
The latest EU agriculture, environment & trade news

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EU NEEDS “CONCRETE SOLUTIONS” TO KEEP FARMERS ON THE LAND, WOJCIECHOWSKI

The EU must provide “concrete solutions that fit with national realities & needs” to retain farmers on the land & attract new blood into the sector, the incoming Agriculture Commissioner Janusz Wojciechowski stated yesterday. During his highly-anticipated address at the joint Copa-Cogeca Praesidium (Nov 28), the Law & Justice (PiS) politician said “some four million farms have been lost over the past 10 years, while we are losing around 1 000 farmers per day,” underlining the importance of “generational renewal.” Different countries are experiencing different problems, he said, while the “diversity of the European farming sector must be maintained.” Making his debut appearance at Copa-Cogeca headquarters, the new EU Farm chief said the next few months were of “key importance”, with further progress on the Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) & the future CAP reform (Strategic Plans) “crucial for the farming sector in order to provide clarity & stability.” Commenting on the broader budgetary question, he pointed to three types of security which are of vital importance - military security, energy security & food security - where agriculture is central to the latter. “This is the main objective of the CAP, it is not about one branch of the economy being privileged ... but rather for food security,” he insisted. Wojciechowski reiterated the need for a strong farm budget to “meet additional obligations,” but conceded that the long-term financial perspectives might not meet expectations due to budgetary limits. “We need to convince those that do not understand the need for additional support ... as agriculture is different to producing bikes or cars,” he said.

Speaking in his native tongue, the former ECR MEP said he had been criticised for certain elements he had defended during the EP Hearing, which were tabled under the outgoing Commission, calling for feedback from industry. On the European Green Deal - to be tabled within the first 100 days of office - he insisted that farmers “were the first protectors of the environment,” viewing Commission President Ursula von der Leyen’s flagship project as an “opportunity despite industry concerns.” But he acknowledged that the new initiative could be damaging for farmers if they were asked to do “extra work,” making a strong case to take into account what they are already doing in terms of environmental protection & climate change mitigation. Flanked by the top Copa-Cogeca representatives & Magdalena Majerczyk (former ECR agri advisor), who quickly emerged as a “dead cert” in his Cabinet & a key player in the formation of the new team [see below], he pledged to engage with industry & meet with stakeholders “at every opportunity”.

Armengol elected Cogeca President: Ramon Armengol, a Board Member of Cooperativas Agro-alimentarias de España, was unanimously elected as President of the European farm cooperatives organisation (Cogeca) yesterday (Nov 28). Armengol will serve a 3-year mandate. He replaces Thomas Magnusson of the Federation of Swedish Farmers (LRF) as head of the lobby group. *Colleagues gathered yesterday evening to bid farewell to the popular Swedish farm leader, with outgoing Commissioner Phil Hogan saying he did an “amazing job promoting the cooperative model & its significance for the agri sector all around over the past years,” while his fellow LRF colleagues donned impressive 1970s rigouts & serenaded him with a specially penned Abba-esque song for the occasion.* Following the election, Armengol said he would “strive to enhance the promotion of the cooperative model,” saying it was “among the most powerful of social & economic instruments to better structure the European agri-food sector.” The pig farmer from Lleida (Catalunya) listed his top priorities as providing a livelihood for farmers, feeding a growing population & scaling up climate & environmental measures. “What we need from the EU is strong support & recognition of our democratic enterprises,” he said. Promoting cooperation among farmers could “boost farmers’ incomes, strengthen their position in the agri-food chain, as well as improve our competitiveness on the global market.” At the same meeting, Cogeca elected six Vice-Presidents, Agnieszka Maliszewska (Federacja Branżowych Związków Producentów Rolnych, PL), Tiina Linnainmaa (Pellervo, FI), Thomas Memmert (Deutscher Raiffeisenverband), Leonardo Pofferi (Alleanza delle Cooperative Italiane), Bernard Ader (Coop de France), & Jørgen Mikkelsen (Landbrug & Fødevarer, DK). The election took place during the 2-day Praesidium, which ended this afternoon [see AF92-19].

NEW COLLEGE TAKES OFFICE ON DECEMBER 1; TRADE & AGRI CABINET UPDATES

The Council endorsed the new Commission on Nov 28, following MEPs' approval earlier in the week (Nov 27) [see AF92-19], paving the way for the new College to take office Dec 1 & get down to business on Monday morning (Dec 2). Approval by Member States was by written procedure. The new Commissioners, under the watchful eye of President Ursula von der Leyen, will serve until Oct 31, 2024.

