
2. Conservation and effective management of fish resources through the implementation of the "Control and Implementation" measure of MFAP.
3. Execution of activities for adaptation of the fishing fleet capabilities to the fishing opportunities through financial support under Measure "Final cessation of fishing activities" of the MFAP
4. Execution of activities to modernize the fishing fleet (Measure "Temporary suspension of fishing activities" of the MFAP)
5. Execution of activities to foster investment in new equipment and innovations, contributing to environmental protection and biodiversity through financial support under Measure "Specific equipment of fishing vessels, activities and innovations aimed at environmental protection and biodiversity" of the MFAP

AREA OF IMPACT 2 - COMPETITIVENESS OF THE FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE INDUSTRY:

OBJECTIVE: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF AQUACULTURE PRODUCTION AND PROCESSING OF ITS PRODUCTS

MEASURES:

1. Implementation of activities to promote investment activity and introduction of innovations in the Aquaculture sub-sector through financial support under Measures "Productive investments in aquaculture" and "Innovations in aquaculture" under MFAP
2. Implementation of activities to promote investment activity and introduction of innovations in processing of fishery and aquaculture products through financial support under Measure "Processing of fishery and aquaculture products" from MFAP

AREA OF IMPACT 3 - BLUE ECONOMY AND FISHERIES COMMUNITIES

OBJECTIVE: STRENGTHENING AND DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITIES IN COASTAL AND INLAND FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE

MEASURES:

1. promote the process of establishing local fishing action groups with financial support under Measure "Preliminary preparation of fisheries local action groups" of the MFAP
2. stimulate the participation of local communities in the sustainable development of coastal and inland fishing areas with financial support under Measure "Development of communities engaged in fisheries and aquaculture in coastal and inland areas" of the MFAP

PRIORITY 7: MOBILIZING THE POTENTIAL OF RURAL AREAS TO ACHIEVE BALANCED SOCIAL AND TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT

AREA OF IMPACT 1 - COMMUNITY LED DEVELOPMENT:

OBJECTIVE: DIVERSIFICATION OF THE RURAL ECONOMY AND HIGH EMPLOYMENT OF THE LOCAL POPULATION

MEASURES:

1. Implementation of integrated multisectoral strategies for local development, based on the characteristics of the specific territory and developed on the basis of local needs and potential

SCOPE 2 - INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC SERVICES IN RURAL AREAS:

OBJECTIVE: IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN RURAL AREAS

MEASURE:

1. Application of interventions under the Strategic Plan for Agriculture and Rural Development to support investments for construction and/or reconstruction of technical infrastructure, municipal road and street network, reconstruction and modernization of water supply and sewerage network and sewerage system, and other public infrastructure

A set of instruments for financial support with European and national funds will be implemented in 2025 to implement the measures and achieve the goals of the agricultural policy.

In terms of agriculture, the implementation of some of the measures financed under the General Agricultural Policy 2014-2020 will continue and part of the interventions under the Strategic Plan for the Development of Agriculture and Rural Areas 2023-2027 will be launched. Fisheries and Aquaculture Production Development will be supported under the 2014-2020 Maritime and Fisheries Program and the 2021-2027 Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Program funded by the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund.

Despite the limitations of the national budget, the sustainable development of agriculture will be promoted with a national resource - through schemes for transitional national aid, supplementing the support with European funds for direct support, and state aid.

The agricultural sector will be able to benefit from an additional financial resource from the National Plan for Recovery and Sustainability for investments in activities that ensure the protection of environmental components and mitigation of the consequences of climate change, the introduction of innovative production and digital technologies, the digitalization of processes in industry and communication between administration and business.

For 2025, funds in the amount of BGN 5,212 million will be needed to support the agricultural sector, including:

- For direct payments - BGN 1,627.1 million (for the financial year)
- For market measures - BGN 150.5 million (for the financial year)
- For transitional national aid - BGN 110.1 million
- For state aid (incl. under tax relief schemes) - BGN 540.3 million. Additional financial resources may be made available if necessary and financially feasible.
- For payments under measures under the RDP 2014-2020 interventions under the CAP Strategic Plan, financed by the EAFRD - BGN 2,468.5 million (for the financial year)
- For implementation of measures in support of fisheries and aquaculture - BGN 40.6 million
- For activities under the NRRP - BGN 274.9 million (VAT included).

ANNEXES

GROSS AND FINAL PRODUCTS FROM THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR FOR 2023 (AT PRODUCER PRICES)

