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IGC cuts world grain forecast

The International Grains Council (IGC) has cut its forecast for world grain production in 2026/27 by 5mt to 2.416 billion tonnes, 3% below the previous season but still the second-largest crop on record. It cites lower expectations for wheat, maize & sorghum, while the hot weather has affected EU production prospects.

[See p.23]

Fertiliser support measures adopted *p.4*
The Commission said on July 31 that it had passed the final adoption of support measures to help farmers cope with sharply rising fertiliser costs.

New EU packaging rules in effect *p.4*
New EU rules on packaging & packaging waste entered into force on August 12, including restrictions on PFAS in food-contact packaging.

Only 43% of EU farms have internet *p.6*
Fewer than half of EU farms had internet access in 2023, highlighting the continuing digital divide in agriculture.

Consequences of pesticide limits *p.8*
Lowering permitted residues of the most hazardous pesticides in imported food & feed could reduce EU imports & raise consumer prices, said the JRC.

Unlock horticulture's potential *p.16*
Agriculture must focus more on providing diverse & nutritious foods rather than just producing enough food, FAO Director-General Qu Dongyu said.

Soil degradation worsening, FAO *p.17*
Soil degradation is continuing to worsen in many countries, with proven measures to protect & restore soils still not being adopted fast enough.

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CANADIAN RESPONSE TO US TARIFFS

Following the US decision to impose a 50% tariff on $27.6 billion of Canadian goods, effective August 22, Canadian Minister of Finance & National Revenue, Francois-Philippe Champagne, confirmed on August 25 that Canada would match the new US tariffs dollar for dollar, rate for rate, with additional Canadian tariffs on US goods. This focused response will protect Canadian workers, farmers, families and businesses, defend industries harmed by unjustified US tariffs, and help Canadian producers compete with US products in the Canadian market.

Effective September 8, Canada will impose counter-tariffs of 15, 25 and 50 per cent on products drawn from those targeted by US Section 338 and Section 232 tariffs, with the rate for each product matching the corresponding US rate.

Canada's counter tariffs will apply to products covering $27.6 billion in imports from the US and will focus on sectors such as steel, dairy, appliances, agricultural equipment, pulp and paper, and electronics, that are most impacted by US tariffs.

In addition, to support Canadian workers and businesses impacted by US tariffs, the government is also introducing a $7.5 billion package of new and enhanced measures that deliver fast, simple and agile supports to Canadian workers and businesses, building on the nearly $25 billion in supports the government has provided since the implementation of the US unjustified tariffs.

This package includes:

- an additional $1.5 billion investment through the Regional Tariff Response Initiative, delivered by Canada's regional development agencies (RDAs), to help small and medium-sized enterprises, including liquidity supports to manage the pressures related to tariffs.

- a new $500 million liquidity stream under the Business Development Bank of Canada’s Pivot to Grow program to help businesses manage immediate cash-flow pressures in addition to targeted programs for the forestry, steel and aluminium sectors.

- broadened access to the Business Development Bank of Canada’s tariff related programs by lowering the minimum revenue requirement for applicants to $1 million.

- an additional $2 billion investment through the new Canada Strong Diversification Fund, to support tariff-affected businesses with shovel-ready projects that support ongoing capital maintenance. This new initiative will work closely with RDA programming for project intake and triage.

- a new suite of $3.5 billion Rapid Response Supports for Workers and Employers to help Canadians affected by tariffs. This will help workers access income support when they need it through extended and additional EI temporary flexibilities; and support their transition into new opportunities through new investments in training delivered in the workplace and enhancements to JobBank.gc.ca. This will also help employers keep their workforce through a difficult period with the help of the new Worker Retention and Retraining Program (WRRP).

- new flexibilities to the Large Enterprise Tariff Loan facility, administered by the Canada Enterprise Emergency Funding Corporation (CEEFC).

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REVIEW

BRUSSELS HITS THE GROUND RUNNING, AS DROUGHT DOMINATES

The Brussels machine is expected to hit the ground running when officials, MEPs & journalists alike return to the European capital after the Summer break. As previously reported, the Irish will be hoping for an Indian Summer when the Presidency invites European Agriculture Ministers, national delegates, farming representatives, MEPs & reporters to Dublin for the Informal AGRIFISH Council in early September 6-8, where sustainable livestock production is on the agenda, with a focus on research & innovation. With visits planned to the National Stud & Japanese Gardens and the Lyons Research Farm in Minister Martin Heydon's native Co. Kildare, the Irish are hoping to garner goodwill, cement ties & generally "test the waters" before the new school term begins. In terms of deliverables in the second semester, Dublin hopes to secure a partial general approach on the future Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) & the Common Market Organisation (CMO) files at the Council meeting in Luxembourg at the end of October (26-27). There is also talk of tabling two separate 'Presidency reports' on the Livestock Strategy & Protein Action Plan by the end of November.

With most of Europe sweltering in high temperatures this Summer, the implications of the severe heatwave continue to dominate the headlines, with crop failures likely in the regions worst affected, with maize, grassland & fodder supplies among the sectors facing the greatest pressure. Earlier this month, the Commission set out short & longer-term measures farmers can take to protect crops & livestock from increasingly severe heatwaves, ranging from more efficient irrigation & changes in crop choice to lower livestock densities & investment in climate-resilient farm buildings. In a ***new page*** launched on the Commission's Agriculture & Rural Development (DG AGRI) website on August 27, it says that climate extremes, including heatwaves & droughts, are becoming more frequent & severe across Europe, requiring heat-stress adaptation to be planned in advance at both farm & landscape level. DG AGRI officials point out that temperatures in many European countries were between 5°C & 12°C above seasonal averages in July 2026, disrupting agricultural activities

Figures released from the Joint Research Centre (JRC) tell a similar story, whereby persistent heat & a lack of rainfall have damaged Summer crops & reduced feed supplies across Western & Central Europe, with some EU Summer crop yield forecasts now as much as 14% below the five-year average. In the latest *JRC Mars Bulletin**, published on August 24, experts say that the strongest effects were being reported in FR, Southern DE, Northern & Central IT, AT, CZ, SK, HU & Western RO. *MARS refers to 'Monitoring Agricultural Resources'*. Agriculture Commissioner Christophe Hansen commented that "this Summer has been particularly difficult for farmers across the EU. Drought & extreme heat are putting crops, fodder, livestock & farmers' incomes under increasing pressure." "We are closely & actively monitoring the developments, gaining insights of the impact directly from the ground," the Luxembourg politician stated. "These events are a reminder that we must prepare for a future in which extreme weather becomes more frequent." "We need to support farmers today while making European agriculture more resilient for tomorrow," Hansen added, but as many point out the agricultural crisis reserve is now empty, so if there is any distribution of EU financial compensation, it is unclear where that money would come from.

In a bid to address this pressing issue, Hansen met with EU farming organisations on September 1 alongside Irish Agriculture Minister Martin Heydon, representing the Irish Council Presidency, to assess the impact of drought, heatwaves & wildfires. "The situation is serious especially in some parts of the EU," Hansen told the virtual meeting. "There will be impacts with crop failure likely in the worst-affected regions." Information received by the Executive so far indicates losses for Summer crops, principally maize, as well as grassland & fodder supplies in Western & Central European countries. Impacts have also been reported for fruit, vegetables, potatoes, sugar beet & wine. After the Summer hiatus, the Brussels machine is beginning to crank up again, as a busy & no doubt challenging Autum/Winter season awaits, with the Irish Presidency central to making it all run smoothly.

EU NEWS

FARM COUNCIL

INFORMAL SET TO FOCUS ON RESEARCH, INNOVATION TO SUPPORT LIVESTOCK, PROTEIN

The Irish Presidency is putting livestock & the protein production sector in the spotlight at its Informal Agriculture Ministerial meeting, on September 6-8, which will be centred around a 'formal' discussion in Dublin Castle on the Tuesday, with the focus on the need for innovation to support the livestock & protein sectors in the face of economic, environmental & climate challenges. Ministers' exchanges will be based around a single page document, headed *'Discussion Topic: Livestock Strategy & EU Protein Plan [Research & Innovation]'*, in which the Presidency stresses that "the livestock sector faces many challenges, including profitability, structural vulnerabilities, environmental/climate impacts & animal disease outbreaks." "These risks can be mitigated through developing new technologies, improving management practices, & generating the knowledge needed to respond to changing environmental, economic & social conditions," authors of the note outline. "Improving the productivity, competitiveness & preparedness of the EU's protein systems will also help to ensure that primary producers remain productive, resilient & economically viable over the long-term." The Presidency points to the Livestock Strategy & Protein Action Plan unveiled in July, noting that they "both highlight the importance of harnessing innovative technologies & applying cutting-edge research to support the development of more sustainable & resilient food systems." It refers to the Livestock Strategy's recommendation that "there should be a focus on scaling up & deploying research & innovation efforts, & increasing the uptake of relevant tools, including decision-support systems, sensors, big data applications, robotics, early-warning solutions & precision livestock farming, while maintaining a systems-based & place-based approach." It also explains that "financial instruments being negotiated under the next Multiannual Financial Framework, such as the European Competitiveness Fund (ECF), could provide an important mechanism for supporting such research & innovation."

The Presidency poses two 'guiding questions' to frame the debate at the Informal gathering. The first is '*How can research & innovation be leveraged to support the EU livestock & protein sectors across the three dimensions of sustainability: economic, social, & environmental?*' and follows up with '*How can the EU & Member States best support farmers, particularly smaller farmers, in adopting new technologies & innovative practices?'*

National Stud visit: As well as the 'formal' discussion at the historic Dublin Castle on September 8, Ministers will visit the Irish National Stud & Gardens in Kildare, some 50km west of Dublin, & the nearby Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF), established in 1998 & located in Tully. *Hailing from Kildare, Ireland's Minister for Agriculture, Food & the Marine, Martin Heydon, is a Fine Gael TD for the Kildare South constituency. Born & raised on a farm near Ballitore, he attended primary school in Crookstown, did his Leaving Certificate at the Cross & Passion school in Kilcullen & completed his farm training at Kildalton Agricultural College. During this Informal, the Minister, who turned 48 years of age on August 9, is keen to showcase the sights & attractions of 'The Thoroughbred County'.* There will also be a visit for Ministers & delegates from the Special Committee on Agriculture (SCA) to Lyons Farm, a teaching & research facility operated by University College Dublin (UCD), just outside Newcastle. The facility is based around the former seat of Lord Cloncurry, described as a period house of national importance, & covers some 250 hectares, with facilities designed to ensure optimal productivity, animal welfare & efficiency. In addition, there will be a gala dinner in the Great Hall at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham in Dublin, home to the Irish Museum of Modern Art.

FUTURE CAP NEWS

COMMISSION SETS OUT MEASURES TO HELP FARMS ADAPT TO WORSENING HEATWAVES

The Commission has set out short & longer-term measures farmers can take to protect crops & livestock from increasingly severe heatwaves, ranging from more efficient irrigation & changes in crop choice to lower livestock densities & investment in climate-resilient farm buildings. In a new page* launched on the Commission's Agriculture & Rural Development website on August 27, it says that climate extremes, including heatwaves & droughts, are becoming more frequent & severe across Europe, requiring heat-stress adaptation to be planned in advance at both farm & landscape level. It says temperatures in many European countries were between 5°C & 12°C above seasonal averages in July 2026, disrupting agricultural activities. EU crop losses caused by drought & heatwaves have tripled over the past 50 years. Heat stress can reduce crop fertility, accelerate grain ripening & increase water requirements, while high temperatures affect livestock grazing periods, reduce feed intake & efficiency & increase water consumption. Under extreme conditions, heat stress can also substantially increase animal mortality, the Commission says.

For crops, immediate measures include multifunctional nets, kaolin-based leaf applications, late or reduced pruning & the use of greenhouses or foil covers. Irrigation is identified as a key means of limiting the effects of extreme heat & declining soil moisture, although the Commission says efficient systems & sustainable water management should be prioritised because irrigation can increase pressure on scarce water resources. Over the medium & longer term, farmers could select crops & varieties whose growing cycles reduce exposure to extreme heat, including early-maturing winter & spring crop varieties. The Commission also points to diversification towards more heat-tolerant crops, specifically citing the replacement of maize by sorghum, & to resilient systems including organic farming & agroecology. Water measures include investment in storage infrastructure, natural water-retention measures, greater reuse of treated water for irrigation & circular water-management systems. The Commission also advocates improving soil health & water-storage capacity through reduced tillage, permanent soil cover, increased organic matter & measures to prevent soil compaction.

For livestock, immediate measures include ensuring permanent access to fresh water, providing shade, moving feeding to cooler periods of the day & adjusting diets. Farmers can also reduce indoor stocking densities where possible & increase monitoring for early signs of heat stress. Longer-term measures include climate-resilient livestock buildings with monitoring & water- & energy-efficient cooling systems, precision livestock technologies, on-farm water storage & reuse, & agroforestry & agro-sylvo-pastoral systems, which combine forestry & livestock, providing shade. The Commission also suggests breeding & genetic-selection programmes, which conserve locally adapted livestock breeds, while incorporating heat tolerance & climate resilience alongside productivity & animal-health objectives.

On the new webpage, it highlights how the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) can finance or encourage some of these measures, using HU, CY & EL as examples of interventions already included in national CAP Strategic Plans. HU's plan includes a dairy cattle welfare intervention supporting lower stocking densities, preventive animal-health measures, improved nutrition & health monitoring & access to grazing where possible. Farmers adopting the higher standards receive compensation for additional costs & income foregone. The Commission says the measures also improve dairy herds' resilience to heat stress. In CY, CAP animal-welfare interventions for pigs & dairy cows support measures including lower stocking densities, improved ventilation & air quality, monitoring of water supplies, balanced nutrition & enhanced health surveillance. EL is using an eco-scheme promoting resilient & adapted crop species & varieties. It encourages winter cereals & legumes as alternatives to more water-intensive crops including maize, alfalfa & cotton, as well as climate-resilient & innovative crops such as aromatic & medicinal plants.

The Commission says the winter crops rely mainly on rainfall & have lower water & nutrient requirements, reducing irrigation needs & increasing resilience to drought.
https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/cap-my-country/sustainability/environmental-sustainability/heatwaves-impacts-agriculture_en;

COMMISSION AGREES FINAL ADOPTION OF FERTILISER CRISIS SUPPORT MEASURES

The Commission confirmed on July 31 that it had passed the final adoption of support measures to help farmers cope with sharply rising fertiliser costs, describing the package as intended to safeguard food security while providing Member States with greater flexibility to assist producers. The measures include a new rural development liquidity scheme for crisis support that can be co-financed by up to 65% from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). The scheme can make use of unused EAFRD funds that might otherwise be lost, while Member States will be able to add national financing of up to 200%. They were proposed on June 12 & follow the Fertiliser Action Plan unveiled on May 19. To speed up delivery & reduce administrative burdens, the support may be paid as a fixed amount per hectare & implemented through Member States' CAP Strategic Plans.

The Commission has also authorised national capitals to make advance direct payments to farmers before October 16 by increasing the rate of advance payments, with the aim of improving farm cash flow. In addition, Member States will be given greater flexibility to adjust their allocations for direct support for the 2027 calendar year in order to respond to the impact of high fertiliser prices. According to the Commission, the new CAP measures complement the exceptional €540 million financial support package announced in the Fertilisers Action Plan & adopted on July 27. Officials said it would continue implementing the Fertilisers Action Plan to reduce farmers' exposure to future crises & that the latest measures would help strengthen EU food security, strategic autonomy & competitiveness.

EU PACKAGING RULES IN EFFECT, PFAS RESTRICTION ON FOOD-CONTACT MATERIALS

New EU rules on packaging & packaging waste have entered into application, including restrictions on PFAS in food-contact packaging, as the Commission begins the phased implementation of measures intended to cut packaging waste & increase recycling. The Packaging & Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR)*, which entered into force on February 11, 2025, began to apply across the EU from August 12, 2026. It replaces varying national requirements with a harmonised framework covering the packaging life cycle & is intended to reduce compliance costs for businesses operating across borders.

One of the first measures to apply is a restriction on per- & polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in food-contact packaging. Packaging containing PFAS above specified limits can no longer be placed on the EU market. PFAS have been used in products including takeaway containers, fast-food wrappers, microwave popcorn bags, bakery paper & pizza boxes because of their ability to repel water & grease. The Commission said restricting their use would reduce human exposure as well as releases of the persistent substances into the environment. Environment Commissioner Jessika Roswall said the regulation represented "an investment in Europe's future." "It will help reduce waste, increase recycling, make food-contact packaging safer for the consumers by limiting harmful substances such as PFAS, & reduce our dependence on virgin raw materials," she underlined. "These are essential steps towards a truly circular economy." The Swedish Commissioner described the regulation as replacing "fragmented national rules difficult to navigate for economic operators in the internal market," but conceded that there would be "adjustment costs," insisting that "we have worked intensively with market operators to implement the new rules in a pragmatic & unbureaucratic way."

