



### **Fertilisers: a responsible strategy proposed in record time by the Commission**

On November 9<sup>th</sup>, the European Commission presented its proposal for a European strategy on fertilisers.

Prepared in record time by its agricultural services, it addresses both concerns on this subject - availability and price - and correctly points out to its most important issues.

The proposal states that if gas use is restricted, gas for fertiliser production should become a priority. Of course, the Commission does not have the power at this stage to impose priorities or reductions on member states. This could happen in the future through a new energy crisis regulation. However, by already proposing such a strong course of action, the Commission's position is of valuable help to the sector.

With this document, the Commission also opens the possibility for member states to use unused money from the recovery fund or national funding (state aid) to support farmers and fertiliser producers. This funding could not only be directed to fertiliser production and use, but also to help farmers invest in new technologies and technical itineraries to reduce input use. In this context, it refers to the interest of working on rotations, combining legumes and investing in precision agriculture.

The Commission also notes that a rapid and generalized reduction in the use of fertilisers would entail a risk of immediate yield reduction. This observation is true, but it is interesting and should encourage European Commission leaders to put their proposals for a 20% reduction in fertiliser use, in the context of the Farm to Fork strategy, into perspective.

The reduction in fertiliser purchases by farmers this summer (-20%) may already have a negative impact on the 2023 harvest. The question is whether European soils have sufficient high levels of N P K to support lower fertilisation without affecting the harvest, at least for one season. This is doubtful, as fertilisation has a cost and the most economical use was sought even before the Ukrainian crisis. A reduction outside the framework of the above-mentioned investments may result in a decrease of production potential.