Code	Products	Current prices															
		Gross output	Losses	Initial stocks	Used per unit			Processed by producers	Own consumption	Sales			Sales - total	Production of goods from fixed capital at own expense	Closing stocks	Change in stocks	Final production
					Seeds and propagating material	Feed supplements	Other			in the country		abroad					
in the sector	outside the sector																
a	b	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
01	Cereals	4,203.0	1.7	1,883.6	92.7	70.5	4.6	13.3		651.7	3,618.3	14.6	4,284.6		1,619.2	-264.0	4,104.0
01.1	Wheat and spelt	2,751.5	0.7	1,206.9	81.1	26.8	2.0	5.9		439.1	2,445.3	2.1	2,886.5		955.4	-251.0	2,667.7
01.1/1	Soft wheat	2,713.4	0.7	1,197.7	80.1	26.7	2.0	5.7		431.9	2,419.9	2.0	2,853.8		942.1	-255.2	2,630.6
01.1/2	Durum wheat	38.1		9.2	1.0	0.1		0.2		7.2	25.4	0.1	32.7		13.3	4.2	37.1
01.2	Rye	5.7		1.4	0.4	1.0		0.1		0.5	1.9		2.4		3.2	1.7	5.3
01.3	Barley	291.2	0.2	56.8	7.4	11.8	0.5	2.6		41.1	235.4	0.7	277.2		48.3	-8.5	283.1
01.4	Oat and cereal mixtures	13.3		5.5	0.7	1.6	0.1			2.3	4.9		7.2		9.2	3.7	12.5
01.5	Corn for grain	1,006.4	0.8	565.4	0.8	21.5	1.1	0.3		160.8	849.5	9.5	1,019.8		527.5	-37.9	1,003.7
01.6	Rice	81.4		38.5	1.0		0.3	2.1			60.6	2.3	62.9		53.6	15.1	80.1
01.7	Other cereals	53.5		9.1	1.3	7.8	0.6	2.3		7.9	20.7		28.6		22.0	12.9	51.6
02	Industrial Crops	1,763.5	2.7	1,040.1	4.0	4.6	5.9	24.9	2.5	271.7	1,886.6	2.9	2,161.2		597.8	-442.4	1,750.9
02.1	Oilseeds	1,594.5	2.3	988.5	1.7	3.2	0.9	4.1	2.1	255.3	1,769.2	1.7	2,026.2		542.5	-446.1	1,589.6
02.1/1	Rapeseed and colza	158.3	0.3	40.7	0.1		0.1			22.8	168.0		190.8		7.7	-33.0	157.8
02.1/2	Sunflower	1,420.3	2.0	942.3	1.2	3.1	0.8	0.7	1.4	232.4	1,592.3	1.7	1,826.4		527.0	-415.3	1,416.3
02.1/3	Soy	6.3		4.1	0.1	0.1				0.1	5.5		5.5		4.7	0.6	6.2
02.1/4	Other oilseeds	9.6		1.4	0.3			3.4	0.7		3.5		3.5		3.1	1.6	9.3
02.2	Protein crops	27.1	0.2	9.6	1.8	1.3	0.1		0.1	1.8	14.8		16.6		16.6	7.0	25.0
02.3	Tobacco	34.9		24.8			0.2	1.0		1.4	41.7		43.1		15.4	-9.4	34.7
02.4	Sugar beet																
02.5	Other industrial crops	107.0	0.2	17.2	0.5	0.1	4.7	19.8	0.3	13.2	60.9	1.2	75.3		23.3	6.1	101.6
02.5/1	Fiber-producing crops	1.7		0.7	0.1						1.0	1.2	2.2		0.1	-0.6	1.6
02.5/2	Hops	1.0													1.0	1.0	1.0
02.5/3	Other industrial crops	104.3	0.2	16.5	0.4	0.1	4.7	19.8	0.3	13.2	59.9		73.1		22.2	5.7	99.0
03	Crops for feed	227.2	0.1	77.4	2.0	115.2	3.7	8.0	11.4	28.8	37.9	3.7	70.4		93.8	16.4	221.4
03.1	Corn for silage	72.6			0.1	24.1	0.9	5.1	1.5	11.7	4.8		16.5		24.4	24.4	71.6
03.2	Root feed																
03.3	Other feed	154.6	0.1	77.4	1.9	91											

Code	Products	Current prices															
		Gross	Losses	Initial	Used per unit			Processed by	Own consumption	Sales			Sales -	Production of	Closing	Change	Final
07.1	Table wine																
09	Other plant crops	52.5		13.1	0.8	0.1				6.6	44.5	0.1	51.2		13.5	0.4	51.7
09.2	Seeds	52.5		13.1	0.8	0.1				6.6	44.5	0.1	51.2		13.5	0.4	51.7
09.3	Other plant products																
10	Crop production (from 01 to 09)	7,137.9	4.9	3,055.0	102.3	192.6	15.8	52.8	20.0	1,060.5	6,252.1	65.4	7,378.0	61.2	2,365.3	-689.6	7,014.9
11	Livestock	1,277.6		417.2				32.5			1,100.8	29.7	1,130.5	108.4	423.4	6.1	1,277.6
11.1	Cattle	177.4		248.7				3.4			102.1		102.1	73.8	246.8	-2.0	177.4
11.2	Pigs	479.4		44.8				19.2			413.9	29.7	443.6	11.5	49.9	5.2	479.4
11.3	Horses																
11.4	Sheep and goats	183.9		46.9				6.6			146.7		146.7	23.1	54.4	7.5	183.9
11.5	Poultry	436.9		76.8				3.3			438.1		438.1		72.3	-4.6	436.9
11.6	Other animals																
12	Livestock products	1,233.7		136.9		34.3	79.9	24.3	31.6	96.7	921.2	58.6	1,076.5		124.0	-12.9	1,119.5
12.1	Milk	712.2				30.5		23.8	10.4	34.8	612.7		647.5				681.7
12.2	Eggs	397.0		7.1			51.2	0.5	10.1	45.0	230.8	58.6	334.4		7.9	0.8	345.8
12.3	Other livestock production	124.5		129.8		3.8	28.7		11.1	16.9	77.7		94.6		116.1	-13.7	92.0
12.3/1	Unwashed wool	1.4								0.5	0.9		1.4				1.4
12.3/2	Silkworm cocoons																
12.3/3	Other livestock production	123.1		129.8		3.8	28.7		11.1	16.4	76.8		93.2		116.1	-13.7	90.6
13	Livestock production (11+12)	2,511.3		554.1		34.3	79.9	56.8	31.6	96.7	2,022.0	88.3	2,207.0	108.4	547.4	-6.8	2,397.1
14	Production of agricultural goods (10+13)	9,649.2	4.9	3,609.1	102.3	226.9	95.7	109.6	51.6	1,157.2	8,274.1	153.7	9,585.0	169.6	2,912.7	-696.4	9,412.0
15	Production of agricultural services	595.7									595.7		595.7				595.7
16	Production from agriculture (14 + 15)	10,244.9	4.9	3,609.1	102.3	226.9	95.7	109.6	51.6	1,157.2	8,869.8	153.7	10,180.7	169.6	2,912.7	-696.4	10,007.7
17	Non-agricultural inseparable secondary activities	299.0							299.0								299.0
17.1	Processing of agricultural products	299.0							299.0								299.0
17.1/1	- cereals	11.3							11.3								11.3
17.1/2	- vegetables	50.5							50.5								50.5
17.1/3	- fruit	18.1							18.1								18.1
17.1/4	- wine	41.9							41.9								41.9
17.1/5	- animals	65.2							65.2								65.2
17.1/6	- animal products	105.1							105.1								105.1
17.1/6/1	- milk	105.1							105.1								105.1
17.1/7	- other	6.9							6.9								6.9
17.2	Other inseparable secondary activities																
18	Production from the agriculture sector (16+17)	10,543.9	4.9	3,609.1	102.3	226.9	95.7	109.6	350.6	1,157.2	8,869.8	153.7	10,180.7	169.6	2,912.7	-696.4	10,306.7