From 2028, a harmonised EU labelling system for packaging will apply to facilitate waste sorting & improve the efficiency of recycling & composting. Measures to reduce packaging waste, including limits on empty space, restrictions on some single-use plastic packaging & reuse targets, will apply from 2030. Requirements for the use of recycled plastic in new plastic packaging & for all packaging to be recyclable will also apply from 2030. The Executive said it was working on the necessary secondary legislation & would continue to work with national authorities, industry & civil society to avoid unnecessary administrative burdens & ensure "efficient & pragmatic implementation" of the rules. Without additional action, EU packaging waste had been projected to increase by 19% by 2030, with plastic packaging waste potentially rising by as much as 46%, according to officials.
https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L_202500040

SMALL-SCALE FARMERS CALL FOR EMERGENCY AID AS DROUGHT, HEAT, WILDFIRES HIT

European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC) has called for emergency aid for farmers affected by drought, heatwaves & wildfires across Europe, warning that crops, livestock, grazing land & agricultural infrastructure are being lost as extreme conditions spread across the continent. In a statement issued on August 12, the peasant farmers' organisation said wildfires were "escalating," in rural areas in FR, ES, PT, IT & EL, while prolonged drought & extreme heat were also causing agricultural damage further north. Farmers have reported losses of crops, livestock, orchards & grazing areas, as well as damaged irrigation systems & other infrastructure. Clémence Goujon, a member of ECVC's Youth Articulation, said that, "wildfires have devastated Southwestern France." "Our fields are parched, water is scarce, & even wildlife struggles to find enough food to eat," she added, complaining that "despite these hardships, government policies continue to support the agro-industry & pesticide use, making the situation worse for small-scale farmers like myself & my community."

ECVC stresses that "small-scale farmers & local people in rural areas are disproportionately shouldering the consequences of climate crises," while facing "many more difficulties in recovering from the catastrophic losses than industrial actors, despite the fact that the industrial agri model disconnects agriculture from local communities & increases the vulnerability of landscapes to fires, droughts & other extreme events." The group complains of "public policies that foster the industrialisation of livestock farming, monoculture forests & land speculation & abandonment," & a "lack of adequate emergency support for those who need it most." Testimonies published alongside the statement describe severe water shortages & farmers already using winter fodder reserves to maintain livestock in mid-August.

Peter Schön, a farmer in Eastern Austria & member of ECVC's Youth Articulation, said rainfall in his area had fallen to around one-third of its usual level. "This is the hottest & driest summer on record. My area has received only about 100mm of rain this year, compared to the usual 300mm, which is already low," he said. The previous two winters had also been extremely dry, leaving groundwater at critically low levels & some farmers without water in their wells. Schön said conditions had become so difficult that he was considering stopping work until the end of the summer because most crops were not growing. In Belgium, farm worker Matthieu Blerot, reported just 5.5mm of rain during the month. Although deep soils had initially kept grass green, grazed pastures had stopped growing & cattle were already being given fodder intended for the winter. "We are now out of grass, & the cows are fed with hay that they are supposed to eat during winter. If it does not rain, we don't know how we will manage to feed them through the winter," he said. Similar problems were reported in the Netherlands, despite its traditionally wetter climate. Farmer Roos Saat said her holding was on low-lying land below sea level & therefore among the last areas likely to experience drought effects. However, she said grass had stopped growing & livestock were already being fed from winter reserves after only around 20mm of summer rainfall, compared with an average of 250mm. "Seeing river levels falling & even forest

fires breaking out in a country known for its wet climate is testament to the huge climate crisis we are facing," Saat said.

In Southwestern France, farmer Clémence Goujon, described the effects of extreme heat & wildfire following heavy rainfall earlier in the year. She said spring had been brief before temperatures remained around 43°C for a prolonged period, while the level of a nearby river was lower than she had previously seen at that point in the year. "There is almost no grass, so deer have begun eating cucumber leaves, indicating a severe lack of food. Tomatoes are withering on the plants," she said. Goujon also criticised the continued use of water for large-scale maize irrigation in her village during the dry conditions. In Portugal, ECVC Coordinating Committee member, Vitor Rodrigues, said farmers & forestry producers were repeatedly losing plantations, pastures, permanent crops, buildings & machinery to fires. "Year after year, farmers & forestry producers lose plantations, pastures, permanent crops, facilities, & agricultural machinery & firefighters, forest fire brigades are forced to deal with major fires," he said. Rodrigues said government compensation in Portugal had been insufficient, with "huge bureaucratic barriers & long waits before the funds reach farmers." He called for more mixed use of forests, combining timber production with activities including extensive grazing, livestock farming & beekeeping.

EUROSTAT HIGHLIGHTS LACK OF INTERNET ACCESS ON EUROPEAN FARMS

Fewer than half of the European Union's farms had internet access in 2023, highlighting the continuing digital divide in agriculture despite growing use of precision farming technologies, new figures published by Eurostat show. The bloc's statistical office said in a July 24 release that about 43% of EU farms reported having internet access in 2023, although adoption varied sharply between Member States. Denmark, Germany, Slovakia, Latvia, Czechia & Austria all recorded internet access rates above 90%, while uptake remained much lower elsewhere. The figures are drawn from the Eurostat Statistics Explained paper '*Agriculture statistics – machinery & digitalisation'*, a 12-page analysis based on the 2023 Farm Structure Survey, which provides a broader picture of the uptake of digital technologies, precision farming & agricultural machinery across the Community.

"The digitalisation of the sector - defined as the adoption & integration of digital technologies such as sensor systems, variable rate technologies, GPS/GNSS (Global Positioning System/Global Navigation Satellite System), big data, artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, & the Internet of Things (IoT) - has the potential to transform agriculture," the statistics body's experts explain. "It can address key sectoral challenges while boosting competitiveness."

In the release, Eurostat explains that around 11% of EU farms used farm management information systems in 2023, with France recording by far the highest adoption rate, at about 60%. Robotics remained relatively uncommon, being used by around 7% of farms across the EU, although the Netherlands recorded the highest national adoption rate at about 35%. Eurostat underlines that the use of digital technologies was strongly linked to farm size. About 74% of farms with a standard output of at least €100 000 had internet access, compared with only around 21% of farms with an output below €2 000. Similar patterns were seen for farm management information systems & robotics, indicating that larger & economically stronger farms are adopting digital tools much more rapidly than smaller holdings. Only around 18% of farms employed precision farming, but those holdings managed approximately 44% of the EU's total utilised agricultural area, reflecting the concentration of these technologies on larger farms. Soil analysis was the most widely adopted practice, used by about 11% of farms, followed by variable-rate application techniques at about 5% & band spraying of plant protection products, at about 4%.

There were also wide national differences. More than three-quarters of the agricultural land in Luxembourg, Finland & Estonia was managed by farms using precision farming technologies, whereas the share was below 10% in Greece & Cyprus. Eurostat finds a similar pattern in livestock

production. Around one quarter of livestock farms used automated machinery or digital systems, such as animal welfare monitoring, automatic feeding systems or climate control, but adoption increased markedly with herd size. Farms using such technologies accounted for around 71% of all livestock units in the EU, with Denmark & the Netherlands recording the highest shares.
More information available here - **https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Agriculture_statistics_-_machinery_and_digitalisation*

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT NEWS

MEPs TO EXAMINE EU FOOD & FEED SAFETY SIMPLIFICATION PACKAGE

European Parliament (EP) agriculture & environment lawmakers were to meet jointly on September 2 to examine proposed changes to a wide range of EU food & feed safety rules, with a dedicated hearing bringing scientists, farmers & regulatory experts into the debate. The Agriculture & Rural Development (AGRI) & Environment, Climate & Food Safety (ENVI) Committees will hold the joint meeting (from 15:00 to 18:30 in Brussels). The session will combine a 2½-hour public hearing on '*Simplifying EU rules on Food & Feed Safety'* with consideration of amendments to the Commission's Food & Feed Safety Omnibus proposals. The hearing will be divided into two panels examining the scientific basis for the changes & the practical experience of applying EU food & feed legislation. It will be opened by AGRI Chair Veronika Vrecionová (ECR, CZ) & ENVI Chair Pierfrancesco Maran (S&D, IT).

The first panel, on '*Scientific Challenges & Opportunities of the Food & Feed Omnibus'*, will hear Anne-Kathrin Mahlein, Director of the Institute of Sugar Beet Research in Göttingen; Milvia Miccolis, Associate Professor in the Plant Pathology Section at the University of Bari; & Martina Vijver, Professor & Scientific Director at Leiden University's Institute of Environmental Sciences. Their presentations will be followed by questions from MEPs. A second panel will put greater emphasis on how EU food & feed legislation operates in agriculture. Entitled '*Implementing the EU Food & Feed Regulatory Framework: Practical Experience & Challenges on the Ground'*, it will hear Cédric Benoist, Chair of Copa-Cogeca's Cereals Working Party; Pavel Minář, Director of the Department of Plant Protection Products at the Czech Central Institute for Supervising & Testing in Agriculture; & Robert Wiedmer, Director of the South Tyrolean Extension Service for Fruit- & Winegrowing. The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) will give remarks following the two panels, followed by the European Commission, before Vrecionová & Maran close the hearing.

The hearing will be followed by the legislative part of the joint AGRI-ENVI meeting, with MEPs due to consider amendments to the two parts of the Commission's simplification & strengthening package. One proposal would amend the EU's rules on the protection of animals kept for farming purposes & the sustainable use of pesticides, while repealing two older directives. The second proposal covers a much broader range of food, feed & agricultural legislation, including rules on transmissible spongiform encephalopathies, genetically modified food & feed, feed additives, food hygiene, hygiene rules for food of animal origin, pesticide maximum residue levels, animal slaughter, plant protection products, biocidal products & official controls. Both files are being handled jointly by AGRI & ENVI, with Michele Picaro (ECR, IT) & Herbert Dorfmann (EPP, IT) serving as co-rapporteurs. Euro-deputies will consider amendments to both proposals at the meeting.

The food & feed session forms a distinct joint AGRI-ENVI section of a wider series of ENVI meetings on September 1-2. Other ENVI business includes the 2027 EU budget, the Irish Council Presidency's programme, implementation of the Nature Restoration Law & the EU response to the summer wildfires, while a separate joint ENVI-SANT meeting will consider biotechnology legislation. For AGRI MEPs it is part of a two day, September 2-3, meeting, during which they

will consider amendments to reports on the CAP for 2028-34, changes to the Common Market Organisation (CMO) Regulation, & strengthening competitiveness, resilience & fairness in EU agriculture. On September 3, DG AGRI Director-General Elisabeth Werner will present the state of play of CAP implementation, based on the annual performance reports of Member States on the implementation of their National Strategic Plans (NSPs) (2023-2024). The following discussion with AGRI members will offer the opportunity for a comprehensive assessment of Member States' progress on result indicators, based on the Common Monitoring & Performance Framework (CMPF).

SANTE UPDATES

JRC FINDS PESTICIDE RESTRICTIONS COULD CUT EU IMPORTS, RAISE FOOD PRICES

Lowering permitted residues of the most hazardous pesticides in imported food & feed could reduce EU agricultural imports, increase EU crop production & raise consumer prices, but the scale of the effects would depend heavily on the ability of third country producers to adapt, according to a preliminary study from the Commission. In the paper, published on August 11, the Joint Research Centre (JRC) examines the economic consequences of implementing the principle that pesticides banned in the EU for health or environmental reasons should not return through imported agricultural products. The authors, from JRC in Spain & consultants Seidor in Belgium, of the 161-page report, '*Assessing the economic impacts of stronger alignment of production standards applied to imported products on the EU's agricultural sector – Reducing all maximum residue levels of the most hazardous pesticides banned in the EU to the limit of quantification '**, identify 18 hazardous active substances, which are not approved in the bloc but for which maximum residue levels (MRLs) above the limit of quantification (LOQ) remain relevant to imports. They affect 235 commodities from 86 countries. They model what would happen if all relevant MRLs were simultaneously reduced to the LOQ under three scenarios, ranging from one in which affected third country producers do not adapt to the EU requirements to scenarios in which producers change their practices & incur additional costs.

The authors stress that the scenarios are not forecasts. "The scenarios therefore provide a deliberate bracket - an upper & a lower bound rather than a central projection," they explain. The range extends from a 41% reduction in EU agricultural imports where all exporters are affected & no adaptation takes place to 0.4% where exposure is limited & adaptation costs are low. They say that "the simulated impacts show a common pattern - reduced imports to the EU, increased production in the EU & increased consumer prices - differing in intensity rather than direction," with the effects becoming smaller as assumptions about third country producers' responses become more nuanced.

Under the upper-bound, no-adaptation scenario, total EU agricultural imports fall by 41% in volume, including reductions of 92% for citrus & 90% for soybeans. Aggregate EU agricultural production increases by 1.1%, while agricultural land use expands by 1.9 million hectares, or 1.2%. Citrus production increases by 47%, rapeseed by 41% & soybeans by 29%. However, the study shows a significant knock-on effect on livestock in this extreme scenario. Higher feed costs, including an 87% increase for oilseed cakes, lead to falls of 5.8% in pork production & 5.4% in poultry output. Consumer price effects would also be substantial, with modelled increases of 332% for coffee, 105% for soybean cakes & 85% for citrus.

The results are much smaller when exporters are assumed to adapt. Under the intermediate scenario, which assumes additional costs of exporting to the EU of 20%, overall EU agricultural imports decline by 8%, while EU production increases by 0.23%. The largest consumer price increases are 6.5% for table grapes, 6% for coffee & 5.6% for citrus, while the spillover effect on livestock becomes negligible.

Under the lower-bound scenario, where fewer producers are assumed to be affected & adaptation raises export costs by 5%, total EU agricultural imports fall by just 0.4%, while changes in EU production & consumer prices remain below 1% for all commodities. "The findings support the conclusion that assessing the impacts of reducing MRLs to the LOQ requires AS (active substance) specific in-depth analysis rather than uniform assumptions applied across all AS - commodity - country triads," the authors conclude.

A detailed examination of cyproconazole, a fungicide used on several crops, found that EU-approved alternatives exist but replacing the substance could increase production costs by around 20-40%, although the net cost could be lower where the alternatives provide more effective crop protection. The experts also find potentially different consequences for crop & livestock farmers within the EU. "EU crop production expands across all scenarios, indicating an increased competitiveness of EU producers as import volumes decline," it says. But in the no-adaptation scenario, reduced imports increase feed costs & livestock production contracts. Under what the report calls the "more plausible intermediate & lower-bound scenarios," this livestock effect becomes negligible.

The JRC stresses the considerable uncertainty surrounding the exercise. It lacks comprehensive information on the actual use of individual pesticides on particular commodities in exporting countries & on the cost & feasibility of replacing them. The authors say impacts are highly heterogeneous between substances, products & countries & that a uniform assumption about exporter behaviour is therefore "rather unrealistic." "This report is not an impact assessment & should not be read as one," the writers make clear. It does not examine the environmental or social dimensions underlying the EU bans & has not undergone public consultation. The authors conclude that the work provides initial evidence rather than a prediction of the effects of future legislation. "The findings point to the need for further assessments of impacts, & in particular for better information on the actual use & agronomic importance of specific substances in exporting countries concerned," they say. The report also notes that some of the countries potentially most exposed are developing countries, whose circumstances would require more detailed analysis. The work follows the Commission's Vision for Agriculture & Food, which committed it to establishing the principle that the most hazardous pesticides banned in the EU for health & environmental reasons should not be allowed to return through imports. The JRC study will feed into the Commission's impact assessment & does not prejudge what subsequent measures may be proposed. ***https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC147659***

IN BRIEF

ES ham PGI: The Commission said on August 4 that it had approved the registration of '*Pernil Cerretà*' from Spain as a Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), recognising a traditional Catalan cured ham, whose production methods can be traced back to antiquity. The registration covers a cured hind-leg ham produced from a white (non-Iberian) breed of pigs. The product is distinguished by its rounded shape, the use of pepper during curing, the absence of smoking & a high-temperature drying & maturation process. Boneless hams must be cured for at least seven months, while bone-in products require a minimum of nine months. According to the Commission, the recipe has been passed down through generations. During the 20th century, production techniques developed by small local producers were adopted by the regional meat-processing industry while retaining the product's traditional characteristics.