Some more details have emerged about the incoming TRADE Cabinet this evening. Indications are that Elisabetta Siracusa, who will remain on in the role of Deputy Chef de Cabinet for incoming Trade Commissioner Phil Hogan for a temporary period [see AF90-19] will be responsible for sustainable development in trade, investment policy & the carbon border tax. Once Siracusa lands an anticipated promotion (understood to become Director in DG SANTE), Spanish woman Cristina Rueda-Catry would rise to the role of Deputy Chef & is understood to get the files on The Americas & a level-playing field (general issues related to market access in trade deals, reciprocity, subsidies & market conditions on 3rd country markets) as well as relations with China. Following Siracusa's departure (timing tbc, said to be in the "next couple of months"), Frenchwoman Cécile Billaux, current Head of Unit for Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) Africa-Caribbean-Pacific countries, is understood to take up the "vacant" position as a Cabinet 'member'. Previously, she was Deputy Head of Unit for the agriculture & SPS unit, but it is unclear at the time of going to press which portfolios she will get. Polish lawyer Agnieszka Drzewoska, who up until today worked with Elżbieta Bieńkowska's (Internal Market & Industry), is understood to have secured e-commerce, public procurement & neighbourhood policy. As previously stated, Mountbellew's Kevin Keary, is said to have landed dossiers on WTO reform, the Australia & New Zealand FTAs and the South East Asia bilaterals such as Vietnam, Indonesia & the Philippines. Close aide Dermot Ryan looks set to be the coordinator of Brexit/UK & is expected to follow ASEAN (the bloc) & Russia and continue his role as communications advisor & on inter-institutional affairs. Hogan's right-hand man Tom Tynan is understood to have secured Trade Defence Instruments (anti-dumping), relations with Korea & SMEs, with sources indicating that he will also cover technical agri-related issues such as rules of origin etc.*

At the time of going to press, the formation of the AGRI Cabinet continues, with interviews still ongoing even as late as today. With the Cabinet expected to get down to business on Monday morning (Dec 2), Magdalena Majerczyk, agri advisor for the ECR group & largely seen as Wojciechowski's right-hand woman, is the only one with a signed contract, it seems. Certain quarters indicate that a German hopeful will land a Cabinet position, if the Poles can get "one of their own" on the Commission chief's Ursula von der Leyen's team. With speculation rife, others say that there will be no German in the final line-up. An Italian is also set to secure a post, with sources previously referring to a "tug-of-war" between Socialist MEP Paolo De Castro & Italy's Permanent Representative over their preferred candidates (understood to be a close ally of De Castro's/member of the Rep's Agri/Fisheries team, pushed by the Deputy Ambassador). Unconfirmed reports suggest that an Italian permanent official Giulio Menato (DG AGRI, Deputy Head of Unit on the Americas) with extensive international experience, might emerge as a compromise candidate. Three candidates from Romania are said to be in the running inc. (outgoing) DG AGRI Chief Jerzy Plewa's executive assistant Daniela Ciobanu. A Dutch DG AGRI official is also being floated as a possible contender at the time of going to press. All details of the final make-up should become clearer over the weekend. Meanwhile, Portugal's Daniel Rosario & his trusted colleague Clémence Robin (FR) will remain on as the spokesperson & press officer in the Commission's Agriculture Department, while Rosario will continue to be supported by Poland's Kinga Malinowska on all trade-related files.

**This is based on information circulating at the time of going to press; The final division of responsibilities will be made known on Dec 2, when the new Commission takes office, usual caveats apply;*