Source: NSI

ANNEX 2

VALUE OF GROSS PRODUCTION AND GROSS ADDED VALUE FROM AGRICULTURE (AT PRODUCER PRICES) FOR THE PERIOD 2021-2023

(BGN million)

Code	Products	2021	Coefficient of variation	2022	Coefficient of variation	2023
a		1	2	3	4	5
01	Cereals	4,532.1	24.5	5,644.7	-25.5	4,203.0
01.1	Wheat and spelt	2,847.0	33.0	3,785.6	-27.3	2,751.5
01.1/1	Soft wheat	2,825.9	32.6	3,747.1	-27.6	2,713.4
01.1/2	Durum wheat	21.1	82.5	38.5	-1.0	38.1
01.2	Rye	5.9	67.8	9.9	-42.4	5.7
01.3	Barley	240.9	41.6	341.2	-14.7	291.2
01.4	Oat and cereal mixtures	8.9	55.1	13.8	-3.6	13.3
01.5	Corn for grain	1,363.5	3.3	1,408.7	-28.6	1,006.4
01.6	Rice	39.5	34.2	53.0	53.6	81.4
01.7	Other cereals	26.4	23.1	32.5	64.6	53.5
02	Industrial Crops	2,567.9	15.8	2,974.4	-40.7	1,763.5
02.1	Oilseeds	2,330.5	19.5	2,784.8	-42.7	1,594.5
02.1/1	Rapeseed and colza	348.5	-2.3	340.4	-53.5	158.3
02.1/2	Sunflower	1,977.7	22.8	2,429.0	-41.5	1,420.3
02.1/3	Soy	2.5	416.0	12.9	-51.2	6.3
02.1/4	Other oilseeds	1.8	38.9	2.5	284.0	9.6
02.2	Protein crops	30.3	-4.6	28.9	-6.2	27.1
02.3	Tobacco	39.9	-34.3	26.2	33.2	34.9
02.4	Sugar beet					
02.5	Other industrial crops	167.2	-19.6	134.5	-20.4	107.0
02.5/1	Fiber-producing crops	1.4	-7.1	1.3	30.8	1.7
02.5/2	Hops	1.0	30.0	1.3	-23.1	1.0
02.5/3	Other industrial crops	164.8	-20.0	131.9	-20.9	104.3
03	Crops for feed	173.0	19.5	206.7	9.9	227.2
03.1	Corn for silage	51.6	33.5	68.9	5.4	72.6
03.2	Root feed	0.1	0.0	0.1	-100.0	0.0
03.3	Other feed	121.3	13.5	137.7	12.3	154.6
04	Vegetables	422.7	14.8	485.1	2.8	498.7
04.1	Fresh vegetables	347.2	6.6	370.1	8.6	402.1
04.1/2	Tomatoes	109.5	15.7	126.7	1.3	128.4
04.1/3	Other fresh vegetables	237.7	2.4	243.4	12.4	273.7
04.2	Flowers	75.5	52.3	115.0	-16.0	96.6
04.2/1	Plant nurseries	9.5	14.7	10.9	66.1	18.1
04.2/2	Decorative plants, including Christmas trees	20.8	-7.7	19.2	-9.9	17.3
04.2/3	Creation and growing	45.2	87.8	84.9	-27.9	61.2
05	Potatoes	74.5	20.1	89.5	-13.3	77.6
06	Fruit	324.9	6.8	347.1	-9.1	315.4
06.1	Fresh fruits	212.8	13.0	240.4	-12.7	209.8
06.1/1	Apples	24.2	16.5	28.2	-23.0	21.7
06.1/2	Pears	2.5	4.0	2.6	-23.1	2.0
06.1/3	Peaches	20.9	11.0	23.2	-59.5	9.4
06.1/4	Other fresh fruit	165.2	12.8	186.4	-5.2	176.7
06.4	Grapes - total	112.1	-4.8	106.7	-1.0	105.6
06.4/1	Dessert grapes	13.4	5.2	14.1	1.4	14.3
06.4/2	Other grape	98.7	-6.2	92.6	-1.4	91.3
07	Wine					
07.1	Table wine					
09	Other plant crops	38.7	25.6	48.6	8.0	52.5
09.2	Seeds	38.7	25.6	48.6	8.0	52.5
09.3	Other plant products					
10	Crop production (from 01 to 09)	8,133.8	20.4	9,796.1	-27.1	7,137.9
11	Livestock	891.6	20.7	1,076.6	18.7	1,277.6
11.1	Cattle	173.5	16.1	201.4	-11.9	177.4
11.2	Pigs	287.2	22.4	351.5	36.4	479.4
11.3	Horses					0.0
11.4	Sheep and goats	137.4	12.1	154.0	19.4	183.9
11.5	Poultry	293.5	26.0	369.7	18.2	436.9
11.6	Other animals					
12	Livestock products	1,046.9	18.5	1,241.0	-0.6	1,233.7
12.1	Milk	706.9	11.7	789.7	-9.8	712.2
12.2	Eggs	227.8	39.9	318.6	24.6	397.0
12.3	Other livestock production	112.2	18.3	132.7	-6.2	124.5
12.3/1	Unwashed wool	1.6	-6.3	1.5	-6.7	1.4
12.3/2	Silkworm cocoons					