The official product specification provides further details on the distinctive sensory characteristics of the ham, describing a mildly salty flavour with peppery notes, umami & slight bitterness, together with aromas of cured meat but no smokiness. Production requires the use of sea salt & pepper, while optional spices include paprika, garlic, juniper, bay leaf & rosemary. The geographical area covers much of inland Catalonia, including districts such as Cerdanya,

Berguedà, Osona, Garrotxa, Bages & Segrià, while excluding the coastal municipalities of Blanes, Lloret de Mar & Tossa de Mar. All production stages, including curing, slicing & packaging, must take place within the designated area. The specification says the product's reputation dates back to Roman times, when pernac cerretanae was mentioned in Emperor Diocletian's Edict on Maximum Prices & by classical writers including Strabo & Martial. It also cites medieval & later historical references documenting the continued production & trade of the ham throughout Catalonia. ***https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C_202602141**

PDO for ES olive oil: The Commission has approved the registration of '*Aceite de las Sierras Espadán y Calderona*' from the mountainous areas of Spain's Valencia region as a Protected Designation of Origin (PDO). The registration, announced on August 4, covers extra virgin & virgin olive oils produced mainly from the local Serrana de Espadán olive variety, together with smaller proportions of Villalonga, Canetera, Morruda & Arbequina olives. The oil is characterised by a sweet, smooth & fruity flavour, with bitterness & pungency of medium intensity & colours ranging between green & yellow. It attributed these characteristics to the mountainous terrain, sea breezes & night-time dew, together with traditional cultivation methods developed over generations. According to the official product specification, the oil also displays aromas of green almond, fresh grass, olives, artichoke & outdoor-grown tomatoes, with a balanced sweetness & light bitterness. Production is confined to 28 municipalities across the provinces of Castellón & Valencia, where olive groves are generally located on steep terraced slopes between 350 & 850 metres above sea level. The proximity of the Mediterranean provides moisture-bearing sea breezes & night-time dew, reducing water stress during the summer & helping olives retain higher chlorophyll & carotenoid levels. The Serrana de Espadán variety is naturally resistant to many common olive pests, allowing producers to use very few plant protection treatments. Olives are harvested early & picked directly from the tree to preserve quality.
***https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C_202601460**

PL apple gets PGI: The Executive has approved the registration of '*Jabłka krajeńskie'* apples grown in the northern Krajna region of Poland as a Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), it emerged on August 4. The indication covers fresh dessert apples of the Gala, Golden Delicious, Jonagold & Champion varieties, together with their 'sports' (a word referring to cultivated mutations of an apple variety), produced in southern Krajna. The apples are distinguished by higher sugar content & greater firmness than the same varieties grown elsewhere in Poland. It attributed these characteristics to the region's relatively high number of sunny days, moderate rainfall & the experience of local growers passed down through generations.

According to the official product specification, the apples must comply with recognised food quality schemes such as Integrated Production (IP) &/or GLOBALG.A.P. The fruit's high sugar levels, firmness & colour are linked to fertile soils, large day-night temperature differences & a growing season of about 210 days. The protected geographical area covers parts of the Kujawsko-Pomorskie & Wielkopolskie regions, including districts around Bydgoszcz, Nakło & Piła. Harvesting, storage & packing must all take place within the production area to preserve quality & maintain traceability. Apples are stored in controlled-atmosphere cold stores before being packed either individually or in bulk.
***https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C_202602143**

PL sausage PGI: On August 7, the Commission announced its approval for registration of Poland's '*Kiełbasa pradziada z Dukli'*, a traditionally smoked pork & liver sausage from the country's southeastern Podkarpackie region, as a Protected Geographical Indication (PGI). The sausage, the name of which means 'great-grandfather's sausage from Dukla', is produced in the municipality of Dukla, in Krosno district, using meat & liver exclusively from Puławska pigs or crossbreeds. All stages of production, including grinding, mixing, filling the casings, smoking, cooling & chilling, must take place within the designated area. The finished sausage combines ham meat with unusually large pieces of pig's liver, cut into cubes of 2-4 cm. According to the

5-page Official Journal single document accompanying the application, pork accounts for 75%, plus or minus five percentage points, & fresh liver 25%, also plus or minus five points. The finished sausage has a fat content of no more than 5%.

The Commission describes its flavour as combining ham & noticeable pieces of pork liver with a deep smoky aroma. The specification describes the dominant taste as well-seasoned pork, accompanied by mild pepper, garlic & a pronounced taste of roasted pig's liver. A slight sweet or sour cherry flavour & aroma can also be perceptible. Its distinctive smoking process uses beech & alder wood supplemented by sweet cherry or sour cherry wood. Smokers with an offset firebox are used in a three-stage process comprising drying, smoking & baking. The specification says the unusual addition of cherry wood gives the sausage its characteristic colour, taste & aroma. The production technique also requires the filling to be mixed considerably longer than for other sausages. This allows the relatively large pieces of liver & ham to bind without the finished sausage disintegrating. The specification says the technique is not found elsewhere in Poland & requires considerable skill passed between generations of local butchers. The product's history is linked closely to Dukla's butchery tradition, which the document traces back to the 16th century. A guild grouping eight slaughterers & meat curers operated in the town between 1920 & 1939. The oldest surviving written recipe specifically for 'Kiełbasa pradziada z Dukli' dates from 1896 & remains in the archives of a local company. According to the specification, it developed from two names formerly used interchangeably - 'Kiełbasa dukielska' & 'Kiełbasa pradziada z Dukli' - with the latter emphasising the product's transmission through earlier generations.
See* ***https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C_202602144*

IT aid approved: The Commission has approved a €20 million Italian State aid scheme to help agricultural, fisheries & aquaculture businesses in the autonomous region of Friuli Venezia Giulia cope with higher fuel & fertiliser prices resulting from the Middle East crisis. The scheme, announced on August 3, was approved under the EU's Middle East Crisis Temporary State Aid Framework (METSAF), adopted by the Commission on April 29, 2026. The support will remain in force until December 31, 2026, & is intended to mitigate rising costs for agricultural fuel & fertilisers, as well as fuel used in the fisheries & aquaculture sectors. Aid will be provided through direct grants & subsidised loans. For agricultural producers, support will be calculated according to the area of land used for primary agricultural production, while aid for fisheries & aquaculture operators will be based on estimated fuel consumption. Assistance will be capped at €50 000 per beneficiary & will be paid by the autonomous region of Friuli Venezia Giulia. The Commission said the measure was necessary, appropriate & proportionate to facilitate the development of the affected economic activities & would not distort competition or trade to an extent contrary to the common interest.
The non-confidential versions of the decision will be published in the Commission's* ***State aid register* *under case number* ***SA.123315,*** *once confidentiality issues have been resolved.*

Exec approves €149m Swedish fuel & fertiliser aid scheme: The Commission has approved a €149 million (SEK 1.6 billion) Swedish State aid scheme to support agricultural, fishing & aquaculture companies facing higher fuel & fertiliser costs resulting from the Middle East crisis. The measure was approved under the Middle East Crisis Temporary State Aid Framework (METSAF), adopted by the Commission on April 29, 2026. It will remain in force until December 31, 2026. Under the scheme, aid will be paid as direct grants to companies active in the primary production of agricultural, fishery & aquaculture products. Support will be based on increases in fuel & fertiliser prices, with the aid intensity set at 85% of the estimated increase in fuel & nitrogen fertiliser costs for agricultural companies & fuel costs for fishing & aquaculture businesses. Payments will be capped at €50 000 per company. **The non-confidential versions of the decision will be published in the Commission's* ***State aid register*** *under case number* ***SA.123975,*** *once confidentiality issues have been resolved.*

Hansen seeks simplification ideas: Farm Commissioner Christophe Hansen broke the summer purdah on August 6 to take to social media & urged farmers to give the Executive their ideas on CAP simplification. "The best ideas for simplification come from those on the ground," the Luxembourg politician tweeted. "If you're a farmer, forester, producer or part of the agri-food chain, tell us where EU rules can work better & be easier to implement." "Your feedback can make a difference," he added, with a ***link*** to the Commission's simplification platform website.

EU-FarmBook session: Copa & Cogeca will hold a co-design session in Brussels on September 29 aimed at helping shape the development of the EU-FarmBook* agricultural knowledge exchange platform. The EU-FarmBook Co-Design Lab Session will bring together agricultural stakeholders to contribute ideas on the development of the platform & consider how it can support knowledge sharing & innovation in European agriculture. The hybrid event will take place from 14:00 on September 29 at the Copa-Cogeca offices, Rue de Trèves 61, Brussels, with participation also possible online. The farm lobby organisation said the interactive session would give participants an opportunity to contribute to the development of EU-FarmBook, engage with stakeholders from across the agricultural sector & help design the platform as a tool for agricultural knowledge exchange & innovation.
https://eufarmbook.eu/en. Registration for the event is already open through the organisers' online registration form ***https://form.jotform.com/261803349299366;***

Arla profit rises: Arla Foods increased first-half net profit to €213 million from €158 million a year earlier as branded sales recovered & demand for dairy protein strengthened, despite abundant European milk supplies pushing down prices paid to farmers, the farmer-owned group announced on August 27. Group revenue reached €7.6 billion in the first half of 2026, compared with €7.5 billion a year earlier, while strategic branded volume-driven revenue growth, excluding the impact of Arla's merger with DMK, rose to 6.7% from a 1.5% decline in the first half of 2025. "We have entered 2026 in formidable shape. Demand for nutritious dairy is healthy across the world, our brands have more than recovered, & consumers are responding to better value with real enthusiasm," Arla CEO Peder Tuborgh said. "This is the cooperative performing at its best, turning strong consumer demand into real growth for our brands," he added.

The Arla brand recorded volume-driven revenue growth of 6.5%, while Castello grew 4.0%, Lurpak 5.2%, Puck 9.9% & Starbucks chilled coffee 8.0%. Arla Skyr grew 39.6% & Arla Protein 34.4%. Arla Foods Ingredients increased revenue by 19.3% to €867 million, driven mainly by higher whey protein prices & continued strong demand for whey-based ingredients linked to health & nutrition trends, including GLP-1 diets. GLP-1 *(glucagon-like peptide-1)* diets are eating patterns associated with the use of GLP-1 weight-loss drugs, such as semaglutide (Wegovy & Ozempic) & tirzepatide (Mounjaro), which reduce appetite & food intake, often increasing demand for high-protein foods to help maintain muscle mass. The stronger consumer business contrasted with pressure on milk prices as high European production weighed on global dairy commodity markets. Arla said its own milk intake also increased strongly, while cost inflation, partly driven by the Middle East crisis, was higher than expected.

Arla's performance price consequently fell to 43.6 euro cents/kg from 57.5 cents/kg in the first half of 2025, while its pre-paid milk price fell to 40.7 cents/kg. Milk volumes, including non-owner milk, increased to 7.9 billion kg from 7.2 billion kg. "This is the market doing what it should. High milk availability has brought prices down across the sector, & that is the reality our owners are navigating right now, but a lower milk price does not mean a weaker cooperative," Tuborgh said. "Our brands are growing, our business is efficient, & we remain highly competitive. That is what gives me confidence that Arla remains a strong & reliable home for our owners' milk," he added. The results allowed Arla's board to approve a supplementary half-year payment of one euro cent/kg of milk delivered to its farmer owners. The cooperative also reported €63 million in net efficiencies under its Fund our Future programme. Arla invested €322 million across its markets during the half year & separately decided on an approximately €300 million

new cheese dairy at Götene in Sweden, the largest single investment in its history. The plant will roughly double the site's milk intake to around 1 billion kg annually & is expected to begin production in 2030. The results also include the first month following Arla's merger with German dairy cooperative DMK, which took effect on June 1. The combined cooperative has around 11,200 farmer owners, 28 800 employees & a milk pool of approximately 20 billion kg. DMK contributed €409 million to first-half revenue. Arla raised its full-year forecast for strategic branded volume-driven revenue growth to 4-6%, from 1-3% previously. Following the DMK merger, it expects group revenue of €16.8-17.6 billion & a profit share of 2.8-3.2%. The cooperative said high milk supply was expected to continue weighing on global dairy prices, although early signs of stabilisation suggested a possible gradual recovery later in the year.

ES veg takeover: The Commission has approved the acquisition of joint control of Spanish fresh herb & vegetable producer Herbex by the UK's Flamingo Produce Investments & Spanish investment fund Nazca. The transaction relates primarily to the production & commercialisation of fresh aromatic herbs & vegetables. DG COMP officials said the transaction would not raise competition concerns because the joint venture has negligible activities in the European Economic Area (EEA) & the companies are not active in the same or vertically related markets.
More information is available on the Commission's **competition website, under the case number **M.12447.***

PERSONNEL NEWS:

AnimalhealthEurope expands secretariat: AnimalhealthEurope has appointed **Alexis Schütz** as Public Affairs Officer & **Eglė Rapaliutė** as Technical Manager, expanding the organisation's secretariat to 10 people, it announced on August 24. Belgian Schütz moves into the public affairs role after completing a six-month internship supporting European Livestock Voice (ELV), an informal stakeholder platform. He has a background in political communications & psychology & previously helped coordinate a campaign across French-speaking Belgium around the 2024 European Parliament elections. His previous experience also includes an internship in the European Parliament with a Belgian MEP.

Lithuanian Rapaliutė, a trained veterinarian, joins AnimalhealthEurope's technical team with experience working with both companion animals & dairy cattle. She has several years' experience in clinical research, research & development & animal health, including two years as a Veterinary Epidemiology Resident at the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences. Her most recent research has focused on animal husbandry, sustainability & greenhouse gas mitigation. AnimalhealthEurope said the two appointments strengthened both its technical & public affairs teams. Under the watchful eye of Secretary General Roxane Feller, the Brussels-based organisation represents 14 leading European manufacturers of animal medicines & 16 national associations in 19 countries, which it says together cover 90% of the European market.

NATIONAL NEWS

HANSEN HIGHLIGHTS CAP BUDGET DURING LIBRAMONT CENTENARY VISIT

Agriculture Commissioner Christophe Hansen underlined the importance of generational renewal in farming & pressed the case for a strong CAP backed by an adequate long-term EU budget, during a visit to the Libramont Agricultural, Forestry & Agri-Food Fair* in Belgium on July 27. Celebrating the show's 100th anniversary, this year's edition focused on young people, reflecting the European Commission's emphasis on attracting a new generation into agriculture through its Strategy for Generational Renewal in Agriculture. During his time there, he toured the exhibition with Belgian Prime Minister Bart De Wever, Deputy Prime Minister & Agriculture Minister David Clarinval, & Walloon Agriculture Minister Anne-Catherine Dalcq. The delegation visited the livestock hall, stands dedicated to One Health & bio-solutions, the Parc Mecanic Show featuring agricultural innovations, & the 'Tomorrow Food' exhibition.

Hansen did not give a speech at the annual gathering but highlighted the themes of the event on the social media site 'X'. "Libramont Fair shows all the richness of our rural areas: agriculture, food, forests, innovation & entrepreneurship," he wrote (in French). "We must ensure that new generations can still choose this profession & make a decent living from it." The Commissioner also met De Wever & Clarinval to discuss the Commission's proposals for the future CAP post-2027 & the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). "The negotiations must meet the expectations of our farmers," he stressed. "A strong Europe needs strong agriculture, capable of ensuring our food security & investing in the future."
For more info - **https://foiredelibramont.com/ - July 24-27;*

EU MOBILISES AIRCRAFT, FIREFIGHTERS AS LAHBIB VISITS FR WILDFIRE FRONTLINE

The European Union has deployed firefighting aircraft, helicopters & personnel to support France & Spain as both countries battle major wildfires, with Preparedness, Crisis Management & Equality Commissioner Hadja Lahbib visiting south-west France to underline the bloc's solidarity with frontline responders. Lahbib travelled to Gironde, one of the French regions hardest hit by the fires, where she met the local authorities & emergency personnel to thank them for their efforts & observe the response on the ground.

Following France's activation of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, the Commission has coordinated the deployment of eight firefighting aircraft from Croatia, Luxembourg, Portugal, Sweden & Turkey, together with four helicopters from Czechia, Germany & Slovakia. The Commission is also coordinating assistance to Spain, where authorities are battling what it described as the country's largest wildfires on record. Support includes six firefighting aircraft from Greece, Italy & Turkey, one helicopter from Serbia, & 174 emergency personnel & 60 vehicles from Portugal & Serbia. Ahead of the wildfire season, the EU pre-positioned 331 firefighters from Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania & Slovakia in high-risk areas of France & Spain, while it is also providing rapid emergency mapping through the Copernicus satellite service.

Lahbib said the fires had demonstrated the value of European cooperation. "In the midst of these unprecedented wildfires, there are images that will forever remain etched in our minds, such as columns of farmers' trucks heading to Gironde to support firefighters with water supplies," she said. "This human solidarity is exactly what we are doing at the European level." The Commissioner said the bloc had strengthened its preparedness before the fire season. "Since June, nearly 800 firefighters from 14 countries have been stationed in high-risk areas," she reported.

"Across Europe, firefighters are leaving their own homes to protect others. The first face people see when they flee the flames may come from another European country. They may wear different uniforms, speak different languages, but they are fighting the same fire with the same European spirit." "Thanks to our European solidarity mechanism, when France or Spain called, Europe responded with boots on the ground, planes in the air, & even satellites in space mapping the emergency in real time," Lahbib highlighted. Warning that increasingly severe wildfire seasons are linked to climate change, she concluded that "climate change is no longer knocking on Europe's door, it is already inside. The only answer is more unity, more solidarity. More Europe."

BEYOND THE EU

FAO CHIEF CALLS FOR INVESTMENT TO UNLOCK HORTICULTURE'S POTENTIAL

Agriculture needs to focus more on providing diverse & nutritious foods rather than simply producing sufficient quantities of food, FAO Director-General Qu Dongyu said, calling for greater investment & innovation in horticulture. Addressing the International Horticultural Congress 2026 (running from August 23-28) in Kyoto, Qu said fruits, vegetables & other horticultural crops had an important role in healthy diets, biodiversity, climate resilience & livelihoods. "Success can no longer be measured simply by how much food we produce," he stressed. "It must also be measured by whether agriculture provides the foods that healthy societies require, & whether those foods are available, accessible & affordable for everyone."