Loonela takes over from Paduraru on SANTE file: Anca Paduraru, the Commission spokeswoman covering public health & food safety as well as specific energy union projects, is leaving the Spokesperson's service (SPP), but is expected to return to DG COMM in Jan after taking some time to focus on other projects. Her Greek colleague Aikaterini Apostola, who has worked as press officer for at least three mandates, is also leaving the SANTE file, to take up a similar post in FISME (Financial Stability, Financial Services & Capital Markets Union). The eloquent Romanian woman, highly-regarded by both colleagues & journalists alike, spent a total of 11 years in the SPP (returning to Bucharest to work with the then Prime Minister Dacian Cioloş). Paduraru, known for her encyclopaedic knowledge of technical dossiers & inimitable style, is set to be replaced by Vivian Loonela. The Estonian woman was a former member of Commissioner Andrus Ansip's Cabinet, until her boss resigned with effect from July 1, to take up a seat in the EP as part of the Renew Europe Group. With a background in law & Foreign Affairs, Loonela previously worked on international data protection (DG Justice), focusing on negotiations with the US on Privacy Shield/Safe Harbour. The Estonian, who will also cover environment & fisheries (inc. European Green Deal), will be joined by Darragh Cassidy as press officer on the communications team. An occupational therapy clinician by training (10 years' experience), Cassidy describes himself as a "human behaviour expert, project manager & communications specialist." Most recently, he worked on external communications, planning & strategy in DG AGRI (since Nov 2018), following an internship in Andriukaitis' Cabinet (March -July 2018) as a 'Blue Book' stagiaire. Essex man Tim McPhie, Multimedia Editor in the SPP since June 2019, following a

stint from Jan 2019 as Communication Manager for Frans Timmermans' common candidate campaign (PES) will become the spokesperson on Climate & Energy (also covering European Green Deal).

“DEEPLY TRANSFORMATIVE” NEW EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL SLAMMED BY GREENPEACE

The Communication on the European Green Deal, expected to be published on Dec 11, will include “designing a set of deeply transformative policies,” according to a draft outline* published by *Greenpeace* today, which describes much of the plan as “too weak.” According to the 5-page draft summary, the Commission intends to put the 2050 climate neutrality objective into law by March 2020 & present “a comprehensive plan on how to increase the EU's greenhouse gas emission reduction target for 2030 to at least 50% & towards 55% in a responsible way by Oct 2020.” The EU's Exec will also “review & potentially revise all relevant legislative measures to deliver on this renewed ambition” by a date left blank in the draft. One priority is “promoting nature-based solutions while preserving & restoring ecosystems & biodiversity,” with the Commission set to “review all existing legislation affecting agriculture & forestry to ensure it is in line with renewed climate & biodiversity ambition.” There will be a forest restoration plan & measures to support deforestation-free value chains. The draft includes the theme ‘from Farm to Fork’, promising a “fair, healthy & environmentally-friendly food system.” The Commission “will seek to ensure high environmental & climate ambition in the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), with particular focus on the Member States' strategic plans.”

A ‘Farm to Fork’ White Paper will be presented in spring 2020 [see AF91 & 90-19], with the aim to rollout “a comprehensive set of initiatives from the end of 2020.” They will include the adoption of a toolbox for alternatives to pesticides. The Commission will also address the European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruling of July 25, 2018, which makes plants derived from new breeding techniques (NBTs) subject to the full GMO approvals process by April 2021 [see AF62-18]. There will also be reform of the food information rules to ensure consumers are able to know about what they're eating & action to reduce food loss & waste. On supplying clean, affordable & secure energy, there will be energy efficiency & renewable energy Directives & additional EU-wide instruments to close any gap between potential & ambition in national plans. There will also be a proposal to extend the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) to shipping & reduce the free allowances available for airlines as well as measures on road pricing & emissions standards for vehicles. The Commission undertakes to “ensure that the EU continues to lead the international climate negotiations,” & “ensure that every future trade agreement includes an ambitious dedicated chapter on sustainable development.” Greenpeace ‘European Green Deal’ spokeswoman Franziska Achterberg described the proposed measures “either too weak, half-baked or missing altogether.” She called for “a fundamental rethink of the economic system that for decades has rewarded pollution, environmental destruction & human exploitation,” & complained that “this plan barely scratches the surface.” Her colleague Sebastian Mang (EU Climate Policy Adviser) wanted to see measures including “banning pesticides & ending subsidies for factory farms.” *www.greenpeace.org/eu-unit/news/

DG SANTE: Clarification on livestock transport; CIWF attacks Ireland's record; GM approval;

Clarification on livestock transport: The Irish Department of Agriculture & Food has clarified to *Agra Facts* that the vessel *Express 1* was used for livestock transport three times between March 7 & May 9, 2018, & *not* between those dates in 2019 as stated in a release from Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) on Nov 27 [see AF92-19]. The Irish authorities also refuted CIWF's claim that the vessel was not approved to carry livestock. Although the vessel's certificate of approval had expired on Feb 17, 2018, a temporary approval for six months was granted on Feb 15, 2018 & covers the three journeys in question.