Code	Products	2021	Coefficient of variation	2022	Coefficient of variation	2023
12.3/3	Other livestock production	110.6	18.6	131.2	-6.2	123.1
13	Livestock production (11+12)	1,938.5	19.6	2,317.6	8.4	2,511.3
14	Production of agricultural goods (10+13)	10,072.3	20.3	12,113.7	-20.3	9,649.2
15	Production of agricultural services	546.3	9.0	595.3	0.1	595.7
16	Production from agriculture (14 + 15)	10,618.6	19.7	12,709.0	-19.4	10,244.9
17	Non-agricultural inseparable secondary activities	202.3	35.0	273.2	9.4	299.0
17.1	Processing of agricultural products	202.3	35.0	273.2	9.4	299.0
17.1/1	- cereals	66.8	24.3	83.0	-86.4	11.3
17.1/2	- vegetables	27.2	0.4	27.3	85.0	50.5
17.1/3	- fruit	14.5	24.8	18.1	0.0	18.1
17.1/4	- wine	35.2	16.8	41.1	1.9	41.9
17.1/5	- animals	42.3	82.3	77.1	-15.4	65.2
17.1/6	- animal products	9.0	104.4	18.4	471.2	105.1
17.1/6/1	- milk	9.0	104.4	18.4	471.2	105.1
17.1/7	- other	7.3	12.3	8.2	-15.9	6.9
17.2	Other inseparable secondary activities					
18	Production from the Agriculture sector (16+17)	10,820.9	20.0	12,982.2	-18.8	10,543.9
19	Intermediate consumption	5,862.3	24.9	7,322.8	-10.2	6,574.6
	Losses	11.6	19.8	13.9	-64.7	4.9
19.01	Seeds and propagating material	357.2	42.2	508.0	-4.9	483.2
19.01/1	supplied by other agricultural holdings	38.6	26.9	49.0	39.2	68.2
19.01/2	purchased outside the sector	207.3	33.5	276.8	13.0	312.7
	produced and consumed on the farm itself	111.3	63.7	182.2	-43.9	102.3
19.02	Fuels and oils	1,191.1	9.6	1,305.7	-10.3	1,171.5
19.02/1	- electricity	104.0	20.9	125.7	5.9	133.1
19.02/2	- gas	39.5	21.8	48.1	-6.2	45.1
19.02/3	- other fuels	1,042.4	8.1	1,126.7	-12.5	985.9
19.02/4	- other	5.2	0.0	5.2	42.3	7.4
19.03	Fertilizers and soil improvers	741.6	90.5	1,412.7	-18.4	1,152.7
19.03/1	supplied by other agricultural holdings	12.3	115.4	26.5	52.1	40.3
19.03/2	purchased outside the sector	729.3	90.1	1,386.2	-19.8	1,112.4
19.04	Plant protection products and pesticides	366.9	39.5	511.8	0.4	513.8
19.05	Veterinary costs	250.7	-11.6	221.6	-27.1	161.6
19.06	Feed supplements	1,190.7	24.2	1,479.3	-8.7	1,351.0
19.06/1	supplied by other agricultural holdings	383.0	39.7	534.9	1.0	540.1
19.06/2	purchased outside the sector	419.9	45.7	612.0	1.0	618.3
19.06/3	produced and consumed on the farm itself	387.8	-14.3	332.4	-42.1	192.6
	Feed supplements, not included in the final production	44.7	11.6	49.9	-31.3	34.3
19.07	Maintenance and repair of machinery and small inventory	391.6	6.1	415.5	-8.7	379.4
19.08	Building maintenance	175.6	0.7	176.8	-12.4	154.8
19.09	Agricultural services	546.3	9.0	595.3	0.1	595.7
19.10	FISIM	69.5	-1.0	68.8	-26.5	50.6
19.11	Other goods and services	524.8	7.4	563.5	-7.5	521.1
	supplied by other agricultural holdings	121.5	13.3	137.7	-17.1	114.2
	purchased outside the sector	321.4	5.1	337.7	-7.8	311.2
	produced and consumed on the farm itself	81.9	7.6	88.1	8.6	95.7
20	Gross value added at producer prices (18-19)	4,958.6	14.1	5,659.4	-29.9	3,969.3

Source: NSI

ANNEX 3

INTERMEDIATE CONSUMPTION, FACTOR EXPENDITURE, OTHER SUBSIDIES AND TAXES FOR 2023

(BGN million)