Horticulture has expanded rapidly, with fruit & vegetable production growing faster than cereals between 2010 & 2024. The sector now accounts for almost one-quarter of global agricultural production value, worth about $1.4 trillion (€1.2tn), according to FAO. Exports grew by around 2.6% annually over the period to reach 175 million tonnes, worth $240 billion (€206bn), in 2024. However, Qu said that economic growth had not translated into healthier diets, identifying productivity, availability & affordability as three interconnected obstacles to realising horticulture's nutritional potential. Horticultural yields have risen by less than 1% annually, lagging behind cereals amid underinvestment in research, genetics & infrastructure. In 2023, only around half of countries produced enough fruit & vegetables to meet the joint FAO/World Health Organization target of 400 grams per person per day. Estimated global average consumption was just 80 grammes of fruit & 190 grammes of vegetables per person per day.

FAO projections indicate that by 2050 fewer than one-third of countries in sub-Saharan Africa will have sufficient fruit & vegetable supplies to meet the FAO/WHO recommendation. Qu said pressure on land & water resources, combined with climate change, meant future increases in production would have to rely increasingly on efficiency. "Future growth must increasingly come from producing more with fewer resources," he said. The FAO chief called for investment in improved seed & planting material, healthier soils, efficient irrigation, mechanisation & digital technologies, alongside extension services, better post-harvest systems & stronger links between farmers & markets. Qu also stressed that producers would have to be central to technological & policy changes. "No innovation, no policy & no investment will succeed without their knowledge, their confidence & their participation. Scientists & researchers' works must be recognized by farmers," he said. Artificial intelligence, genome editing & digital technologies were accelerating breeding & helping to reduce post-harvest losses, Qu said. He cited work by the Joint FAO/IAEA Centre of Nuclear Techniques in Food & Agriculture on mutation breeding, which has contributed to more than 3 450 officially released varieties across more than 70 plant species. Small farms remain particularly important to the sector. Farms of 20 hectares or less produce more than half of global fruit & vegetable output, rising to more than 80% in Asia & sub-Saharan Africa. Qu said innovation therefore needed to be accessible, affordable & capable of adoption by small-scale producers. ***https://www.ihc2026.org/***

COP17 MOBILISES €1.1BN FOR LAND RESTORATION & DROUGHT RESILIENCE

Governments, development banks, funds & companies have assembled a $1.3 billion (€1.1bn) portfolio of finance for land restoration & drought resilience across 23 countries, as the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) COP17 (August 17-28) concluded in Ulaanbaatar in Mongolia. Rangelands were a central focus of the conference, with a $1.2 billion

(€1.0bn) portfolio spanning 45 projects. The UNCCD said rangelands cover 54% of the world's land surface, support around two billion people & are managed by some 500 million pastoralists.

The meeting also advanced measures to strengthen drought resilience, including work on a proposed pooled fund under the Riyadh Global Drought Resilience Partnership intended to support around 70 vulnerable countries. UNCCD & Luxembourg meanwhile launched the Drought Resilience Investment Facility, a global financing platform intended to mobilise up to $400 million (€344m) in public & private capital for investments including water security, sustainable agriculture, nature-based solutions & land restoration.

COP17 took place against a backdrop in which up to 40% of the world's land is degraded, while countries have committed to restoring more than one billion hectares by 2030. More than 70 countries now have national drought plans, compared with three in 2013, but the UNCCD said finance & implementation continued to lag behind the scale of the challenge. The conference also highlighted the implications of land degradation & drought for agriculture, with evidence presented in Ulaanbaatar examining their effects on food & water security & livelihoods & making the case for prevention, sustainable land management & restoration.

Parties agreed to continue negotiations on proactive drought management at COP18, building on work at COP16 & COP17, rather than reaching a final decision in Ulaanbaatar. Drought will remain a stand-alone agenda item at COP18 & subsequent ordinary COP sessions. The gathering also sought to close the gap between land-restoration commitments & available finance. Private finance currently accounts for only around 6% of global investment in land restoration, according to the UNCCD. Of the financing portfolio announced around COP17, $216.4 million (€185.9m) had already been confirmed & was moving towards implementation. Rangelands received particular attention as COP17 was held during the UN International Year of Rangelands & Pastoralists. Parties recognised pastoralists as important stewards of rangeland ecosystems & highlighted transboundary mobility & pastoralists' knowledge & experience. Over the past four years, the Global Environment Facility has approved more than 50 projects worth over $300 million (€258m) benefiting rangelands & pastoralist communities. "We came to Ulaanbaatar saying that COP17 must be a COP of implementation," stressed UNCCD Executive Secretary Yasmine Fouad. "We leave with more of the architecture needed to make that possible - political decisions, stronger science, innovative financing mechanisms, investment pipelines & partnerships that can move solutions to scale." "But Ulaanbaatar will not be judged by what was announced inside this conference," the Egyptian politician added. "Its legacy will be measured by what happens next: whether countries are better prepared for drought, whether degraded land & rangelands are restored, whether finance reaches viable projects, & whether the people who manage the land see a real difference in their lives." ***https://www.unccd.int/cop17**

FAO WARNS SOIL DEGRADATION WORSENING AS UPTAKE OF SOLUTIONS LAGS

Soil degradation is continuing to worsen in many parts of the world, with proven measures to protect & restore soils still not being adopted fast enough, according to a new global assessment from the UN Food & Agriculture Organization (FAO). The 818-page '*Status of the World's Soil Resources 2026*' report*, presented at the UN Convention to Combat Desertification COP17 (August 17-28 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia) includes the FAO's finding that more than half of the regional & subregional assessments reviewed showed low or very low adoption of sustainable soil management practices. Some 58% reported a deterioration in adoption trends since 2015, while only around 10% reported an improvement. The assessment draws on scientific literature published between 2015 & 2025 & expertise from 75 countries. "We have much better evidence today about the pressures facing the world's soils & about the practices that can protect & restore them. But this report makes clear that proven solutions are still not being adopted at the pace & scale required," FAO Deputy Director-General Beth Bechdol said. "The priority now is to give

countries, farmers & other land users the knowledge, capacity & incentives they need to put those solutions into practice," she added.

FAO said soils produce more than 95% of the food consumed globally, while also storing & filtering water, regulating the climate, supporting biodiversity & sustaining livelihoods. Since 2015, the world's population has increased by 800 million while the harvested area of major crops has expanded by 80 million hectares. The report identifies soil erosion as the most severe & interconnected threat to soil health. Across the seven regions assessed, 81% of assessments rated erosion management as poor or very poor, while 65% reported a deteriorating trend since 2015. Officials at the UN agency said nutrient management problems differed significantly between regions, with some facing surpluses caused by excessive inputs while others suffered nutrient depletion that constrained agricultural productivity & food security. Practices already shown to mitigate threats to soils while maintaining or improving agricultural productivity include reduced tillage, integrated nutrient management, crop diversification, cover crops, organic amendments & agroforestry. The main challenge, FAO said, was expanding their adoption sufficiently rapidly. The report calls for stronger soil governance & legal frameworks, greater education & knowledge exchange, improved monitoring using harmonised data & indicators, stronger incentives for sustainable soil management, & more inclusive decision-making. Alongside the assessment, FAO & the UN Convention to Combat Desertification launched the 60-page '*Living Soils, Productive Lands, Resilient Landscapes - Guidance on Avoiding, Reducing & Reversing Agricultural Land & Soil Degradation'**. The guidance underlines the importance of agricultural land to efforts to achieve land degradation neutrality, noting that agricultural landscapes have often been underrepresented in such efforts despite accounting for the majority of human-induced land degradation. It advocates moving away from isolated restoration measures towards integrated management of productive landscapes, with priority given to preventing degradation, reducing existing pressures & restoring land & soils where degradation has already occurred. ***The report is at https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/f7d10741-ba81-4de3-b843-6cf3dbb02def, with the guidance at https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/cf6f3ffa-42a4-4fde-a0b3-4a739d7fbe8b;***

MARKETS

HEAT & DROUGHT SHARPLY CUT EU CROP PRODUCTION PROSPECTS

Persistent heat & a lack of rainfall have damaged summer crops & reduced feed supplies across western & central Europe, with some EU summer crop yield forecasts now as much as 14% below the five-year average, according to the Commission. In the latest *JRC Mars Bulletin**, published on August 24, the Joint Research Centre's experts say that the strongest effects were being reported in FR, southern DE, northern & central IT, AT, CZ, SK, HU & western RO. *MARS refers to 'Monitoring Agricultural Resources'*. Agriculture Commissioner Christophe Hansen commented that "this summer has been particularly difficult for farmers across the EU. Drought & extreme heat are putting crops, fodder, livestock & farmers' incomes under increasing pressure." "We are closely & actively monitoring the developments, gaining insights of the impact directly from the ground," the Luxembourg politician reported. "These events are a reminder that we must prepare for a future in which extreme weather becomes more frequent." "We need to support farmers today while making European agriculture more resilient for tomorrow," Hansen added.

The JRC explained that "persistent heat & exceptional water deficits have substantially worsened summer crop prospects across western & most of central Europe," with the effects including reduced fertility & biomass accumulation, impaired grain filling & accelerated senescence. Impacts ranged from moderate yield reductions to severe losses, with crop failure likely in the worst-affected regions. Grassland productivity & pasture availability have also declined markedly, raising concerns over fodder supplies. The Centre's analysts said that EU yield forecasts for all summer crops had been "sharply reduced," falling below the five-year average by up to 14%. Winter cereals have fared considerably better: with harvesting largely completed, yield prospects for most winter cereals were confirmed at around the five-year average at EU level.

In the worst-affected areas, high temperatures combined with insufficient rainfall strongly affected summer crops, particularly during flowering & yield formation. The JRC said the consequences included "reduced fertility & biomass accumulation, poor grain filling & premature senescence." Limited irrigation water & restrictions on its use further aggravated crop stress in several regions. Conditions previously reported in western FR, northern & central IT, south-western DE, southern CZ, SK, HU & western RO have intensified since the July bulletin. The "yields will be significantly reduced, & crop failure is likely locally in these regions," they said. More moderate effects were reported in the Benelux countries, as well as SI & HR, where hot & dry conditions intensified from late June onwards & affected summer crops during critical development stages. Yield expectations have been reduced, particularly for maize, with locally greater effects where irrigation is unavailable.

In a Commission statement to publicise the report, officials said that fodder supply was becoming a concern across large parts of western & central Europe as persistent heat & drought reduced pasture availability & biomass accumulation. Furthermore, they said the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) could help make farming more resilient to climate change by supporting more resilient & sustainable farming practices. Funding can support investments including efficient irrigation, climate-resilient infrastructure, water-saving technologies & improved water management, as well as a shift towards more climate-resilient crops. The JRC said cooler & wetter conditions forecast across much of western & central Europe could provide some relief, but warned that they would come "too late to compensate for the losses already sustained." **For more see - https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/jrc-news-and-updates/exceptionally-dry-and-hot-weather-threatens-summer-crops-2026-08-24_en;*

FOOD PRICES FIRM ON HIGHER CEREALS, SUGAR, VEGOIL, SAYS FAO

World food commodity prices were 0.6% higher in July than June, according to a report published by the UN Food & Agriculture Organisation (FAO) on August 7. In its regular '*Food Price Index'** the Rome-based organisation said that "increases in the price indices for cereals, sugar & vegetable oils were partially offset by declines in those for meat & dairy products." The index was 1.0% higher than a year ago, but 18.2% down on its March 2022 peak. The biggest month on month rise was for sugar, up 5.6% from a month earlier, although the prices in the sector were still down 8.0% from their level of a year ago. The FAO's experts described the increase as "mainly driven by concerns about the potential impacts of persistent hot & dry weather on crop yields in the European Union & of El Niño-related weather conditions on production prospects in key producing countries in Asia." "Expectations of stronger demand for ethanol in Brazil following a temporary increase in the mandatory ethanol blend in gasoline also provided support to prices," they also pointed out, "as a higher ethanol blending requirement could divert a larger share of sugarcane towards ethanol production & reduce sugar availability." However, the rise had been improved by "improving harvesting conditions in Brazil's key centre-south growing regions," they said.

Prices for cereals were up 3.4% overall from June & 6.9% higher than in July 2025. "Global wheat prices surged by 5.8%, standing 9.9% above their year-earlier level," they highlighted, pointing to "heightened concerns over continued disruptions to Black Sea export flows & damage to export infrastructure, further compounded by the impact of recent heatwaves on crop yields in several key producing countries." A 3.6% hike in maize prices from the previous month was "supported by concerns over hot & dry weather in parts of the (US) corn belt…, & spillover effects from firmer energy markets amid heightened geopolitical tensions," they explained. "International sorghum prices edged higher in line with the increases in (US) maize prices." Barley bucked the trend with a 1.9% fall, "as favourable crop prospects in Australia & the Black Sea region more than offset heat-related yield losses in the (EU)." Rice was broadly steady in July 2026, as a mild increase in Indica quotations was offset by demand-driven price declines for all other major traded rice varieties.

Vegetable oil prices were 2.0% higher in July, at their highest level since June 2022. "The continued increase in the index reflected higher palm & soy oil prices, which more than offset lower sunflower & rapeseed oil quotations," the FAO explained. The second consecutive monthly rise in palm oil was "largely underpinned by firm demand from Indonesia's biodiesel sector & higher crude oil prices, which outweighed downward pressure from seasonally higher production in Southeast Asia," they said. The FAO writers put a rise in soy oil prices down to "persistently robust feedstock demand" in the US & "stronger global import demand amid greater price competitiveness." Falls in sunflower & rapeseed oils reflected "expectations of larger supplies in the 2026/27 season, although renewed tensions in the Black Sea region & concerns over the impact of these tensions on export flows limited further price declines," they said.

There was a 0.7% month on month fall for dairy, bringing prices to 24.8% below their July 2025 level & "extending the decline observed since April," according to the UN agency, which highlighted "lower quotations for butter & milk powders, which more than offset a modest recovery in cheese prices." A "3.3% monthly fall for SMP was down to ample export supplies," in the EU & Oceania, "coupled with more cautious buying following earlier price increases." "SMP remained the only dairy product trading above its July 2025 level," they commented & put a 3.1% monthly drop for WMP down to "subdued import demand, particularly from China, (which) continued to outweigh firm purchases from Southeast Asia & the Near East, with increasing export competition adding downward pressure on quotations." Butter was down by 2.4% "as improving milk fat availability & expanding export supplies eased market tightness, particularly in Europe," while a rise of 1.7% for cheese, its first monthly increase since July 2025," was because "tighter seasonal milk supplies lifted cheese quotations in the European

Union, more than offsetting continuing price declines in Oceania, where cheese prices remained under pressure from ample export supplies & intensified competition from the United States."

Overall meat prices were 2.8% down from June, but 0.8% above July 2025 levels. "This marked the first monthly decline in 2026, reflecting lower quotations across all meat categories except ovine meat," FAO said. A fall for poultry was "largely due to lower quotations in Brazil amid ample export supplies." "Uncertainty over future access to the European Union market, due to the antimicrobial requirements, further fuelled expectations that higher-value products could be redirected to alternative markets, likely intensifying competition & weighing on prices," they noted. A price cut for pigmeat was "driven by abundant supplies in the European Union & subdued global demand, although high summer temperatures limited animal growth rates, providing some price support." Lower bovine meat prices reflected weaker import demand from Asia. "In Australia, export prices softened as shipments to China & the Republic of Korea declined after annual quota allocations had been filled, making subsequent exports subject to higher tariffs," FAO said. "In Brazil, exports slowed as China's beef safeguard quota approached full utilization." Sheep meat rose, "reaching a new record high, supported by persistently tight exportable supplies in Oceania & sustained global import demand," they said.
*https://www.fao.org/worldfoodsituation/foodpricesindex/en/

FAO Chief Economist Torero warns of coming food price inflation: Maximo Torero, the FAO's Chief Economist, has warned that food commodity prices are set to start rising more, feeding before long into food inflation, as geopolitical factors increase producer costs. "I expect that commodity prices will start to increase more now," he told the Reuters news agency in an interview published on August 5, & "food prices will start increasing by the end of the year, & next year for sure they will increase more." "The transmission from the commodity to the final food price is around three to six months," the Peruvian expert added. "The Strait of Hormuz is a problem that affects all the inputs of agricultural commodities, agricultural systems," he stressed, referring to issues with "Brent oil, because it's used for pumping, packaging, processing, & transportation, & natural gas because it's used for fertilisers." "You're hearing this in Europe, in the US, Brazil & in Asia," Torero underlined. "Tight margins are putting stress in planting decisions."

EU AGRI-FOOD TRADE SURPLUS WIDENS IN FIRST HALF AS IMPORTS FALL

EU agri-food trade surplus increased in the first half of 2026 as imports fell more rapidly than exports, according to the European Commission's latest monthly trade report. The 12-page analysis, '*Monitoring EU agri-food trade developments until June 2026'**, shows the cumulative surplus reached €23.9 billion in January-June, €1.4bn higher than in the same period last year, supported in particular by falling cocoa prices. In June alone, EU agri-food exports reached €20.3bn, up 5% from May & 6% from June 2025. Imports totalled €15.7bn, up 1% month on month & 2% year on year, leaving a monthly trade surplus of €4.6bn, 24% higher than in May & 20% above June 2025. For the first six months, cumulative exports amounted to €117.2bn, down 2%, or €2.2bn, from the same period in 2025. The Commission said the decline was mostly due to reduced exports of cocoa, pigmeat & olive oil.