In response, CIWF Public Affairs Advisor Aleksandra Terzieva insisted that there was no reference to the possibility of a Member State issuing a temporary approval in the Transport Regulation 1/2005 & that the three voyages were carried out without a legal certificate of approval. Terzieva provided copies of the exchange of letters between CIWF & the Commission. The 2-page Commission response, signed by a DG SANTE legal affairs expert, makes no reference to the temporary approval referred to by Dublin, but does say that the ship has now been approved by the competent authorities.

CIWF on attack over Irish livestock transport: Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) has gone on the attack over Ireland's regulation of live animal transport, rejecting the Commission's decision not to proceed with an investigation into the use of the ship *Express 1* [see AF92-19 & above]. Peter Stevenson, CIWF's Chief Policy Advisor, wrote again on Nov 29 to the DG SANTE's legal department, insisting that “over the last twenty years, Ireland has regularly failed to ensure compliance with various aspects of Council Regulation 1/2005,” on the protection of animals during transport. CIWF had “often” provided evidence of such failure to the Commission. The CIWF campaigner, in a letter which totals six-pages, goes on to list cases in which he believes the Irish authorities were at fault, dating back to a Food & Veterinary Office mission, which involved visits to Ireland in Nov 1998, Feb 1999 & March 1999. The cases include inaccurate documents, overlong journeys, failure to observe rules on rest periods, & lack of feed, among other complaints. On that basis, Stevenson claims that “the failure of Irish authorities to ensure that a livestock vessel that was used on three journeys in 2018 had a current certificate of approval was not an isolated

incident, but rather part of a pattern of systemic failure by Ireland over many years,” the graduate from Trinity College Cambridge & qualified lawyer concludes, ignoring the temporary approval granted by Dublin. “Accordingly, we urge the Commission not to close our complaint,” he states.

Commission authorises eight biotech varieties. The Commission authorised eight genetically modified crops for food & feed purposes under its own authority on Nov 28 [as flagged in AF91-19], following the customary ‘no opinions’ at Standing Committee & Appeal Committee level. The biotech varieties involved are maize MZHG0JG, maize MON 89034 x 1507 x NK603 x DAS-40278-9, maize MON 89034 x 1507 x MON 88017 x 59122 x DAS-40278-9, maize Bt11 x MIR162 x MIR604 x 1507 x 5307 x GA21, the renewals of soybeans MON 89788 & A2704-12, LLCotton25, & oilseed rape T45. The (outgoing) EU’s executive stressed that the authorisations do not cover cultivation. Given that the products had gone through the required authorisation procedure, including a favourable assessment by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), the Commission was legally obliged to go ahead with the authorisations, which are valid for ten years. As one commentator put it, the outgoing Exec “cleared the decks” before the new College got down to business on Dec 2.

EP DEBRIEF: Trade chief on Airbus dispute; Climate emergency; Budget 2020; Beef access;

EU Trade chief on Airbus dispute: Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström told MEPs on Nov 26 that she was “very concerned about the recent imposition by the US of tariffs on a range of our agri-food exports,” describing the move as “a very regrettable development, although the US has formerly the legal right to impose the tariffs.” She stressed that “for a long time the Commission has been engaging with the US to ask them to freeze, to suspend this in order to find a negotiating solution to the Boeing-Airbus dispute.” The EU executive had “made a credible offer in July for a negotiated settlement.” However, “unfortunately this opportunity has not been taken up by the US yet,” the Swedish politician went on. “We believe that it is time to de-escalate the pace on this dispute rather than adding uncertainty to a delicate world trade situation,” the outgoing Trade Commissioner emphasises. The EU’s executive was committed to finding a solution which would make it possible for “workers on both sides of the Atlantic to be able to keep their jobs.” Phil Hogan, as incoming Trade Commissioner, would continue the efforts, visiting Washington in the New Year “to continue to engage with members of the US administration.” *Unconfirmed reports suggest that Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen will travel on the same trade mission.*