Elements of intermediate consumption	To create gross output at producer prices	To create the final production at basic prices	Produced and consumed on the farm itself	Purchase of goods and services for intermediate consumption	
				from other agricultural units	from units outside the industry
a	1	2	3	4	5
Losses	4.9		4.9		
Seeds and propagating material	483.2	380.9	102.3	68.2	312.7
Fuels and oils	1,171.5	1,171.5			1,171.5
- electricity	133.1	133.1			133.1
- gas	45.1	45.1			45.1
- other fuels	985.9	985.9			985.9
- other	7.4	7.4			7.4
Fertilizers and soil improvers	1,152.7	1,152.7		40.3	1,112.4
Plant protection products and pesticides	513.8	513.8			513.8
Veterinary costs	161.6	161.6			161.6
Feed supplements	1,351.0	1,351.0	192.6	540.1	618.3
Feed supplements, not included in the final production	34.3		34.3		
Maintenance and repair	534.2	534.2			534.2
- maintenance and repair of machines and small inventory	379.4	379.4			379.4
- maintenance of buildings	154.8	154.8			154.8
Agricultural services	595.7	595.7			595.7
FISIM	50.6	50.6			50.6
Other goods and services	521.1	425.4	95.7	114.2	311.2
Intermediate consumption	6,574.6	6,337.4	429.8	762.8	5,382.0
Use of fixed capital	1,232.2	1,232.2			1,232.2
- equipment	975.2	975.2			975.2
- buildings	115.9	115.9			115.9
- creation and cultivation	25.0	25.0			25.0
- other	116.1	116.1			116.1
Compensation of employees	1,648.9	1,648.9			1,648.9
Other taxes on production	33.9	33.9			33.9
Other subsidies on production	2,302.5	2,302.5			2,302.5
Rent	2,532.2	2,532.2			2,532.2
Interest paid	185.4	185.4			185.4
Interest received	82.5	82.5			82.5

Source: NSI

ANNEX 4
VALUE OF FINAL PRODUCTION, GROSS VALUE ADDED AND ENTREPRENEURIAL INCOME IN AGRICULTURE (AT CURRENT BASIS PRICES) FOR THE PERIOD 2021 - 2023
(BGN million)

Code	Products	2021	Coefficient of variation	2022	Coefficient of variation	2023
a	b	1	2	3	4	5
01	Cereals	4,429.3	23.8	5,485.4	-25.2	4,104.0
01.1	Wheat and spelt	2,761.3	32.0	3,644.8	-26.8	2,667.7
01.1/1	Soft wheat	2,741.0	31.6	3,607.4	-27.1	2,630.6
01.1/2	Durum wheat	20.3	84.2	37.4	-0.8	37.1
01.2	Rye	5.6	73.2	9.7	-45.4	5.3
01.3	Barley	234.2	40.4	328.7	-13.9	283.1
01.4	Oat and cereal mixtures	8.3	57.8	13.1	-4.6	12.5
01.5	Corn for grain	1,358.4	3.5	1,405.9	-28.6	1,003.7
01.6	Rice	38.7	32.6	51.3	56.1	80.1
01.7	Other cereals	22.8	39.9	31.9	61.8	51.6
02	Industrial Crops	2,578.2	15.2	2,971.0	-40.0	1,783.8
02.1	Oilseeds	2,312.8	19.1	2,754.2	-42.3	1,589.6
02.1/1	Rapeseed and colza	334.3	-5.4	316.3	-50.1	157.8
02.1/2	Sunflower	1,974.4	22.7	2,422.9	-41.5	1,416.3
02.1/3	Soy	2.5	404.0	12.6	-50.8	6.2
02.1/4	Other oilseeds	1.6	50.0	2.4	287.5	9.3
02.2	Protein crops	56.5	-0.4	56.3	-0.5	56.0
02.3	Tobacco	39.9	-34.3	26.2	32.4	34.7
02.4	Sugar beet					
02.5	Other industrial crops	169.0	-20.5	134.3	-22.9	103.5
02.5/1	Fiber-producing crops	5.1	-35.3	3.3	6.1	3.5
02.5/2	Hops	1.0	30.0	1.3	-23.1	1.0
02.5/3	Other industrial crops	162.9	-20.4	129.7	-23.7	99.0
03	Crops for feed	172.1	19.4	205.5	7.7	221.4
03.1	Corn for silage	51.3	33.3	68.4	4.7	71.6
03.2	Root feed	0.1		0.1	-100.0	
03.3	Other feed	120.7	13.5	137.0	9.3	149.8
04	Vegetables	450.6	13.7	512.5	3.9	532.6
04.1	Fresh vegetables	375.1	6.0	397.5	9.8	436.6
04.1/2	Tomatoes	112.7	19.9	135.1	2.2	138.1
04.1/3	Other fresh vegetables	262.4		262.4	13.8	298.5
04.2	Flowers	75.5	52.3	115.0	-16.5	96.0
04.2/1	Plant nurseries	9.5	14.7	10.9	60.6	17.5
04.2/2	Decorative plants, including Christmas trees	20.8	-7.7	19.2	-9.9	17.3
04.2/3	Creation and growing	45.2	87.8	84.9	-27.9	61.2
05	Potatoes	84.4	15.8	97.7	-22.6	75.6
06	Fruit	361.2	7.0	386.4	-8.0	355.4
06.1	Fresh fruits	247.9	12.3	278.3	-10.4	249.3
06.1/1	Apples	28.4	14.4	32.5	-19.4	26.2
06.1/2	Pears	3.1	6.5	3.3	-15.2	2.8
06.1/3	Peaches	24.7	9.7	27.1	-53.1	12.7
06.1/4	Other fresh fruit	191.7	12.4	215.4	-3.6	207.6
06.4	Grapes - total	113.3	-4.6	108.1	-1.9	106.1
06.4/1	Dessert grapes	14.6	6.2	15.5	1.3	15.7