The US recorded the largest fall among EU export destinations, with shipments down €1.7bn, or 11%. The DG AGRI experts said this followed high exports in the opening months of 2025, "with potential frontloading ahead of the announced US tariffs." The main reductions involved drinks, olive oil & cocoa products. The UK remained the EU's largest agri-food export market but shipments fell by €837m, or 3%. Pigmeat exports to the UK were down 13%, cocoa products 44%, cereals 26%, dairy 6% & vegetable preparations 7%. Rape oil export volumes, however, doubled. Exports to Japan fell by €492m, or 12%, driven by lower tobacco prices & reduced pigmeat volumes following the African Swine Fever (ASF) outbreak in Spain in November 2025. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz from March also affected trade, with EU agri-food exports to

the United Arab Emirates falling €395m, or 25%, in the first half. However, the Commission said June exports to the Persian Gulf were "almost back to average levels."

By contrast, exports to Egypt rose by €278m, or 28%, mostly due to higher wheat shipments. Exports to Ukraine increased €247m, or 12%, with spirits recording the largest increase, while shipments to India rose €174m, or 26%, mostly due to sunflower oil. By product, coffee, tea, cocoa & spices recorded the largest decline in export value, falling €1.1 bn, or 16%. This was mainly due to cocoa paste, butter & powder, for which volumes fell 13% & prices 28%. Pigmeat exports fell €773m, or 12%, mostly because of lower prices as well as reduced volumes to China, Japan, the Philippines & UK. Olive & olive oil exports dropped €432m, or 13%, as olive oil prices fell 6% & volumes 7%. Spirits & liqueurs provided the largest increase, rising €405m, or 10%, while fruit & nut exports increased €284m, or 8%, & vegetable oil exports rose €249m, or 21%.

On the import side, the EU bought €93.4bn of agri-food products in January-June, down €3.6bn, or 4%, from a year earlier. The Commission attributed much of the decline to reduced imports of cocoa products, cereals & soya cake. Falling cocoa prices were the main factor. Imports from Côte d'Ivoire fell €942m, or 19%, Nigeria €567m, or 46%, Cameroon €536m, or 43%, & Guinea €250m, or 94%. Imports from Canada fell €473m, or 20%, primarily because of lower maize volumes & lower wheat volumes & prices. Brazil moved in the opposite direction, with EU imports rising €425m, or 5%, mostly because of increased soy bean purchases. Imports from Argentina grew €281m, or 11%, due to higher sunflower seed imports, while those from Guatemala increased €194m, or 37%, mainly on larger palm oil & coffee volumes.

Imports of coffee, tea, cocoa & spices fell €3.6bn, or 17%, with lower cocoa prices alone reducing import value by €3.0bn. Cereal imports fell €715m, or 15%, including a €449m, or 35%, reduction for wheat, while oilseed & protein crop imports declined €345m, or 3%. In contrast, fruit & nuts recorded the largest increase in import value, rising €503m, or 3%. Beef & veal imports increased €327m, or 23%, while poultry & egg imports rose €207m, or 13%. The resulting improvement in the EU trade balance was particularly pronounced for coffee, tea, cocoa & spices, where the deficit narrowed by €2.45bn. The cereals balance improved by €728m, while the pigmeat surplus fell €775m & the olive & olive oil surplus declined €603m.
***https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/document/download/bbd2055c-f5df-480f-a007-73f9fb4b5db7_en?filename=monitoring-agri-food-trade_aug2026_en.pdf**

EU AGRI-FOOD TRADE SURPLUS WIDENS AS COCOA PRICES DRIVE IMPORTS LOWER

The European Union's agri-food trade surplus widened during the first five months of 2026 as falling cocoa prices & lower import values more than offset a decline in exports, the Commission's monthly trade report until May shows. In the ten-page report, '*Monitoring EU agri-food trade developments until May 2026'**, DG AGRI says that the EU generated a cumulative agri-food trade surplus of €19.4 billion between January & May, €1.1 billion higher than a year earlier. While exports fell by 3% year on year to €96.9 billion, imports declined by a steeper 5% to €77.5 billion, largely reflecting sharply lower cocoa prices.

In May alone, EU agri-food exports totalled €19.3 billion, down 5% from April & 4% below the level recorded in May 2025. Imports reached €15.4 billion, 7% lower than the previous month & 10% below a year earlier. The monthly trade surplus edged up 1% to €3.9 billion, 31% higher than in May 2025.

The United Kingdom remained the EU's largest export destination, although exports during January-May fell by €782 million, or 3%, compared with the same period of 2025. The decline was mainly due to lower pigmeat exports, falling cocoa product prices, reduced cereal shipments & weaker dairy prices, although rape oil export volumes almost tripled. Exports to the United States, the EU's second-largest export market, fell by €1.6 billion, or 13%. The Commission

attributes this largely to exceptionally strong exports during the first months of 2025, when shipments were potentially brought forward ahead of announced US tariffs. Drinks, olive oil & cocoa products accounted for much of the decline. Other notable export declines included Japan, down €460 million or 13%, largely due to lower pigmeat volumes following Spain's African Swine Fever outbreak, & the United Arab Emirates, where exports fell €371 million, or 28%, after the closure of the Strait of Hormuz in March disrupted trade with Gulf countries. By contrast, exports to Egypt rose by €289 million, or 36%, driven mainly by wheat shipments, while exports to Ukraine increased by €187 million, or 11%, led by spirits.

By product, coffee, tea, cocoa & spices recorded the largest fall in export value, down €981 million, or 17%, reflecting lower prices & volumes for cocoa paste, butter & powder. Pigmeat exports declined by €688 million, or 13%, while olives & olive oil fell by €424 million, or 15%. Wine & wine-based products were down €359 million, or 5%. The strongest increase came from fruit & nuts, up €223 million, or 8%, mainly due to higher exports of apples, kiwis & raspberries.

On the import side, lower cocoa prices reduced purchases from several West African suppliers. Imports from Côte d'Ivoire fell by €788 million, or 18%, Nigeria by €507 million, or 48%, Cameroon by €450 million, or 42%, & Guinea by €224 million, or 95%. Imports from the United States declined by €433 million, or 7%, mainly because of sharply lower soybean & tobacco imports, while imports from the United Kingdom fell by €400 million, or 6%. Argentina & Vietnam bucked the trend, with imports rising by €220 million & €213 million respectively, driven by sunflower seeds & coffee. Among product categories, imports of coffee, tea, cocoa & spices showed the largest decline, falling by €2.9 billion, or 16%, mainly because cocoa product prices dropped by 24%. Cereal imports fell by €801 million, or 19%, largely through lower wheat volumes, while oilseeds & protein crops declined by €536 million, or 6%. In contrast, fruit & nut imports increased by €465 million, or 4%, beef & veal imports rose by €330 million, or 28%, reflecting tight EU supplies & high prices, & imports of margarine & other vegetable oils increased by €176 million, or 9%. **Click **here** for more;*

IGC CUTS GRAIN CROP FORECAST AS EUROPEAN HEAT, BLACK SEA DISRUPTION BITE

"Due to sustained heat, outlooks have deteriorated further in Europe," the IGC said. The intergovernmental organisation also highlighted disruption to Black Sea grain shipments amid increased security risks, saying deep-sea exports from Russia through Novorossiysk & from Ukraine were "effectively at a standstill." Shipping suspensions have mainly affected wheat, with the IGC estimating that exports from Russia & Ukraine since hostilities intensified in mid-July were around 4m tonnes below normal. It said the effect on markets had so far been relatively limited, partly because of subdued nearby import demand, "but with much depending on the length & severity of the disruptions."

The London-based Council raised its forecast for world grains trade by a million tonnes from July to 451m tonnes, mainly because of increased EU maize import requirements. Nevertheless, trade is expected to be 3% lower year-on-year, mainly because of reduced shipments to Near East Asia & North Africa. Wheat production is forecast at 817m tonnes in 2026/27, compared with 844m tonnes in 2025/26, while wheat stocks are put at 275m tonnes. Maize production is forecast at 1.305bn tonnes, against 1.346bn tonnes in the previous season, with stocks falling to 293m tonnes. The deterioration in grain supply prospects & geopolitical risks was also reflected in prices, with the international body reporting a 3% rise overall, "recently touching a more than two-year high, with net increases across all constituent components."

The wheat component of the IGC Grains & Oilseeds Index was 2% higher than in mid-July. Russian fob values were assessed lower amid a depreciating rouble & rising freight cost, while prices at competing origins were mostly firmer. The maize sub-index increased by 3%, supported by a tightening US stocks outlook & continuing disruption to Ukrainian shipments. For soybeans, the Council maintained its forecast for 2026/27 global production at a record 441m tonnes, 2%

higher year-on-year. World trade is forecast to reach a record 190m tonnes, also up 2%, supported particularly by increasing Asian feed demand. The IGC said recent Chinese buying had "entrenched expectations for a moderate recovery of US shipments."

World rice production is meanwhile forecast to decline by 1% in 2026/27, to 541 million tonnes. "Growing food demand will likely underpin expanded global uptake &, as such, stocks could contract for the first time in four years, including a drawdown in Indian inventories," the IGC said. "Assuming solid demand from African importers, trade in 2027 (January/December) could reach a peak." ***https://www.igc.int/en/gmr_summary.aspx***

EU ICE CREAM PRODUCTION RISES 1.9% IN 2025, FRANCE LARGEST EXPORTER

EU ice cream production increased by 1.9% last year, with the greatest growth in Italy, while France remained the bloc's largest exporter to countries outside the EU, according to figures released by Eurostat on August 19. EU countries produced 3.44 billion litres of ice cream in 2025, up from 3.38 billion litres in 2024. Germany remained the EU's largest producer, with output of 608 million litres, followed by Italy with 549m litres & France with 525m litres. Meanwhile, Spain produced 457m litres & Belgium 274m litres. Production increased in all five of the leading producing countries. Italy recorded the largest rise, at 10%, followed by Belgium at 6%, France at 4% & Spain at 2%. German production was virtually unchanged, increasing by 0.2%. EU countries also increased their trade in ice cream with the rest of the world. Extra-EU exports reached 289.8m kg in 2025, while imports totalled 77.8m kg. Exports were 10% higher than in 2024, an increase of 26m kg, while imports rose by 12%, or 8.5m kg.

France remained the EU's biggest ice cream exporter, shipping 59.1m kg to non-EU countries. This accounted for 20% of total extra-EU ice cream exports. Italy was the second-largest exporter, with 55.2m kg, or 19% of the EU total, followed by Belgium with 34.5m kg, or 12%. Germany exported 29.9m kg, accounting for 10%, & the Netherlands 26.5m kg, or 9%. Eurostat said the production ranking was based on available non-confidential data. Production quantities are confidential for HU, NL, PL, PT, RO, SI & SE, while CY, LU & MT are exempt from providing production data because of the size of their economies.
https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/main/home

EU BEER EXPORTS FALL 11% IN 2025 TO 3.2BN LITRES

EU beer exports to countries outside the bloc fell by 11% last year, while imports increased by 6%, according to figures released by Eurostat. The EU exported 3.2 billion litres of beer containing alcohol to non-EU countries in 2025, down 11% compared with 2024. Imports from outside the EU totalled 0.5bn litres, an increase of 6%. Belgium was the EU's largest beer exporter when both intra-EU & extra-EU trade were included, exporting 1.5bn litres in 2025. The Netherlands ranked second, with exports of 1.4bn litres, followed by Germany with 1.3bn litres. Czechia & Ireland each exported 0.6bn litres. France, meanwhile, was the EU's largest importer of beer containing alcohol, importing 0.9bn litres during the year. Italy imported more than 0.7bn litres, while Germany & Spain each imported 0.6bn litres. The Netherlands was the fifth-largest importer among the countries highlighted by Eurostat, with 0.3bn litres. The figures were published by Eurostat on August 7 to mark International Beer Day, which is celebrated on the first Friday of August. ***https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/main/home***

AGRA FACTS DOCUMENTATION

August 2026

The following pages provide a chronological summary of the past month's events, as detailed by **AGRA FACTS**, the rapid-response fax service for agribusiness executives, direct from Brussels.

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The latest EU agriculture, environment & trade news

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HEAT & DROUGHT SHARPLY CUT EU CROP PRODUCTION PROSPECTS

Persistent heat & a lack of rainfall have damaged Summer crops & reduced feed supplies across western & central Europe, with some EU Summer crop yield forecasts now as much as 14% below the five-year average, according to the Commission. In the latest JRC Mars Bulletin*, published on Aug 24, the Joint Research Centre's experts say that the strongest effects were being reported in FR, southern DE, northern & central IT, AT, CZ, SK, HU & western RO. *MARS refers to 'Monitoring Agricultural Resources'.*

Agriculture Commissioner Christophe Hansen commented that "this Summer has been particularly difficult for farmers across the EU. Drought & extreme heat are putting crops, fodder, livestock, & farmers' incomes under increasing pressure." "We are closely & actively monitoring the developments, gaining insights of the impact directly from the ground," the Luxembourg politician reported. "These events are a reminder that we must prepare for a future in which extreme weather becomes more frequent." "We need to support farmers today while making European agriculture more resilient for tomorrow," Hansen added.

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COMMISSION SETS OUT MEASURES TO HELP FARMS ADAPT TO WORSENING HEATWAVES

The Commission has set out short & longer-term measures farmers can take to protect crops & livestock from increasingly severe heatwaves, ranging from more efficient irrigation & changes in crop choice to lower livestock densities & investment in climate-resilient farm buildings.

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In a new page* launched on the Commission's Agriculture & Rural Development website on Aug 27, it says that climate extremes, including heatwaves & droughts, are becoming more frequent & severe across Europe, requiring heat-stress adaptation to be planned in advance at both farm & landscape level. It says temperatures in many European countries were between 5°C & 12°C above seasonal averages in July 2026, disrupting agricultural activities. EU crop losses caused by drought & heatwaves have tripled over the past 50 years.

Heat stress can reduce crop fertility, accelerate grain ripening & increase water requirements, while high temperatures affect livestock grazing periods, reduce feed intake & efficiency & increase water consumption. Under extreme conditions, heat stress can also substantially increase animal mortality, the Commission says. For crops, immediate measures include multifunctional nets, kaolin-based leaf applications, late or reduced pruning & the use of greenhouses or foil covers. Irrigation is identified as a key means of limiting the effects of extreme heat & declining soil moisture, although the Commission says efficient systems & sustainable water management should be prioritised because irrigation can increase pressure on scarce water resources.

Over the medium & longer term, farmers could select crops & varieties whose growing cycles reduce exposure to extreme heat, including early-maturing Winter & Spring crop varieties. The Commission also points to diversification towards more heat-tolerant crops, specifically citing the replacement of maize by sorghum, & to resilient systems including organic farming & agroecology.

Water measures include investment in storage infrastructure, natural water-retention measures, greater reuse of treated water for irrigation & circular water-management systems. The Commission also advocates improving soil health & water-storage capacity through reduced tillage, permanent soil cover, increased organic matter & measures to prevent soil compaction. For livestock, immediate measures include ensuring permanent access to fresh water, providing shade, moving feeding to cooler periods of the day & adjusting diets. Farmers can also reduce indoor stocking densities where possible & increase monitoring for early signs of heat stress. Longer-term measures include climate-resilient livestock buildings with monitoring & water- & energy-efficient cooling systems, precision livestock technologies, on-farm water storage & reuse, & agroforestry & agro-sylvo-pastoral systems, which combine forestry & livestock, providing shade. The Commission also suggests breeding & genetic-selection programmes, which conserve locally adapted livestock breeds, while incorporating heat tolerance & climate resilience alongside productivity & animal-health objectives.

In the new webpage, it highlights how the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) can finance or encourage some of these measures, using HU, CY & EL as examples of interventions already included in national CAP Strategic Plans. HU's plan includes a dairy cattle welfare intervention supporting lower stocking densities, preventive animal-health measures, improved nutrition & health monitoring & access to grazing where possible. Farmers adopting the higher standards receive compensation for additional costs & income foregone. The Commission says the measures also improve dairy herds' resilience to heat stress.

In CY, CAP animal-welfare interventions for pigs & dairy cows support measures including lower stocking densities, improved ventilation & air quality, monitoring of water supplies, balanced nutrition & enhanced health surveillance. EL is using an eco-scheme promoting resilient & adapted crop species & varieties. It encourages winter cereals & legumes as alternatives to more water-intensive crops including maize, alfalfa & cotton, as well as climate-resilient & innovative crops such as aromatic & medicinal plants. The Commission says the Winter crops rely mainly on rainfall & have lower water & nutrient requirements, reducing irrigation needs & increasing resilience to drought.

https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/cap-my-country/sustainability/environmental-sustainability/heatwaves-impacts-agriculture_en;

MEPS TO EXAMINE EU FOOD & FEED SAFETY SIMPLIFICATION PACKAGE

European Parliament (EP) agriculture & environment lawmakers will meet jointly next week to examine proposed changes to a wide range of EU food & feed safety rules, with a dedicated hearing bringing scientists, farmers & regulatory experts into the debate.