Malmström noted that “the four EU Member States where Airbus manufacture is concentrated, the UK, France Germany & Spain, together with Italy & Ireland account for 95% of the total food exports of the €3.5bn exposed to the tariffs.” The target “products in order of magnitude range from wine, spirits, liqueurs, dairy products & olive oils,” the Brännkyrka (Stockholm) native woman continued. “These products are highly valued by US consumers & we hope that demand for them will help resist price pressures.” There are CAP measures, which could help mitigate the effect, she said, while the Commission was reviewing the appropriateness of direct intervention. “We are taking account of number of considerations,” Malmström said. “For instance, we need to clearly distinguish between difficulties that are directly related to the US tariffs & those that are related to other issues.” There was also a “need to take account of the wider development of the WTO in relation to the US measures including the possibilities that Boeing case will present next year,” [expected next Spring]. A negotiated settlement would avoid a damaging dispute, she stressed, & “would provide a powerful signal to the world market that we want to keep world trade flowing.” The 51-year-old Liberal accepted that “promotion policies often offer a very appropriate response to tariff sanctions offering operators the possibility to consolidate the market or to retain their position on existing markets or even to seek new opportunities.” “The recently adopted 2020 annual work program emphasises promotion campaigns in 3rd country markets by allocating almost two-thirds of the available funding to them, that is €180 million,” she added.

In response to MEPs’ concerns on wine, Hogan “last week confirmed that providing greater flexibility in implementation & management of promotion activity seems to be an appropriate response to market disturbances, which are liable to affect the wine sector,” Malmström said. That flexibility included a proposal to increase the Union financing rate for promotion to 60% instead of 50% today “which will alleviate the financial burden on producers,” the Commissioner said. *In a 2-page letter from Hogan to French Agriculture Minister Didier Guillaume (dated Nov 22), the outgoing Farm chief proposes greater flexibility in the implementation of national programmes on promotion measures for the wine sector i.e. changing target markets from the US to China, higher EU co-financing rates - currently at 50% under national programmes to ease pressure on operators & no limit to the duration of promotion programmes in the sector (currently 5 years). Current provisions run until Oct 15, 2023 & until this date, there will be no limit to the duration of promotion campaigns.*

Having “reacted rapidly to the urgency & seriousness of the situation,” the Commission was hoping that “we can count on your support to ensure a smooth & swift adoption of the required regulation.” She noted that “the CAP toolbox also includes certain market management measures such as private storage.” The Commission was currently analysing the situation & “where the analysis suggests - we are ready to activate exceptional market measures including private storage.” The current & incoming Commission “will do our

best to find a negotiated balanced, sustainable & compatible solution with the WTO rules & one that will put an end to the damage suffered by European farmers including our wine producers.”

MEPs call for support to food producers hit by Airbus ruling: MEPs called yesterday for swift action to help farmers affected by US tariffs worth €6.8 billion [see AF75-19], imposed in the long-running dispute over Airbus. Voting through the resolution, the House stressed their concerns over the damage done to the EU agri-food sector because of a dispute in an unrelated industry. They deplored the US decision to impose increased duties on a wide-range of agricultural products. The parliamentarians also accused Washington of a lack of interest in working with the EU to solve the long-running dispute over aircraft manufacturers Boeing & Airbus. There were a chorus of voices asking the Commission to investigate the impact of the US move on the sectors affected & to use tools “such as private storage schemes & market withdrawal,” along with “any new or other available instruments & relevant measures to deal with disturbances that arise in the internal market.” The 4-page resolution* also includes a call for increased promotional efforts on the US or alternative markets. MEPs supported the Commission’s efforts in the dispute & asked it to “continue trying to find negotiated solutions to dilute the current trade tensions between the two parties.” *<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/texts-adopted.html>

EP declares climate emergency: The EP declared a climate & environment emergency at the plenary session in Strasbourg yesterday (Nov 28) & called on the Commission to align all proposals with the target of limiting global warming to under 1.5° C. During the plenary debate on the issue on Nov 25, Renew Europe’s Pascal Canfin (FR), Chair of the ENVI Committee, said it was “essential to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by 55% in 2030.” The resolution would send “a clear & timely message to the Commission a few weeks before the publication of the Communication on the European Green Deal.”

Germany’s Peter Liese, the EPP Group’s ENVI Spokesman, called for the EU to “be more ambitious in protecting our planet, but we must be smart as well while doing it.” Liese was critical of the idea of declaring an emergency, referring to “fake debate about climate emergency”, which was “only a smokescreen which hides the real decisions that we need to take in order to reduce emissions beyond 50%.” “There is an urgency to act, but no state of emergency to declare,” he said. For the S&D Group, President Iratxe Garcia Perez, said that “fighting climate warming is no longer an option but an obligation.” “Our planet is at risk,” the Spanish MEP stressed. “It has already become a threat to humanity.” Finland’s Nils Torvalds, Renew Europe’s ENVI Coordinator, said that Europe had “to be the global leader in climate change,” & called all European institutions to come up with “commitments with profoundly credible approaches to all European & global challenges.” Speaking for the Greens/EFA, Aileen McLeod supported the idea of declaring a climate & environmental emergency, but the Scottish SNP politician insisted that it was “absolutely essential that we commit to taking bolder & urgent climate action in response to the deteriorating situation.” Leftist group GUE/NGL echoed this sentiment, urging against the declaration being “used as a smokescreen for complacency by centrist political groups, who only recently have taken concern for the climate crisis while continuing to block meaningful measures to tackle it.”