Code	Products	2021	Coefficient of variation	2022	Coefficient of variation	2023
06.4/2	Other grape	98.7	-6.2	92.6	-2.4	90.4
07	Wine					
07.1	Table wine					
09	Other plant crops	34.4	20.1	41.3	25.2	51.7
09.2	Seeds	34.4	20.1	41.3	25.2	51.7
09.3	Other plant products					
10	Crop production (from 01 to 09)	8,110.2	19.6	9,699.8	-26.6	7,124.5
11	Livestock	966.1	19.1	1,151.0	18.4	1,362.5
11.1	Cattle	198.8	14.4	227.5	-4.7	216.8
11.2	Pigs	287.2	22.4	351.5	36.4	479.4
11.3	Horses					
11.4	Sheep and goats	186.6	8.4	202.3	13.4	229.4
11.5	Poultry	293.5	26.0	369.7	18.2	436.9
11.6	Other animals					
12	Livestock products	996.5	18.7	1,182.6	-0.8	1,172.7
12.1	Milk	729.7	11.4	812.9	-9.6	734.9
12.2	Eggs	181.9	49.3	271.5	27.4	345.8
12.3	Other livestock production	84.9	15.7	98.2	-6.3	92.0
12.3/1	Unwashed wool	1.6	-6.3	1.5	-6.7	1.4
12.3/2	Silkworm cocoons					
12.3/3	Other livestock production	83.3	16.1	96.7	-6.3	90.6
13	Livestock production (11+12)	1,962.6	18.9	2,333.6	8.6	2,535.2
14	Production of agricultural goods	10,072.8	19.5	12,033.4	-19.7	9,659.7
15	Production of agricultural services	546.3	9.0	595.3	0.1	595.7
16	Production from agriculture (14 + 15)	10,619.1	18.9	12,628.7	-18.8	10,255.4
17	Non-agricultural inseparable secondary activities	202.3	35.0	273.2	9.4	299.0
17.1	Processing of agricultural products	202.3	35.0	273.2	9.4	299.0
17.1/1	- cereals	66.8	24.3	83.0	-86.4	11.3
17.1/2	- vegetables	27.2	0.4	27.3	85.0	50.5
17.1/3	- fruit	14.5	24.8	18.1		18.1
17.1/4	- wine	35.2	16.8	41.1	1.9	41.9
17.1/5	- animals	42.3	82.3	77.1	-15.4	65.2
17.1/6	- animal products	9.0	104.4	18.4	471.2	105.1
17.1/6/1	- milk	9.0	104.4	18.4	471.2	105.1
17.1/7	- other	7.3	12.3	8.2	-15.9	6.9
17.2	Other inseparable secondary activities					
18	Production from the Agriculture sector (16+17)	10,821.4	19.2	12,901.9	-18.2	10,554.4
19	Intermediate consumption	5,612.8	24.5	6,988.7	-9.3	6,337.4
19.01	Seeds and propagating material	245.9	32.5	325.8	16.9	380.9
19.01/1	supplied by other agricultural holdings	38.6	26.9	49.0	39.2	68.2
19.01/2	purchased outside the sector	207.3	33.5	276.8	13.0	312.7
19.02	Fuels and oils	1,191.1	9.6	1,305.7	-10.3	1,171.5
19.02/1	- electricity	104.0	20.9	125.7	5.9	133.1
19.02/2	- gas	39.5	21.8	48.1	-6.2	45.1
19.02/3	- other fuels	1,042.4	8.1	1,126.7	-12.5	985.9
19.02/4	- other	5.2		5.2	42.3	7.4
19.03	Fertilizers and soil improvers	741.6	90.5	1,412.7	-18.4	1,152.7

Code	Products	2021	Coefficient of variation	2022	Coefficient of variation	2023
19.03/1	supplied by other agricultural holdings	12.3	115.4	26.5	52.1	40.3
19.03/2	purchased outside the sector	729.3	90.1	1,386.2	-19.8	1,112.4
19.04	Plant protection products and pesticides	366.9	39.5	511.8	0.4	513.8
19.05	Veterinary costs	250.7	-11.6	221.6	-27.1	161.6
19.06	Feed supplements	1,190.7	24.2	1,479.3	-8.7	1,351.0
19.06/1	supplied by other agricultural holdings	383.0	39.7	534.9	1.0	540.1
19.06/2	purchased outside the sector	419.9	45.7	612.0	1.0	618.3
19.06/3	produced and consumed on the farm itself	387.8	-14.3	332.4	-42.1	192.6
19.07	Maintenance and repair of machinery and small inventory	391.6	6.1	415.5	-8.7	379.4
19.08	Building maintenance	175.6	0.7	176.8	-12.4	154.8
19.09	Agricultural services	546.3	9.0	595.3	0.1	595.7
19.10	FISIM	69.5	-1.0	68.8	-26.5	50.6
19.11	Other goods and services	442.9	7.3	475.4	-10.5	425.4
	supplied by other agricultural holdings	121.5	13.3	137.7	-17.1	114.2
	purchased outside the sector	321.4	5.1	337.7	-7.8	311.2
20	Gross value added at basic prices (18-19)	5,208.6	13.5	5,913.2	-28.7	4,217.0
21	Use of fixed capital	982.9	14.4	1,124.4	9.6	1,232.2
21.1	- equipment	786.0	13.8	894.6	9.0	975.2
21.2	- buildings	90.4	13.6	102.7	12.9	115.9
21.3	- creation and cultivation	21.9	-2.7	21.3	17.4	25.0
21.4	- other	84.6	25.1	105.8	9.7	116.1
22	Gross value added at basic prices (20-21)	4,225.7	13.3	4,788.8	-37.7	2,984.8
23	Compensation of employees	1,211.2	15.0	1,393.2	18.4	1,648.9
24	Other taxes on production	15.2	382.9	73.4	-53.8	33.9
25	Other subsidies on production	1,950.3	26.6	2,468.2	-6.7	2,302.5
26	Income by factors (22 - 24 + 25)	6,160.8	16.6	7,183.6	-26.9	5,253.4
27	Operating surplus / Mixed income (22 - 23 + 25)	4,949.6	17.0	5,790.4	-37.8	3,604.5
28	Rent	1,624.0	53.4	2,490.7	1.7	2,532.2
29	Interest paid	78.6	31.0	103.0	80.0	185.4
30	Interest received	27.9	52.3	42.5	94.1	82.5
31	Entrepreneurial income (27 - 28 - 29 + 30)	3,274.9	-1.1	3,239.2	-70.1	969.4