The Agriculture & Rural Development (AGRI) & Environment, Climate & Food Safety (ENVI) Committees will hold the joint meeting on next Wednesday (Sept 2), from 15:00 to 18:30 in Brussels. The session will combine a 2½-hour public hearing on *'Simplifying EU rules on Food & Feed Safety'* with consideration of amendments to the Commission's Food & Feed Safety Omnibus proposals.

The hearing, running from 15:00 to 17:30, will be divided into two panels examining the scientific basis for the changes & the practical experience of applying EU food & feed legislation. It will be opened by AGRI Chair Veronika Vrecionová (ECR, CZ) & ENVI Chair Pierfrancesco Maran (S&D, IT).

The first panel, on *'Scientific Challenges & Opportunities of the Food & Feed Omnibus',* will hear Anne-Kathrin Mahlein, Director of the Institute of Sugar Beet Research in Göttingen; Milvia Miccolis, Associate Professor in the Plant Pathology Section at the University of Bari; & Martina Vijver, Professor & Scientific Director at Leiden University's Institute of Environmental Sciences. Their presentations will be followed by questions from MEPs.

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A second panel will put greater emphasis on how EU food & feed legislation operates in agriculture. Entitled *'Implementing the EU Food & Feed Regulatory Framework: Practical Experience & Challenges on the Ground',* it will hear Cédric Benoist, Chair of Copa-Cogeca's Cereals Working Party; Pavel Minář, Director of the Department of Plant Protection Products at the Czech Central Institute for Supervising & Testing in Agriculture; & Robert Wiedmer, Director of the South Tyrolean Extension Service for Fruit- & Winegrowing. The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) will give remarks following the two panels, followed by the European Commission, before Vrecionová & Maran close the hearing.

The hearing will be followed by the legislative part of the joint AGRI-ENVI meeting, with MEPs due to consider amendments to the two parts of the Commission's simplification & strengthening package.

One proposal would amend the EU's rules on the protection of animals kept for farming purposes & the sustainable use of pesticides, while repealing two older directives. The second proposal covers a much broader range of food, feed & agricultural legislation, including rules on transmissible spongiform encephalopathies, genetically modified food & feed, feed additives, food hygiene, hygiene rules for food of animal origin, pesticide maximum residue levels, animal slaughter, plant protection products, biocidal products & official controls. Both files are being handled jointly by AGRI & ENVI, with Michele Picaro (ECR, IT) & Herbert Dorfmann (EPP, IT) serving as co-rapporteurs. Euro-deputies will consider amendments to both proposals at Wednesday's meeting.

The food & feed session forms a distinct joint AGRI-ENVI section of a wider series of ENVI meetings on Sept 1-2. Other ENVI business includes the 2027 EU budget, the Irish Council Presidency's programme, implementation of the Nature Restoration Law & the EU response to the Summer wildfires, while a separate joint ENVI-SANT meeting on Wednesday morning will consider biotechnology legislation.

For AGRI MEPs it is part of a two day, Sept 2-3, meeting, during which they will consider amendments to reports on the CAP for 2028-34, changes to the Common Market Organisation (CMO) Regulation, & strengthening competitiveness, resilience & fairness in EU agriculture. The joint hearing on simplifying EU food & feed safety rules starts at 15:00, followed at around 17:30 by consideration of amendments to the proposed regulation & directive on simplification & strengthening of food & feed safety requirements.

On Sept 3, DG AGRI Director-General Elisabeth Werner will present the state of play of CAP implementation, based on the annual performance reports of Member States on the implementation of their National Strategic Plans (NSPs) (2023-2024). The following discussion with AGRI members will offer the opportunity for a comprehensive assessment of Member States' progress on result indicators, based on the Common Monitoring & Performance Framework (CMPF).

EU AGRI-FOOD TRADE SURPLUS WIDENS IN FIRST HALF AS IMPORTS FALL

EU agri-food trade surplus increased in the first half of 2026 as imports fell more rapidly than exports, according to the European Commission's latest monthly trade report. The 12-page analysis, *'Monitoring EU agri-food trade developments until June 2026'*,* shows the cumulative surplus reached €23.9 billion in Jan-June, €1.4bn higher than in the same period last year, supported in particular by falling cocoa prices.

In June alone, EU agri-food exports reached €20.3bn, up 5% from May & 6% from June 2025. Imports totalled €15.7bn, up 1% month on month & 2% year on year, leaving a monthly trade surplus of €4.6bn, 24% higher than in May & 20% above June 2025. For the first six months, cumulative exports amounted to €117.2bn, down 2%, or €2.2bn, from the same period in 2025. The Commission said the decline was mostly due to reduced exports of cocoa, pigmeat & olive oil.

The US recorded the largest fall among EU export destinations, with shipments down €1.7bn, or 11%. The DG AGRI experts said this followed high exports in the opening months of 2025, "with potential frontloading ahead of the announced US tariffs." The main reductions involved drinks, olive oil & cocoa products. The UK remained the EU's largest agri-food export market but shipments fell by €837m, or 3%. Pigmeat exports to the UK were down 13%, cocoa products 44%, cereals 26%, dairy 6% & vegetable preparations 7%. Rape oil export volumes, however, doubled. Exports to Japan fell by €492m, or 12%, driven by lower tobacco prices & reduced pigmeat volumes following the African Swine Fever (ASF) outbreak in Spain in Nov 2025. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz from March also affected trade, with EU agri-food exports to the United Arab Emirates falling €395m, or 25%, in the first half. However, the Commission said June exports to the Persian Gulf were "almost back to average levels."

By contrast, exports to Egypt rose by €278m, or 28%, mostly due to higher wheat shipments. Exports to Ukraine increased €247m, or 12%, with spirits recording the largest increase, while shipments to India rose €174m, or 26%, mostly due to sunflower oil. By product, coffee, tea, cocoa & spices recorded the largest decline in export value, falling €1.1 bn, or 16%. This was mainly due to cocoa paste, butter & powder, for which volumes fell 13% & prices 28%.

Pigmeat exports fell €773m, or 12%, mostly because of lower prices as well as reduced volumes to China, Japan, the Philippines & UK. Olive & olive oil exports dropped €432m, or 13%, as olive oil prices fell 6% & volumes 7%. Spirits & liqueurs provided the largest increase, rising €405m, or 10%, while fruit & nut exports increased €284m, or 8%, & vegetable oil exports rose €249m, or 21%.

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On the import side, the EU bought €93.4bn of agri-food products in Jan-June, down €3.6bn, or 4%, from a year earlier. The Commission attributed much of the decline to reduced imports of cocoa products, cereals & soya cake. Falling cocoa prices were the main factor. Imports from Côte d'Ivoire fell €942m, or 19%, Nigeria €567m, or 46%, Cameroon €536m, or 43%, & Guinea €250m, or 94%. Imports from Canada fell €473m, or 20%, primarily because of lower maize volumes & lower wheat volumes & prices. Brazil moved in the opposite direction, with EU imports rising €425m, or 5%, mostly because of increased soy bean purchases. Imports from Argentina grew €281m, or 11%, due to higher sunflower seed imports, while those from Guatemala increased €194m, or 37%, mainly on larger palm oil & coffee volumes.

Imports of coffee, tea, cocoa & spices fell €3.6bn, or 17%, with lower cocoa prices alone reducing import value by €3.0bn. Cereal imports fell €715m, or 15%, including a €449m, or 35%, reduction for wheat, while oilseed & protein crop imports declined €345m, or 3%. In contrast, fruit & nuts recorded the largest increase in import value, rising €503m, or 3%. Beef & veal imports increased €327m, or 23%, while poultry & egg imports rose €207m, or 13%. The resulting improvement in the EU trade balance was particularly pronounced for coffee, tea, cocoa & spices, where the deficit narrowed by €2.45bn. The cereals balance improved by €728m, while the pigmeat surplus fell €775m & the olive & olive oil surplus declined €603m.
https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/document/download/bbd2055c-f5df-480f-a007-73f9fb4b5db7_en?filename=monitoring-agri-food-trade_aug2026_en.pdf

FAO CHIEF CALLS FOR INVESTMENT TO UNLOCK HORTICULTURE'S POTENTIAL

Agriculture needs to focus more on providing diverse & nutritious foods rather than simply producing sufficient quantities of food, FAO Director-General Qu Dongyu said, calling for greater investment & innovation in horticulture.

Addressing the International Horticultural Congress 2026 (running from Aug 23-28) in Kyoto last week (Aug 24), Qu said fruits, vegetables & other horticultural crops had an important role in healthy diets, biodiversity, climate resilience & livelihoods. "Success can no longer be measured simply by how much food we produce," he stressed. "It must also be measured by whether agriculture provides the foods that healthy societies require, & whether those foods are available, accessible & affordable for everyone."

Horticulture has expanded rapidly, with fruit & vegetable production growing faster than cereals between 2010 & 2024. The sector now accounts for almost one-quarter of global agricultural production value, worth about $1.4 trillion (€1.2tn), according to FAO. Exports grew by around 2.6% annually over the period to reach 175 million tonnes, worth $240 billion (€206bn), in 2024.

However, Qu said that economic growth had not translated into healthier diets, identifying productivity, availability & affordability as three interconnected obstacles to realising horticulture's nutritional potential. Horticultural yields have risen by less than 1% annually, lagging behind cereals amid underinvestment in research, genetics & infrastructure. In 2023, only around half of countries produced enough fruit & vegetables to meet the joint FAO/World Health Organization target of 400 grams per person per day. Estimated global average consumption was just 80 grammes of fruit & 190 grammes of vegetables per person per day.

FAO projections indicate that by 2050 fewer than one-third of countries in sub-Saharan Africa will have sufficient fruit & vegetable supplies to meet the FAO/WHO recommendation. Qu said pressure on land & water resources, combined with climate change, meant future increases in production would have to rely increasingly on efficiency. "Future growth must increasingly come from producing more with fewer resources," he said. The FAO chief called for investment in improved seed & planting material, healthier soils, efficient irrigation, mechanisation & digital technologies, alongside extension services, better post-harvest systems & stronger links between farmers & markets. Qu also stressed that producers would have to be central to technological & policy changes. "No innovation, no policy & no investment will succeed without their knowledge, their confidence & their participation. Scientists & researchers' works must be recognized by farmers," he said. Artificial intelligence, genome editing & digital technologies were accelerating breeding & helping to reduce post-harvest losses, Qu said. He cited work by the Joint FAO/IAEA Centre of Nuclear Techniques in Food & Agriculture on mutation breeding, which has contributed to more than 3,450 officially released varieties across more than 70 plant species. Small farms remain particularly important to the sector. Farms of 20 hectares or less produce more than half of global fruit & vegetable output, rising to more than 80% in Asia & sub-Saharan Africa. Qu said innovation therefore needed to be accessible, affordable & capable of adoption by small-scale producers. ***https://www.ihc2026.org/***

COP17 MOBILISES €1.1BN FOR LAND RESTORATION & DROUGHT RESILIENCE

Governments, development banks, funds & companies have assembled a $1.3 billion (€1.1bn) portfolio of finance for land restoration & drought resilience across 23 countries, as the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) COP17 (Aug 17-28) concluded in Ulaanbaatar in Mongolia on Friday (Aug 28).

Rangelands were a central focus of the conference, with a $1.2 billion (€1.0bn) portfolio spanning 45 projects. The UNCCD said rangelands cover 54% of the world's land surface, support around two billion people & are managed by some 500 million pastoralists.

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The meeting also advanced measures to strengthen drought resilience, including work on a proposed pooled fund under the Riyadh Global Drought Resilience Partnership intended to support around 70 vulnerable countries. UNCCD & Luxembourg meanwhile launched the Drought Resilience Investment Facility, a global financing platform intended to mobilise up to $400 million (€344m) in public & private capital for investments including water security, sustainable agriculture, nature-based solutions & land restoration.

COP17 took place against a backdrop in which up to 40% of the world's land is degraded, while countries have committed to restoring more than one billion hectares by 2030. More than 70 countries now have national drought plans, compared with three in 2013, but the UNCCD said finance & implementation continued to lag behind the scale of the challenge. The conference also highlighted the implications of land degradation & drought for agriculture, with evidence presented in Ulaanbaatar examining their effects on food & water security & livelihoods & making the case for prevention, sustainable land management & restoration.

Parties agreed to continue negotiations on proactive drought management at COP18, building on work at COP16 & COP17, rather than reaching a final decision in Ulaanbaatar. Drought will remain a stand-alone agenda item at COP18 & subsequent ordinary COP sessions. The gathering also sought to close the gap between land-restoration commitments & available finance. Private finance currently accounts for only around 6% of global investment in land restoration, according to the UNCCD. Of the financing portfolio announced around COP17, $216.4 million (€185.9m) had already been confirmed & was moving towards implementation. Rangelands received particular attention as COP17 was held during the UN International Year of Rangelands & Pastoralists. Parties recognised pastoralists as important stewards of rangeland ecosystems & highlighted transboundary mobility & pastoralists' knowledge & experience. Over the past four years, the Global Environment Facility has approved more than 50 projects worth over $300 million (€258m) benefiting rangelands & pastoralist communities. "We came to Ulaanbaatar saying that COP17 must be a COP of implementation," stressed UNCCD Executive Secretary Yasmine Fouad. "We leave with more of the architecture needed to make that possible - political decisions, stronger science, innovative financing mechanisms, investment pipelines & partnerships that can move solutions to scale." "But Ulaanbaatar will not be judged by what was announced inside this conference," the Egyptian politician added. "Its legacy will be measured by what happens next: whether countries are better prepared for drought, whether degraded land & rangelands are restored, whether finance reaches viable projects, & whether the people who manage the land see a real difference in their lives." ***https://www.unccd.int/cop17***

FAO WARNS SOIL DEGRADATION WORSENING AS UPTAKE OF SOLUTIONS LAGS

Soil degradation is continuing to worsen in many parts of the world, with proven measures to protect & restore soils still not being adopted fast enough, according to a new global assessment from the UN Food & Agriculture Organization (FAO). The 818-page *'Status of the World's Soil Resources 2026' report**, presented at the UN Convention to Combat Desertification COP17 (Aug 17-28 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia) includes the FAO's finding that more than half of the regional & subregional assessments reviewed showed low or very low adoption of sustainable soil management practices. Some 58% reported a deterioration in adoption trends since 2015, while only around 10% reported an improvement. The assessment draws on scientific literature published between 2015 & 2025 & expertise from 75 countries. "We have much better evidence today about the pressures facing the world's soils & about the practices that can protect & restore them. But this report makes clear that proven solutions are still not being adopted at the pace & scale required," FAO Deputy Director-General Beth Bechdol said. "The priority now is to give countries, farmers & other land users the knowledge, capacity & incentives they need to put those solutions into practice," she added.

FAO said soils produce more than 95% of the food consumed globally, while also storing & filtering water, regulating the climate, supporting biodiversity & sustaining livelihoods. Since 2015, the world's population has increased by 800 million while the harvested area of major crops has expanded by 80 million hectares. The report identifies soil erosion as the most severe & interconnected threat to soil health. Across the seven regions assessed, 81% of assessments rated erosion management as poor or very poor, while 65% reported a deteriorating trend since 2015. Officials at the UN agency said nutrient management problems differed significantly between regions, with some facing surpluses caused by excessive inputs while others suffered nutrient depletion that constrained agricultural productivity & food security. Practices already shown to mitigate threats to soils while maintaining or improving agricultural productivity include reduced tillage, integrated nutrient management, crop diversification, cover crops, organic amendments & agroforestry. The main challenge, FAO said, was expanding their adoption sufficiently rapidly. The report calls for stronger soil governance & legal frameworks, greater education & knowledge exchange, improved monitoring using harmonised data & indicators, stronger incentives for sustainable soil management, & more inclusive decision-making. Alongside the assessment, FAO & the UN Convention to Combat Desertification launched the 60-page *'Living Soils, Productive Lands, Resilient Landscapes - Guidance on Avoiding, Reducing & Reversing Agricultural Land & Soil Degradation'**. The guidance underlines the importance of agricultural land to efforts to achieve land degradation neutrality, noting that agricultural landscapes have often been underrepresented in such efforts despite accounting for the majority of human-induced land degradation.

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It advocates moving away from isolated restoration measures towards integrated management of productive landscapes, with priority given to preventing degradation, reducing existing pressures & restoring land & soils where degradation has already occurred. **The report is at **https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/f7d10741-ba81-4de3-b843-6cf3dbb02def**, with the guidance at **https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/cf6f3ffa-42a4-4fde-a0b3-4a739d7fbe8b**;*

IN BRIEF: AnimalhealthEurope expands secretariat: Arla profit rises;

AnimalhealthEurope expands secretariat: AnimalhealthEurope has appointed Alexis Schütz as Public Affairs Officer & Eglė Rapaliutė as Technical Manager, expanding the organisation's secretariat to 10 people, it announced on Aug 24. Belgian Schütz moves into the public affairs role after completing a six-month internship supporting European Livestock Voice (ELV), an informal stakeholder platform. He has a background in political communications & psychology & previously helped coordinate a campaign across French-speaking Belgium around the 2024 European Parliament elections. His previous experience also includes an internship in the European Parliament with a Belgian MEP.