A separate resolution*, covering the UN Climate Conference (COP25) to be held in Madrid Dec 2-13, calls for the EU to “strive towards reaching net-zero GHG emissions as early as possible & by 2050 at the latest.” MEPs want the new Commission President Ursula von der Leyen to write “an economy-wide target of a 55% reduction in domestic GHG emissions by 2030 compared to 1990 levels,” into the new Green Deal. There is also a call to include aviation & shipping in emissions reduction targets and reform its approach to agricultural trade in the light of the climate & environment emergency. The House approved the motion declaring a climate emergency by 429 votes for to 225 against, with 19 abstentions, while the resolution on COP25 was approved by 430 votes in favour, to 190 against with 34 abstentions. An EP delegation led by Dutch Green MEP Bas Eickhout will attend the climate gathering in Madrid from Dec 9-14.

*<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/texts-adopted.html>

MEPs approve 2020 EU Budget: MEPs voted this week (Nov 27) to formally approve the 2020 EU Budget* following agreement between Parliament & Council. The deal has now formally been signed into law by EP President David Sassoli. The House obtained additional funds of more than €850 million for its priorities, *inc.* €0.5 billion for climate-related expenditure, €302m for research, €133m for network infrastructure projects along with €50m more for Erasmus+ & an extra €28.3m for the Youth Employment Initiative. The 19-page joint text* includes total commitment appropriations for 2020 of €168.7bn, up 1.5% on 2019, & payment appropriations of €153.6bn (+3.4%). Next year’s budget was approved by 543 votes for to 136 against, with 23 abstentions.

Chair of the BUDG Committee Johan Van Overtveldt (ECR, BE), described it as a “strong, responsible & future-oriented budget,” & called for a long-term financial framework (2021-2027) that “does indeed take into account, in an explicit, clear & bold manner, our citizens’ needs,” focussing on “innovation, competitiveness, climate, infrastructure, security & migration management ... the areas where Europe can absolutely offer added value compared to actions at national level.” Lead Rapporteur on the Commission section of the budget, Monika Hohlmeier (EPP, DE), said MEPs had “achieved a great deal to create jobs & increase the competitiveness of the EU.” Spanish Socialist Eider Gardiazabal Rubial, Rapporteur for the other sections, said the agreement was “very positive,” for the bloc, but “still far away from the 1.3% GNI budget we are

demanding for the long-term financial framework 2021-2027,” as well as being “far from the ambitious budget that could be a turning point in the fight against climate change & inequalities.”

[*https://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/texts-adopted.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/texts-adopted.html)

MEPs agree to raise US hormone-free beef share: MEPs agreed yesterday to give the US the biggest share of an existing Tariff Rate Quota (TRQ) for imports of high-quality hormone free beef. Of a total 45 000 tonnes under the quota, 35 000t will be ring-fenced for the US. The overall total of the imports will be unchanged, after the other key suppliers Australia, Uruguay & Argentina agreed to lower their shipments [see AF47-19 & AF44-19]. The change is part of moves to solve the long-running dispute between the US & EU over restrictions imposed by the Union in 1989 on imports of US beef containing growth hormones.

German S&D MEP Bernd Lange, Rapporteur on the dossier, said that the agreement’s message was clear. “We would like to de-escalate trade tensions with the US, but we want to see the same efforts of de-escalation on the other side of the Atlantic.” The Chair of the INTA Committee called for a “negotiated solution” for the Airbus-Boeing dispute & progress on other areas, including tariffs on aluminium & steel & table olives. The proposal* was carried by 457 votes in favour, to 140 against with 71 abstentions, while an accompanying resolution giving reasons for the decision passed by 459 for to 145 against with 66 abstentions. The new rules enter into force on Jan 1, 2020.

