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PRESS STATEMENT

HOW THE SUGAR SECTOR'S DECARBONISATION SUPPORTS EU FOOD & ENERGY SECURITY

As part of our annual congress in Bratislava CEFS today hosted a roundtable discussion on how the EU sugar sector's decarbonisation can support EU food and energy security. Speakers included MEP Alexander Bernhuber MEP (EPP, Austria), Dr. Andreas Schneider from the Cabinet of Agriculture Commissioner Janusz Wojciechowski, Martin Pitorák, Director of Fuels and Energy at the Slovakian Department of Ministry of Economy, and Adrian Šedivý, Director at Agrana and Chairman of Supervisory Board at the Slovak Sugar Association.

In advance of the roundtable discussion, Dr. Samuel Vlčan, Slovakian Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, addressed delegates. He emphasised the importance of sugar for food security and the rural economy: sugar is the only entirely self-sufficient food sector in Slovakia; and it creates twice as many jobs per hectare as other agri-food sectors, such as oilseeds.

Kicking off, Andreas Schneider expressed the Commission's support for the energetic self-use of biomass residues in the sugar sector and encouraged Member States to make use of CAP funds to support biogas production.

To reach climate neutrality, MEP Bernhuber emphasised the need for a mix of energy sources, including wind and solar, but also biomass. "We need a technology-neutral approach" he said. He also stressed that European electricity grids need to be reinforced.

Speakers also discussed the importance of the energetic self-use of biomass (e.g. beet pulp) to decarbonise sugar production. Agrana's sugar factory in Kaposvar, Hungary shows it's possible: 83% of energy required for sugar production is supplied by biogas

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produced on-site from beet residues. The remnants (digestate) of the beet pulp is subsequently used to fertilise nearby fields, replacing artificial fertiliser that has become much more expensive due to the increase in gas prices.

Martin Pitorák of the Slovakian Ministry of Economy stressed that Slovakia is already using money from existing structural funds and the Recovery and Resilience Fund (RRF) to support biogas and biomethane production, but the difficulty lies in finding projects that will be finalised by 2026.

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