Lithuanian Rapaliutė, a trained veterinarian, joins AnimalhealthEurope's technical team with experience working with both companion animals & dairy cattle. She has several years' experience in clinical research, research & development & animal health, including two years as a Veterinary Epidemiology Resident at the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences. Her most recent research has focused on animal husbandry, sustainability & greenhouse gas mitigation. AnimalhealthEurope said the two appointments strengthened both its technical & public affairs teams. Under the watchful eye of Secretary General Roxane Feller, the Brussels-based organisation represents 14 leading European manufacturers of animal medicines & 16 national associations in 19 countries, which it says together cover 90% of the European market.

Arla profit rises: Arla Foods increased first-half net profit to €213 million from €158 million a year earlier as branded sales recovered & demand for dairy protein strengthened, despite abundant European milk supplies pushing down prices paid to farmers, the farmer-owned group announced on Aug 27. Group revenue reached €7.6 billion in the first half of 2026, compared with €7.5 billion a year earlier, while strategic branded volume-driven revenue growth, excluding the impact of Arla's merger with DMK, rose to 6.7% from a 1.5% decline in the first half of 2025.

"We have entered 2026 in formidable shape. Demand for nutritious dairy is healthy across the world, our brands have more than recovered, & consumers are responding to better value with real enthusiasm," Arla CEO Peder Tuborgh said. "This is the cooperative performing at its best, turning strong consumer demand into real growth for our brands," he added.

The Arla brand recorded volume-driven revenue growth of 6.5%, while Castello grew 4.0%, Lurpak 5.2%, Puck 9.9% & Starbucks chilled coffee 8.0%. Arla Skyr grew 39.6% & Arla Protein 34.4%. Arla Foods Ingredients increased revenue by 19.3% to €867 million, driven mainly by higher whey protein prices & continued strong demand for whey-based ingredients linked to health & nutrition trends, including GLP-1 diets. *GLP-1 (glucagon-like peptide-1) diets are eating patterns associated with the use of GLP-1 weight-loss drugs, such as semaglutide (Wegovy & Ozempic) & tirzepatide (Mounjaro), which reduce appetite & food intake, often increasing demand for high-protein foods to help maintain muscle mass.* The stronger consumer business contrasted with pressure on milk prices as high European production weighed on global dairy commodity markets. Arla said its own milk intake also increased strongly, while cost inflation, partly driven by the Middle East crisis, was higher than expected.

Arla's performance price consequently fell to 43.6 euro cents/kg from 57.5 cents/kg in the first half of 2025, while its pre-paid milk price fell to 40.7 cents/kg. Milk volumes, including non-owner milk, increased to 7.9 billion kg from 7.2 billion kg. "This is the market doing what it should. High milk availability has brought prices down across the sector, & that is the reality our owners are navigating right now, but a lower milk price does not mean a weaker cooperative," Tuborgh said. "Our brands are growing, our business is efficient, & we remain highly competitive. That is what gives me confidence that Arla remains a strong & reliable home for our owners' milk," he added.

The results allowed Arla's board to approve a supplementary half-year payment of one euro cent/kg of milk delivered to its farmer owners. The cooperative also reported €63 million in net efficiencies under its Fund our Future programme. Arla invested €322 million across its markets during the half year & separately decided on an approximately €300 million new cheese dairy at Götene in Sweden, the largest single investment in its history. The plant will roughly double the site's milk intake to around 1 billion kg annually & is expected to begin production in 2030. The results also include the first month following Arla's merger with German dairy cooperative DMK, which took effect on June 1. The combined cooperative has around 11,200 farmer owners, 28,800 employees & a milk pool of approximately 20 billion kg. DMK contributed €409 million to first-half revenue. Arla raised its full-year forecast for strategic branded volume-driven revenue growth to 4-6%, from 1-3% previously. Following the DMK merger, it expects group revenue of €16.8-17.6 billion & a profit share of 2.8-3.2%. The cooperative said high milk supply was expected to continue weighing on global dairy prices, although early signs of stabilisation suggested a possible gradual recovery later in the year.

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- **EU ICE CREAM PRODUCTION RISES 1.9% IN 2025, FRANCE LARGEST EXPORTER**
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IGC CUTS GRAIN CROP FORECAST AS EUROPEAN HEAT, BLACK SEA DISRUPTION BITE

The International Grains Council (IGC) has cut its forecast for world grain production in 2026/27 by five million tonnes, citing lower expectations for wheat, maize & sorghum, while the hot weather has affected EU production prospects.

In its Grain Market Report* published on August 20, the Council put total world grains output at 2.416 billion tonnes, 3% below the previous season but still the second-largest crop on record. Global consumption is forecast at 2.444bn tonnes, while closing stocks are expected to fall to 606m tonnes. "Due to sustained heat, outlooks have deteriorated further in Europe," the IGC said. The intergovernmental organisation also highlighted disruption to Black Sea grain shipments amid increased security risks, saying deep-sea exports from Russia through Novorossiysk & from Ukraine were "effectively at a standstill." Shipping suspensions have mainly affected wheat, with the IGC estimating that exports from Russia & Ukraine since hostilities intensified in mid-July were around 4m tonnes below normal. It said the effect on markets had so far been relatively limited, partly because of subdued nearby import demand, "but with much depending on the length & severity of the disruptions."

The London-based Council raised its forecast for world grains trade by a million tonnes from July to 451 million, mainly because of increased EU maize import requirements. Nevertheless, trade is expected to be 3% lower year-on-year, mainly because of reduced shipments to Near East Asia & North Africa. Wheat production is forecast at 817m tonnes in 2026/27, compared with 844m tonnes in 2025/26, while wheat stocks are put at 275m tonnes. Maize production is forecast at 1.305bn tonnes, against 1.346bn tonnes in the previous season, with stocks falling to 293m tonnes. The deterioration in grain supply prospects & geopolitical risks was also reflected in prices, with the international body reporting a 3% rise overall, "recently touching a more than two-year high, with net increases across all constituent components."

The wheat component of the IGC Grains & Oilseeds Index was 2% higher than in mid-July. Russian fob values were assessed lower amid a depreciating rouble & rising freight cost, while prices at competing origins were mostly firmer. The maize sub-index increased by 3%, supported by a tightening US stocks outlook & continuing disruption to Ukrainian shipments. For soybeans, the Council maintained its forecast for 2026/27 global production at a record 441m tonnes, 2% higher year-on-year. World trade is forecast to reach a record 190m tonnes, also up 2%, supported particularly by increasing Asian feed demand. The IGC said recent Chinese buying had "entrenched expectations for a moderate recovery of US shipments."

World rice production is meanwhile forecast to decline by 1% in 2026/27, to 541 million tonnes. "Growing food demand will likely underpin expanded global uptake &, as such, stocks could contract for the first time in four years, including a drawdown in Indian inventories," the IGC said. "Assuming solid demand from African importers, trade in 2027 (Jan/Dec) could reach a peak."

https://www.igc.int/en/gmr_summary.aspx

EU ICE CREAM PRODUCTION RISES 1.9% IN 2025, FRANCE LARGEST EXPORTER

EU ice cream production increased by 1.9% last year, with the greatest growth in Italy, while France remained the bloc's largest exporter to countries outside the EU, according to figures released by Eurostat on August 19. EU countries produced 3.44 billion litres of ice cream in 2025, up from 3.38 billion litres in 2024. Germany remained the EU's largest producer, with output of 608 million litres, followed by Italy with 549m litres & France with 525m litres. Meanwhile, Spain produced 457m litres & Belgium 274m litres.

Production increased in all five of the leading producing countries. Italy recorded the largest rise, at 10%, followed by Belgium at 6%, France at 4% & Spain at 2%. German production was virtually unchanged, increasing by 0.2%. EU countries also increased their trade in ice cream with the rest of the world. Extra-EU exports reached 289.8m kg in 2025, while imports totalled 77.8m kg. Exports were 10% higher than in 2024, an increase of 26m kg, while imports rose by 12%, or 8.5m kg.

France remained the EU's biggest ice cream exporter, shipping 59.1m kg to non-EU countries. This accounted for 20% of total extra-EU ice cream exports. Italy was the second-largest exporter, with 55.2m kg, or 19% of the EU total, followed by Belgium with 34.5m kg, or 12%. Germany exported 29.9m kg, accounting for 10%, & the Netherlands 26.5m kg, or 9%.

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Eurostat said the production ranking was based on available non-confidential data. Production quantities are confidential for HU, NL, PL, PT, RO, SI & SE, while CY, LU & MT are exempt from providing production data because of the size of their economies. ***https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/main/home***

EU BEER EXPORTS FALL 11% IN 2025, 3.2bn LITRES GO ABROAD

EU beer exports to countries outside the bloc fell by 11% last year, while imports increased by 6%, according to figures released by Eurostat. The EU exported 3.2 billion litres of beer containing alcohol to non-EU countries in 2025, down 11% compared with 2024. Imports from outside the EU totalled 0.5bn litres, an increase of 6%.

Belgium was the EU's largest beer exporter when both intra-EU & extra-EU trade were included, exporting 1.5bn litres in 2025. The Netherlands ranked second, with exports of 1.4bn litres, followed by Germany with 1.3bn litres. Czechia & Ireland each exported 0.6bn litres. France, meanwhile, was the EU's largest importer of beer containing alcohol, importing 0.9bn litres during the year. Italy imported more than 0.7bn litres, while Germany & Spain each imported 0.6bn litres. The Netherlands was the fifth-largest importer among the countries highlighted by Eurostat, with 0.3bn litres. The figures were published by Eurostat on Aug 7 to mark International Beer Day, which is celebrated on the first Friday of August.

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/main/home

IN BRIEF: ES veg takeover; EU-FarmBook session

ES veg takeover: The Commission has approved the acquisition of joint control of Spanish fresh herb & vegetable producer Herbex by the UK's Flamingo Produce Investments & Spanish investment fund Nazca.

The transaction relates primarily to the production & commercialisation of fresh aromatic herbs & vegetables. DG COMP officials said the transaction would not raise competition concerns because the joint venture has negligible activities in the European Economic Area (EEA) & the companies are not active in the same or vertically related markets.

More information is available on the Commission's **competition website, under the case number **M.12447.***

EU-FarmBook session: Copa & Cogeca will hold a co-design session in Brussels on September 29 aimed at helping shape the development of the EU-FarmBook* agricultural knowledge exchange platform.

The EU-FarmBook Co-Design Lab Session will bring together agricultural stakeholders to contribute ideas on the development of the platform & consider how it can support knowledge sharing & innovation in European agriculture. The hybrid event will take place from 14:00 on Sept 29 at the Copa-Cogeca offices, Rue de Trèves 61, Brussels, with participation also possible online.

The farm lobby organisation said the interactive session would give participants an opportunity to contribute to the development of EU-FarmBook, engage with stakeholders from across the agricultural sector & help design the platform as a tool for agricultural knowledge exchange & innovation. A detailed agenda is due to be released later in August. ***https://eufarmbook.eu/en.*** Registration for the event is already open through the organisers' online registration form ***https://form.jotform.com/261803349299366;***

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The latest EU agriculture, environment & trade news

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- **EU PACKAGING RULES IN EFFECT, PFAS RESTRICTION ON FOOD-CONTACT MATERIALS**
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EU PACKAGING RULES IN EFFECT, PFAS RESTRICTION ON FOOD-CONTACT MATERIALS

New EU rules on packaging & packaging waste have entered into application, including restrictions on PFAS in food-contact packaging, as the Commission begins the phased implementation of measures intended to cut packaging waste & increase recycling. The Packaging & Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR)*, which entered into force in Feb 11, 2025, began to apply across the EU from Aug 12, 2026. It replaces varying national requirements with a harmonised framework covering the packaging life cycle & is intended to reduce compliance costs for businesses operating across borders.

One of the first measures to apply is a restriction on per- & polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in food-contact packaging. Packaging containing PFAS above specified limits can no longer be placed on the EU market. PFAS have been used in products including takeaway containers, fast-food wrappers, microwave popcorn bags, bakery paper & pizza boxes because of their ability to repel water & grease. The Commission said restricting their use would reduce human exposure as well as releases of the persistent substances into the environment.

Environment Commissioner Jessika Roswall said the regulation represented "an investment in Europe's future." "It will help reduce waste, increase recycling, make food-contact packaging safer for the consumers by limiting harmful substances such as PFAS, & reduce our dependence on virgin raw materials," she underlined. "These are essential steps towards a truly circular economy." The Swedish Commissioner described the regulation as replacing "fragmented national rules difficult to navigate for economic operators in the internal market," but conceded that there would be "adjustment costs," insisting that "we have worked intensively with market operators to implement the new rules in a pragmatic & unbureaucratic way."

From 2028, a harmonised EU labelling system for packaging will apply to facilitate waste sorting & improve the efficiency of recycling & composting. Measures to reduce packaging waste, including limits on empty space, restrictions on some single-use plastic packaging & reuse targets, will apply from 2030. Requirements for the use of recycled plastic in new plastic packaging & for all packaging to be recyclable will also apply from 2030. The Executive said it was working on the necessary secondary legislation & would continue to work with national authorities, industry & civil society to avoid unnecessary administrative burdens & ensure "efficient & pragmatic implementation" of the rules. Without additional action, EU packaging waste had been projected to increase by 19% by 2030, with plastic packaging waste potentially rising by as much as 46%, according to officials.

https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L_202500040

JRC FINDS PESTICIDE RESTRICTIONS COULD CUT EU IMPORTS, RAISE FOOD PRICES

Lowering permitted residues of the most hazardous pesticides in imported food & feed could reduce EU agricultural imports, increase EU crop production & raise consumer prices, but the scale of the effects would depend heavily on the ability of third country producers to adapt, according to a preliminary study from the Commission.

In the paper, published on Aug 11, the Joint Research Centre (JRC) examines the economic consequences of implementing the principle that pesticides banned in the EU for health or environmental reasons should not return through imported agricultural products. The authors, from JRC in Spain & consultants Seidor in Belgium, of the 161-page report, *'Assessing the economic impacts of stronger alignment of production standards applied to imported products on the EU's agricultural sector – Reducing all maximum residue levels of the most hazardous pesticides banned in the EU to the limit of quantification'*, identify 18 hazardous active substances, which are not approved in the bloc but for which maximum residue levels (MRLs) above the limit of quantification (LOQ) remain relevant to imports. They affect 235 commodities from 86 countries.

They model what would happen if all relevant MRLs were simultaneously reduced to the LOQ under three scenarios, ranging from one in which affected third country producers do not adapt to the EU requirements to scenarios in which producers change their practices & incur additional costs.

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The authors stress that the scenarios are not forecasts. “The scenarios therefore provide a deliberate bracket - an upper & a lower bound rather than a central projection,” they explain. The range extends from a 41% reduction in EU agricultural imports where all exporters are affected & no adaptation takes place to 0.4% where exposure is limited & adaptation costs are low. They say that “the simulated impacts show a common pattern - reduced imports to the EU, increased production in the EU & increased consumer prices - differing in intensity rather than direction,” with the effects becoming smaller as assumptions about third country producers’ responses become more nuanced.

Under the upper-bound, no-adaptation scenario, total EU agricultural imports fall by 41% in volume, including reductions of 92% for citrus & 90% for soybeans. Aggregate EU agricultural production increases by 1.1%, while agricultural land use expands by 1.9 million hectares, or 1.2%. Citrus production increases by 47%, rapeseed by 41% & soybeans by 29%. However, the study shows a significant knock-on effect on livestock in this extreme scenario. Higher feed costs, including an 87% increase for oilseed cakes, lead to falls of 5.8% in pork production & 5.4% in poultry output. Consumer price effects would also be substantial, with modelled increases of 332% for coffee, 105% for soybean cakes & 85% for citrus.

The results are much smaller when exporters are assumed to adapt. Under the intermediate scenario, which assumes additional costs of exporting to the EU of 20%, overall EU agricultural imports decline by 8%, while EU production increases by 0.23%. The largest consumer price increases are 6.5% for table grapes, 6% for coffee & 5.6% for citrus, while the spillover effect on livestock becomes negligible. Under the lower-bound scenario, where fewer producers are assumed to be affected & adaptation raises export costs by 5%, total EU agricultural imports fall by just 0.4%, while changes in EU production & consumer prices remain below 1% for all commodities. “The findings support the conclusion that assessing the impacts of reducing MRLs to the LOQ requires AS (active substance) specific in-depth analysis rather than uniform assumptions applied across all AS - commodity - country triads,” the authors conclude.

A detailed examination of cyproconazole, a fungicide used on several crops, found that EU-approved alternatives exist but replacing the substance could increase production costs by around 20-40%, although the net cost could be lower where the alternatives provide more effective crop protection. The experts also find potentially different consequences for crop & livestock farmers within the EU. “EU crop production expands across all scenarios, indicating an increased competitiveness of EU producers as import volumes decline,” it says. But in the no-adaptation scenario, reduced imports increase feed costs & livestock production contracts. Under what the report calls the “more plausible intermediate & lower-bound scenarios,” this livestock effect becomes negligible.