[*https://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/texts-adopted.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/texts-adopted.html)

IN BRIEF: Olive oil PSA; Lithuanian farmers protest against tax hike; Majority for UK Tories?;

Modest volume of olive oil enters private storage: Member States supported the Commission proposal to accept a modest volume of 3 650 tonnes of olive oil (virgin & lampante categories) into private storage at the first of four tenders yesterday (Nov 28). Tenders were received only from Spain for all three categories – olive oil, virgin olive oil & lampante, with the prices tendered described by DG AGRI officials as “very high.” Under the PSA provisions, aid would be set at a maximum amount of €0.83/tonne/day for virgin (2 850t) & lampante (800t) categories (no offer accepted for extra virgin olive oil). The decision was published in today’s EU’s Official Journal. Offers for the next tender must be lodged to national authorities in producing Member States (EL, ES, FR, HR, IT, CY, MT, PT & SI) by Dec 17 by noon, with a vote at the ManCom on Dec 19.

Lithuanian farmers protest against tax hike: Lithuanian farmers protested around the country earlier this week (Nov 26) demanding that proposed tax increases be shelved until their CAP payments match those made to producers in other Member States. The Union of Lithuanian Young Farmers & Youth said the demonstration was “a signal to the authorities that farmers are no longer able to put up with the current situation.” Complaining of the falling number of young farmers in the Baltic state, the union said that politicians were “also leading Lithuanian villages to ruin through unjustified, flawed & spontaneous new taxes.” Thousands of farmers were reported to have taken part in this week’s protest, with between 50-150 tractors congregating around 60 municipalities (more than 5 000 spread across the nation, setting a new ‘Guinness’ record for the north-eastern European country). The demonstrations are a stepping up in action, following a campaign in which thousands of farmers put up green crosses to show their opposition to tax hikes. Since mid-Nov, more than 10 000 green crosses are believed to have appeared across the countryside, a symbol of job losses & the mass exodus from rural areas. Attempts by the Lithuanian government to raise taxes on fuel have so far been rejected by the country’s parliament, the Seimas, but the administration of Prime Minister Saulius Skvernelis of the Lithuanian Farmers & Greens Union is set to come back with the text of a new budget proposal in mid-Dec. Farmers have vowed further protests before Christmas if they don’t like the plan. Lithuania is facing into an election year, with parliamentary elections scheduled on Oct 11 (1st round) & Oct 25, 2020. Farmers are becoming increasingly disenchanted with the Farmers & Greens Union & its leader Ramūnas Karbauskis, who is also the CEO of Agrokoncernas – one the largest agricultural groups in the country. As he retains full ownership of the company, he is considered one of the richest men in the country.

Model predicts majority for UK Conservatives: The UK’s Conservatives are heading for a majority in Parliament after the Dec 12 general election, according to a seat prediction* published by Yougov (Nov 27). The polling organisation forecast that “if the election were held today”, the Conservatives would win 359 seats (up 42 from 2017), Labour would win 211 (-51), the Scottish National Party 43 (+8) & the Liberal Democrats 13 (+ 1). Plaid Cymru would win an unchanged four seats & the Greens would retain their one single seat. The Brexit Party would not win any. YouGov’s prediction is based on voting percentages of 43% for Conservative, 32% for Labour, 14% for Liberal Democrat, 3% for Brexit, 3% for Green, 3% for SNP, less than 1% for Plaid Cymru & 1% for others. The company has credibility based on being the only polling group to have accurately forecast the hung parliament that followed the 2017 election, at a time when others were predicting a majority for former Prime Minister Theresa May. Politicians have avoided reacting to the poll, but commentators have highlighted how small shifts can make a big difference under Britain’s quirky electoral system. Tactical voting, in which electors change party to support the one which has the best chance of removing a candidate they don’t like, is likely to play a big role. Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s apparent success is despite a campaign, which is looking increasingly messy. The old Etonian is dodging an

interview with the BBC's Andrew Neil this Sunday (Dec 1), seen as a more aggressive prospect than some of the corporation's other journalists. Other party leaders have already gone through the ordeal of answering the Scotsman's questions. Johnson also failed to appear at a TV debate between party leaders on the subject of climate change yesterday evening (Nov 28), farcically sending his father to talk to the broadcaster, Channel 4, producing the programme. Stanley Johnson tried to get non-leader of the Conservatives Michael Gove on & failed. Johnson then threatened Channel 4 with revocation of its licence to broadcast.