Source: NSI

ANNEX 5
FINAL PRODUCTS AND GROSS VALUE ADDED (AT BASIC PRICES) - 2022 - 2023 - AMOUNT AND INDICES OF THE CHANGE - 2023 COMPARED TO 2022

Code	Products	Current value for 2022 - BGN million	Volume index (previous year = 100)	Value for 2023 at previous year's prices - BGN million	Price index (previous year = 100)	Current value for 2023 - BGN million	Index of change in current value (2022 = 100)
01	CEREALS	5,485.4	106.1	5,822.1	70.5	4,104.0	74.8
01.1	Wheat and spelt	3,644.8	107.0	3,901.6	68.4	2,667.7	73.2
01.1/1	Soft wheat	3,607.4	106.8	3,851.2	68.3	2,630.6	72.9
01.1/2	Durum wheat	37.4	134.8	50.4	73.6	37.1	99.2
01.2	Rye	9.7	79.4	7.7	68.8	5.3	54.6
01.3	Barley	328.7	128.7	423.2	66.9	283.1	86.1
01.4	Oat and cereal mixtures	13.1	117.6	15.4	81.2	12.5	95.5
01.5	Corn for grain	1,405.9	95.7	1,345.4	74.6	1,003.7	71.4
01.6	Rice	51.3	106.4	54.6	146.7	80.1	156.1
01.7	Other cereals	31.9	232.6	74.2	69.5	51.6	161.7
02	INDUSTRIAL CROPS	2,971.0	83.2	2,473.3	72.1	1,783.8	60.0
02.1	Oilseeds	2,754.2	83.0	2,286.2	69.5	1,589.6	57.7
02.1/1	Rapeseed and colza	316.3	74.3	234.9	67.2	157.8	49.9
02.1/2	Sunflower	2,422.9	83.6	2,026.1	69.9	1,416.3	58.4
02.1/3	Soy	12.6	59.5	7.5	82.7	6.2	49.2
02.1/4	Other oilseeds	2.4	737.5	17.7	52.5	9.3	387.2
02.2	Protein crops	56.3	96.4	54.3	103.1	56.0	99.4
02.3	Tobacco	26.2	102.7	26.9	129.0	34.7	132.5
02.4	Sugar beet						
02.5	Other industrial crops	134.3	78.9	105.9	97.7	103.5	77.1
02.5/1	Fiber-producing crops	3.3	124.2	4.1	85.4	3.5	106.1
02.5/2	Hops	1.3	69.2	0.9	111.1	1.0	76.9
02.5/3	Other industrial crops	129.7	77.8	100.9	98.1	99.0	76.3
03	FEED CROPS	205.5	105.7	217.2	101.9	221.4	107.7
03.1	Corn for silage	68.4	95.2	65.1	110.0	71.6	104.7
03.2	Root feed	0.1	0.0	0.0		0.0	
03.3	Other feed	137.0	111.0	152.1	98.5	149.8	109.3
04	VEGETABLES	512.5	98.1	502.8	105.9	532.6	103.9
04.1	Fresh vegetables	397.5	104.4	414.8	105.3	436.6	109.9
04.1/2	Tomatoes	135.1	92.5	125.0	110.5	138.1	102.2
04.1/3	Other fresh vegetables	262.4	110.4	289.8	103.0	298.5	113.7
04.2	Flowers	115.0	76.5	88.0	109.1	96.0	83.5
04.2/1	Plant nurseries	10.9	161.5	17.6	99.4	17.5	160.5
04.2/2	Decorative plants, including Christmas trees	19.2	68.2	13.1	132.1	17.3	90.1
04.2/3	Creation and growing	84.9	67.5	57.3	106.8	61.2	72.1
05	POTATOES	97.7	72.8	71.1	106.3	75.6	77.4
06	FRUITS	386.4	77.7	300.4	118.3	355.4	91.9
06.1	Fresh fruits	278.3	75.3	209.6	118.9	249.3	89.5
06.1/1	Apples	32.5	71.4	23.2	112.9	26.2	80.6
06.1/2	Pears	3.3	72.7	2.4	116.7	2.8	84.8
06.1/3	Peaches	27.1	41.7	11.3	112.4	12.7	46.9
06.1/4	Other fresh fruit	215.4	80.2	172.7	120.2	207.6	96.4
06.4	Grapes - total	108.1	84.0	90.8	116.9	106.1	98.2
06.4/1	Dessert grapes	15.5	89.7	13.9	112.9	15.7	101.3
06.4/2	Other grape	92.6	83.0	76.9	117.6	90.4	97.6