TIMETABLE: Week ahead (in Brussels unless otherwise stated)

- Dec 1** New Commission College takes office; Charles Michel takes over from Donald Tusk as President of the European Council;
- Dec 2** Transport, Telecommunications & Energy Council (Transport); Justice & Home Affairs Council (&3); President Ursula von der Leyen in Madrid, delivers speech at the UN Climate Change Conference COP25 (Dec 2-13) <https://unfccc.int/cop25>; EU Foreign Affairs Chief Josep Borrell also in Madrid, attends the opening of COP25; Vice-President Margrethe Vestager receives Kaimar Karu, Estonian Minister for Foreign Trade & Information Technology; Trade Commissioner Phil Hogan receives representatives of the European Chamber of Commerce in Vietnam & receives Börje Ekholm, CEO of Ericsson (both in Brussels); **COMENVI** (&3) *inc.* imposing special conditions governing the import of food & feed from Japan following the Fukushima accident, exchange of views with Dr. Werner Hoyer, EIB President on the transformation of part of the bank into a Climate Bank & EU Pollinators Initiative; 4th edition of Farm Europe's *Global Food Forum 'Agri-Food Sectors as front runners of EU future'* [see AF91-19] www.farm-europe.eu (& Dec 3);
- Dec 3** Transport, Telecommunications & Energy Council (Telecommunications); Vice-President Frans Timmermans receives Professor Johan Rockström, Director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research; VP Valdis Dombrovskis receives Gordon Sondland, US Ambassador to the EU; Hogan attends the signature ceremony of the Connecting Europe Facility grant for Celtic Interconnector between Ireland & France at the 2nd PCI Energy Days & receives Carlos Casamiquela, Argentina's Agriculture Minister; Crisis Management Commissioner Janez Lenarčič receives David Beasley, Executive Director of World Food Programme (WFP); Apex-Brasil dialogue on '*Sustainable Food & Agriculture: Building resilient farming through international trade*' (Sofitel, Brussels Le Louise, registration from 1.30pm);
- Dec 4** Eurogroup; Transport, Telecommunications & Energy Council (Energy); Von der Leyen delivers the College readout of the 1st meeting of the new Commission; Timmermans receives Dan Jorgensen, Danish Minister for Climate, Energy & Utilities & representatives of the European Trade Union Confederation; Vestager receives trade union representatives to discuss competition policy; Commissioner for Cohesion & Reforms Elisa Ferreira receives Lilyana Pavlova & Emma Navarro, Vice-Presidents of the EIB; ECJ judgment in Case C-432/18 *Consorzio Tutela Aceto Balsamico di Modena*; **COMAGRI** (&5) *inc.* exchange of views on financial discipline as from financial year 2021 & Regulation No1307/2013 as regards flexibility between Pillars in respect of calendar year 2020 (German MEP Norbert Lins (EPP) is rapporteur) & presentation of a study on '*The EU farming employment: current challenges & future prospects*' by *Ambre Maucorps & Bernd Schuh (Austrian Institute for Regional Studies & Spatial Planning)*; EP COMAGRI Public Hearing on '*The reform of the Common Agriculture Policy*', under the stewardship of Chairman Norbert Lins (EPP) [see AF91-19];
- Dec 5** ECOFIN; Timmermans receives Greenpeace representatives as well as Karel Havlicek, Czech Minister for Industry & Trade and Pascal Lamy (former Director-General of the WTO from Sept 2005-Sept 2013), he also meets Charles Michel, President of the European Council; Commissioner for Jobs Nicolas Schmit attends the plenary session of the Committee of the Regions (CoR); COMENVI, in collaboration with the Committees on Petitions & AGRI, will hold a joint hearing on the '*Re-evaluation of the wolf population in the EU*' (from 10.30am-1pm) [see AF91-19];
- Dec 6** Timmermans receives Monique Goyens, BEUC Director-General & former Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht (Feb 2010-Oct 2014); Vestager meets the European Council of the Danish Parliament; Health Commissioner Stella Kyriakides receives Bruno Bruins, Dutch Minister for Health;

Management & Regulatory Committees plus Civil Dialogue Groups (CDGs)

- Dec 2** Standing Committee on Veterinary Medicinal Products; CDG on arable crops, sub-group, working group on starch;
- Dec 5** Committee for the Common Organisation of Agricultural Markets: Wine; Committee for Spirit Drinks; Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food & Feed (PAFF) on phyto-pharmaceuticals legislation (&6);
- Dec 6** CDG on quality & promotion; ENDS