Code	Products	Current value for 2022 - BGN million	Volume index (previous year = 100)	Value for 2023 at previous year's prices - BGN million	Price index (previous year = 100)	Current value for 2023 - BGN million	Index of change in current value (2022 = 100)
07	WINE						
07.1	Table wine						
09	OTHER PLANT CROPS	41.3	107.0	44.2	117.0	51.7	125.2
09.2	Seeds	41.3	107.0	44.2	117.0	51.7	125.2
09.3	Other plant products						
10	CROP PRODUCTION (FROM 01 TO 09)	9,699.8	97.2	9,431.1	75.5	7,124.5	73.4
11	LIVESTOCK	1,151.0	97.0	1,115.9	122.1	1,362.5	118.4
11.1	Cattle	227.5	80.8	183.8	118.0	216.8	95.3
11.2	Pigs	351.5	102.4	360.1	133.1	479.4	136.3
11.3	Horses						
11.4	Sheep and goats	202.3	100.2	202.8	113.1	229.4	113.3
11.5	Poultry	369.7	99.9	369.2	118.3	436.9	118.2
11.6	Other animals						
12	LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION	1,182.6	93.3	1,103.2	106.3	1,172.7	99.2
12.1	Milk	812.9	90.5	735.4	99.9	734.9	90.4
12.2	Eggs	271.5	101.3	275.1	125.7	345.8	127.3
12.3	Other livestock production	98.2	94.4	92.7	99.2	92.0	93.6
12.3/1	Unwashed wool	1.5	100.0	1.5	93.3	1.4	93.3
12.3/2	Silkworm cocoons						
12.3/3	Other livestock production	96.7	94.3	91.2	99.3	90.6	93.6
13	LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION (11 + 12)	2,333.6	95.1	2,219.1	114.2	2,535.2	108.6
14	AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION (10 + 13)	12,033.4	96.8	11,650.2	82.9	9,659.7	80.2
15	PRODUCTION OF AGRICULTURAL SERVICES	595.3	91.9	547.0	108.9	595.7	100.1
16	PRODUCTION FROM AGRICULTURE (14 + 15)	12,628.7	96.6	12,197.2	84.1	10,255.4	81.2
17	NON-AGRICULTURAL INSEPERABLE SECONDARY ACTIVITIES	273.2	94.6	258.5	115.7	299.0	109.5
17.1	Processing of agricultural products	273.2	94.6	258.5	115.7	299.0	109.5
17.1/1	- cereals	83.0	12.9	10.7	105.6	11.3	13.6
17.1/2	- vegetables	27.3	156.8	42.8	118.0	50.5	185.0
17.1/3	- fruit	18.1	86.2	15.6	116.0	18.1	100.0
17.1/4	- wine	41.1	87.3	35.9	116.7	41.9	101.9
17.1/5	- animals	77.1	74.1	57.1	114.2	65.2	84.6
17.1/6	- animal products	18.4	488.6	89.9	116.9	105.1	571.2
17.1/6/1	- milk	18.4	488.6	89.9	116.9	105.1	571.2
17.1/7	- other	8.2	79.3	6.5	106.2	6.9	84.2
17.2	Other inseparable secondary activities						
18	PRODUCTION FROM THE 'AGRICULTURE' INDUSTRY (16 + 17)	12,901.9	96.5	12,455.7	84.7	10,554.4	81.7
19	INTERMEDIATE CONSUMPTION	6,988.7	96.0	6,707.7	94.5	6,337.4	90.7
19.01	SEEDS AND PROPAGATING MATERIAL	325.8	103.0	335.6	113.5	380.9	116.9
19.01/1	- seeds and propagating material supplied by other agricultural enterprises	49.0	122.7	60.1	113.5	68.2	139.3

Code	Products	Current value for 2022 - BGN million	Volume index (previous year = 100)	Value for 2023 at previous year's prices - BGN million	Price index (previous year = 100)	Current value for 2023 - BGN million	Index of change in current value (2022 = 100)
19.01/2	- seeds and propagating material purchased outside the sector	276.8	99.5	275.5	113.5	312.7	112.9
19.02	FUELS AND OILS	1,305.7	95.0	1,239.9	94.5	1,171.5	89.8
19.02/1	- electricity	125.7	101.9	128.1	103.9	133.1	105.9
19.02/2	- gas	48.1	100.4	48.3	93.4	45.1	93.8
19.02/3	- other fuels	1,126.7	93.8	1,056.7	93.3	985.9	87.5
19.02/4	- other	5.2	130.8	6.8	108.8	7.4	142.3
19.03	FERTILIZERS AND SOIL IMPROVERS	1,412.7	119.5	1,687.7	68.3	1,152.7	81.6
19.03/1	- fertilizers supplied by other agricultural enterprises	26.5	223.0	59.1	68.2	40.3	152.1
19.03/2	- fertilizers purchased outside the sector	1,386.2	117.5	1,628.6	68.3	1,112.4	80.3
19.04	PLANT PROTECTION PRODUCTS AND PESTICIDES	511.8	104.5	534.7	96.1	513.8	100.4
19.05	VETERINARY COSTS	221.6	68.9	152.6	105.9	161.6	73.0
19.06	FEED SUPPLEMENTS	1,479.3	86.2	1,274.5	106.0	1,351.0	91.4
19.06/1	- feed supplements supplied by other agricultural holdings	534.9	95.3	509.5	106.0	540.1	101.0
19.06/2	- feed supplements purchased outside the sector	612.0	95.3	583.3	106.0	618.3	101.0
19.06/3	- feed supplements produced and consumed on the holding	332.4	54.7	181.7	106.0	192.6	58.0
19.07	MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR OF MACHINES AND SMALL EQUIPMENT	415.5	86.0	357.3	106.2	379.4	91.3
19.08	MAINTENANCE OF BUILDINGS	176.8	79.9	141.3	109.6	154.8	87.6
19.09	AGRICULTURAL SERVICES	595.3	91.9	547.0	108.9	595.7	100.1
19.10	FISIM	68.8	67.6	46.5	108.8	50.6	73.5
19.11	OTHER GOODS AND SERVICES	475.4	82.2	390.6	108.9	425.4	89.5
20	GROSS VALUE ADDED AT BASIC PRICES (18-19)	5,913.2	97.2	5,748.0	73.4	4,217.0	71.3

Source: NSI