The JRC stresses the considerable uncertainty surrounding the exercise. It lacks comprehensive information on the actual use of individual pesticides on particular commodities in exporting countries & on the cost & feasibility of replacing them. The authors say impacts are highly heterogeneous between substances, products & countries & that a uniform assumption about exporter behaviour is therefore “rather unrealistic.” “This report is not an impact assessment & should not be read as one,” the writers make clear. It does not examine the environmental or social dimensions underlying the EU bans & has not undergone public consultation. The authors conclude that the work provides initial evidence rather than a prediction of the effects of future legislation. “The findings point to the need for further assessments of impacts, & in particular for better information on the actual use & agronomic importance of specific substances in exporting countries concerned,” they say. The report also notes that some of the countries potentially most exposed are developing countries, whose circumstances would require more detailed analysis. The work follows the Commission’s Vision for Agriculture & Food, which committed it to establishing the principle that the most hazardous pesticides banned in the EU for health & environmental reasons should not be allowed to return through imports. The JRC study will feed into the Commission’s impact assessment & does not prejudge what subsequent measures may be proposed.

https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC147659

SMALL-SCALE FARMERS CALL FOR EMERGENCY AID AS DROUGHT, HEAT, WILDFIRES HIT

European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC) has called for emergency aid for farmers affected by drought, heatwaves & wildfires across Europe, warning that crops, livestock, grazing land & agricultural infrastructure are being lost as extreme conditions spread across the continent.

In a statement issued on Aug 12, the peasant farmers’ organisation said wildfires were “escalating,” in rural areas in FR, ES, PT, IT & EL, while prolonged drought & extreme heat were also causing agricultural damage further north. Farmers have reported losses of crops, livestock, orchards & grazing areas, as well as damaged irrigation systems & other infrastructure.

Clémence Goujon, a member of ECVC’s Youth Articulation, said that, “wildfires have devastated Southwestern France.” “Our fields are parched, water is scarce, & even wildlife struggles to find enough food to eat,” she added, complaining that “despite these hardships, government policies continue to support the agro-industry & pesticide use, making the situation worse for small-scale farmers like myself & my community.”

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ECVC stresses that “small-scale farmers & local people in rural areas are disproportionately shouldering the consequences of climate crises,” while facing “many more difficulties in recovering from the catastrophic losses than industrial actors, despite the fact that the industrial agri model disconnects agriculture from local communities & increases the vulnerability of landscapes to fires, droughts & other extreme events.” The group complains of “public policies that foster the industrialisation of livestock farming, monoculture forests & land speculation & abandonment,” & a “lack of adequate emergency support for those who need it most.” Testimonies published alongside the statement describe severe water shortages & farmers already using Winter fodder reserves to maintain livestock in mid-August.

Peter Schön, a farmer in Eastern Austria & member of ECVC’s Youth Articulation, said rainfall in his area had fallen to around one-third of its usual level. “This is the hottest & driest summer on record. My area has received only about 100 mm of rain this year, compared to the usual 300 mm, which is already low,” he said. The previous two Winters had also been extremely dry, leaving groundwater at critically low levels & some farmers without water in their wells. Schön said conditions had become so difficult that he was considering stopping work until the end of the Summer because most crops were not growing.

In Belgium, farm worker Matthieu Blerot, reported just 5.5 mm of rain during the month. Although deep soils had initially kept grass green, grazed pastures had stopped growing & cattle were already being given fodder intended for the Winter. “We are now out of grass, & the cows are fed with hay that they are supposed to eat during Winter. If it does not rain, we don’t know how we will manage to feed them through the Winter,” he said. Similar problems were reported in the Netherlands, despite its traditionally wetter climate. Farmer Roos Saat said her holding was on low-lying land below sea level & therefore among the last areas likely to experience drought effects. However, she said grass had stopped growing & livestock were already being fed from Winter reserves after only around 20 mm of summer rainfall, compared with an average of 250 mm. “Seeing river levels falling & even forest fires breaking out in a country known for its wet climate is testament to the huge climate crisis we are facing,” Saat said.

In Southwestern France, farmer Clémence Goujon, described the effects of extreme heat & wildfire following heavy rainfall earlier in the year. She said Spring had been brief before temperatures remained around 43°C for a prolonged period, while the level of a nearby river was lower than she had previously seen at that point in the year. “There is almost no grass, so deer have begun eating cucumber leaves, indicating a severe lack of food. Tomatoes are withering on the plants,” she said. Goujon also criticised the continued use of water for large-scale maize irrigation in her village during the dry conditions.

In Portugal, ECVC Coordinating Committee member, Vitor Rodrigues, said farmers & forestry producers were repeatedly losing plantations, pastures, permanent crops, buildings & machinery to fires. “Year after year, farmers & forestry producers lose plantations, pastures, permanent crops, facilities, & agricultural machinery & firefighters, forest fire brigades are forced to deal with major fires,” he said. Rodrigues said government compensation in Portugal had been insufficient, with “huge bureaucratic barriers & long waits before the funds reach farmers.” He called for more mixed use of forests, combining timber production with activities including extensive grazing, livestock farming & beekeeping.

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INFORMAL SET TO FOCUS ON RESEARCH, INNOVATION TO SUPPORT LIVESTOCK, PROTEIN

The Irish Presidency is putting livestock & the protein production sector in the spotlight at its Informal Agriculture Ministerial meeting, in early Sept (6-8), which will be centred around a 'formal' discussion in Dublin Castle on the Tuesday, with the focus on the need for innovation to support the livestock & protein sectors in the face of economic, environmental & climate challenges.

Ministers' exchanges will be based around a single page document, obtained by *Agra Facts*, headed *'Discussion Topic: Livestock Strategy & EU Protein Plan [Research & Innovation]'* in which the Presidency stresses that "the livestock sector faces many challenges, including profitability, structural vulnerabilities, environmental/climate impacts & animal disease outbreaks." "These risks can be mitigated through developing new technologies, improving management practices, & generating the knowledge needed to respond to changing environmental, economic & social conditions," authors of the note outline. "Improving the productivity, competitiveness & preparedness of the EU's protein systems will also help to ensure that primary producers remain productive, resilient & economically viable over the long-term."

The Presidency points to the Livestock Strategy & Protein Action Plan unveiled last month, noting that they "both highlight the importance of harnessing innovative technologies & applying cutting-edge research to support the development of more sustainable & resilient food systems." It refers to the Livestock Strategy's recommendation that "there should be a focus on scaling up & deploying research & innovation efforts, & increasing the uptake of relevant tools, including decision-support systems, sensors, big data applications, robotics, early-warning solutions & precision livestock farming, while maintaining a systems-based & place-based approach." It also explains that "financial instruments being negotiated under the next Multiannual Financial Framework, such as the European Competitiveness Fund (ECF), could provide an important mechanism for supporting such research & innovation."

The Presidency poses two 'guiding questions' to frame the debate at the Informal gathering. The first is *'How can research & innovation be leveraged to support the EU livestock & protein sectors across the three dimensions of sustainability: economic, social, & environmental?'* it follows up with *'How can the EU & Member States best support farmers, particularly smaller farmers, in adopting new technologies & innovative practices?'*

National Stud visit: As well as the 'formal' discussion at the historic Dublin Castle on Sept 8, Ministers will visit the Irish National Stud & Gardens in Kildare, some 50km west of Dublin, & the nearby Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF), established in 1998 & located in in Tully. *Hailing from Kildare, Ireland's Minister for Agriculture, Food & the Marine, Martin Heydon, is a Fine Gael TD for the Kildare South constituency. Born & raised on a farm near Ballitore, he attended primary school in Crookstown, did his Leaving Certificate at the Cross & Passion school in Kilcullen & completed his farm training at Kildalton Agricultural College. During this Informal, the Minister, who incidentally turns 48 years of age today (Aug 9), is keen to showcase the sights & attractions of 'The Thoroughbred County'.*

There will also be a visit for Ministers & delegates from the Special Committee on Agriculture (SCA) to Lyons Farm, a teaching & research facility operated by University College Dublin (UCD), just outside Newcastle. The facility is based around the former seat of Lord Cloncurry, described as a period house of national importance, & covers some 250 hectares, with facilities designed to ensure optimal productivity, animal welfare & efficiency. In addition, there will be a gala dinner in the Great Hall at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham in Dublin, home to the Irish Museum of Modern Art.

Further details will be available **here in due time;*

EUROSTAT HIGHLIGHTS LACK OF INTERNET ACCESS ON EUROPEAN FARMS

Fewer than half of the European Union's farms had internet access in 2023, highlighting the continuing digital divide in agriculture despite growing use of precision farming technologies, new figures published by Eurostat show. The bloc's statistical office said in a July 24 release that about 43% of EU farms reported having internet access in 2023, although adoption varied sharply between Member States.

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Denmark, Germany, Slovakia, Latvia, Czechia & Austria all recorded internet access rates above 90%, while uptake remained much lower elsewhere. The figures are drawn from the Eurostat Statistics Explained paper *'Agriculture statistics – machinery & digitalisation',* a 12-page analysis based on the 2023 Farm Structure Survey, which provides a broader picture of the uptake of digital technologies, precision farming & agricultural machinery across the Community.

"The digitalisation of the sector - defined as the adoption & integration of digital technologies such as sensor systems, variable rate technologies, GPS/GNSS (Global Positioning System/Global Navigation Satellite System), big data, artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, & the Internet of Things (IoT) - has the potential to transform agriculture," the statistics body's experts explain. "It can address key sectoral challenges while boosting competitiveness."

In the release, Eurostat explains that around 11% of EU farms used farm management information systems in 2023, with France recording by far the highest adoption rate, at about 60%. Robotics remained relatively uncommon, being used by around 7% of farms across the EU, although the Netherlands recorded the highest national adoption rate at about 35%. Eurostat underlines that the use of digital technologies was strongly linked to farm size. About 74% of farms with a standard output of at least €100,000 had internet access, compared with only around 21% of farms with an output below €2,000. Similar patterns were seen for farm management information systems & robotics, indicating that larger & economically stronger farms are adopting digital tools much more rapidly than smaller holdings.

Only around 18% of farms employed precision farming, but those holdings managed approximately 44% of the EU's total utilised agricultural area, reflecting the concentration of these technologies on larger farms. Soil analysis was the most widely adopted practice, used by about 11% of farms, followed by variable-rate application techniques at about 5% & band spraying of plant protection products, at about 4%.

There were also wide national differences. More than three-quarters of the agricultural land in Luxembourg, Finland & Estonia was managed by farms using precision farming technologies, whereas the share was below 10% in Greece & Cyprus. Eurostat finds a similar pattern in livestock production. Around one quarter of livestock farms used automated machinery or digital systems, such as animal welfare monitoring, automatic feeding systems or climate control, but adoption increased markedly with herd size. Farms using such technologies accounted for around 71% of all livestock units in the EU, with Denmark & the Netherlands recording the highest shares.

More information available here - **https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Agriculture_statistics_-_machinery_and_digitalisation*

FOOD PRICES FIRM ON HIGHER CEREALS, SUGAR, VEGOIL, SAYS FAO

World food commodity prices were 0.6% higher in July than June, according to a report published by the UN Food & Agriculture Organisation (FAO) on Aug 7. In its regular 'Food Price Index'* the Rome-based organisation said that "increases in the price indices for cereals, sugar & vegetable oils were partially offset by declines in those for meat & dairy products." The index was 1.0% higher than a year ago, but 18.2% down on its March 2022 peak.

The biggest month on month rise was for sugar, up 5.6% from a month earlier, although the prices in the sector were still down 8.0% from their level of a year ago. The FAO's experts described the increase as "mainly driven by concerns about the potential impacts of persistent hot & dry weather on crop yields in the European Union & of El Niño-related weather conditions on production prospects in key producing countries in Asia." "Expectations of stronger demand for ethanol in Brazil following a temporary increase in the mandatory ethanol blend in gasoline also provided support to prices," they also pointed out, "as a higher ethanol blending requirement could divert a larger share of sugarcane towards ethanol production & reduce sugar availability."

However, the rise had been improved by "improving harvesting conditions in Brazil's key centre-south growing regions," they said. Prices for cereals were up 3.4% overall from June & 6.9% higher than in July 2025. "Global wheat prices surged by 5.8%, standing 9.9% above their year-earlier level," they highlighted, pointing to "heightened concerns over continued disruptions to Black Sea export flows & damage to export infrastructure, further compounded by the impact of recent heatwaves on crop yields in several key producing countries."

A 3.6% hike in maize prices from the previous month was "supported by concerns over hot & dry weather in parts of the (US) corn belt…, & spillover effects from firmer energy markets amid heightened geopolitical tensions," they explained. "International sorghum prices edged higher in line with the increases in (US) maize prices." Barley bucked the trend with a 1.9% fall, "as favourable crop prospects in Australia & the Black Sea region more than offset heat-related yield losses in the (EU)." Rice was broadly steady in July 2026, as a mild increase in Indica quotations was offset by demand-driven price declines for all other major traded rice varieties. Vegetable oil prices were 2.0% higher than in July, at their highest level since June 2022. "The continued increase in the index reflected higher palm & soy oil prices, which more than offset lower sunflower & rapeseed oil quotations," the FAO explained.

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The second consecutive monthly rise in palm oil, was "largely underpinned by firm demand from Indonesia's biodiesel sector & higher crude oil prices, which outweighed downward pressure from seasonally higher production in Southeast Asia," they said. The FAO writers put a rise in soy oil prices down to "persistently robust feedstock demand," in the US & "stronger global import demand amid greater price competitiveness."

Falls in sunflower & rapeseed oils reflected "expectations of larger supplies in the 2026/27 season, although renewed tensions in the Black Sea region & concerns over the impact of these tensions on export flows limited further price declines," they said. There was a 0.7% month on month fall for dairy, bringing prices to 24.8% below their July 2025 level & "extending the decline observed since April," according to the UN agency, which highlighted "lower quotations for butter & milk powders, which more than offset a modest recovery in cheese prices." A "3.3% monthly fall for SMP was down to ample export supplies," in the EU & Oceania, "coupled with more cautious buying following earlier price increases."

"SMP remained the only dairy product trading above its July 2025 level," they commented & put a 3.1% monthly drop for WMP down to "subdued import demand, particularly from China, (which) continued to outweigh firm purchases from Southeast Asia & the Near East, with increasing export competition adding downward pressure on quotations." Butter was down by 2.4% "as improving milk fat availability & expanding export supplies eased market tightness, particularly in Europe," while a rise of 1.7% for cheese, its first monthly increase since July 2025," was because "tighter seasonal milk supplies lifted cheese quotations in the European Union, more than offsetting continuing price declines in Oceania, where cheese prices remained under pressure from ample export supplies & intensified competition from the United States."

Overall meat prices were 2.8% down from June, but 0.8% above July 2025 levels. "This marked the first monthly decline in 2026, reflecting lower quotations across all meat categories except ovine meat," FAO said. A fall for poultry was "largely due to lower quotations in Brazil amid ample export supplies." "Uncertainty over future access to the European Union market, due to the antimicrobial requirements, further fuelled expectations that higher-value products could be redirected to alternative markets, likely intensifying competition & weighing on prices," they noted.

A price cut for pigmeat was "driven by abundant supplies in the European Union & subdued global demand, although high summer temperatures limited animal growth rates, providing some price support." Lower bovine meat prices reflected weaker import demand from Asia. "In Australia, export prices softened as shipments to China & the Republic of Korea declined after annual quota allocations had been filled, making subsequent exports subject to higher tariffs," FAO said. "In Brazil, exports slowed as China's beef safeguard quota approached full utilization." Sheep meat rose, "reaching a new record high, supported by persistently tight exportable supplies in Oceania & sustained global import demand," they said.

****https://www.fao.org/worldfoodsituation/foodpricesindex/en/***

FAO CHIEF ECONOMIST TORERO WARNS OF COMING FOOD PRICE INFLATION

Maximo Torero, the FAO's Chief Economist, has warned that food commodity prices are set to start rising more, feeding before long into food inflation, as geopolitical factors increase producer costs.

"I expect that commodity prices will start to increase more now," he told the *Reuters* news agency in an interview published on Aug 5, & "food prices will start increasing by the end of the year, & next year for sure they will increase more." "The transmission from the commodity to the final food price is around three to six months," the Peruvian expert added. "The Strait of Hormuz is a problem that affects all the inputs of agricultural commodities, agricultural systems," he stressed, referring to issues with "Brent oil, because it's used for pumping, packaging, processing, & transportation & natural gas because it's used for fertilisers." "You're hearing this in Europe, in the US, Brazil & in Asia," Torero underlined. "Tight margins are putting stress in planting decisions."

NEW GI APPROVALS: ES ham, olive oil, PL apples, sausages recognised;

ES ham PGI: The Commission said on Aug 4 that it had approved the registration of *'Pernil Cerretà'* from Spain as a Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), recognising a traditional Catalan cured ham whose production methods can be traced back to antiquity. The registration covers a cured hind-leg ham produced from a white (non-Iberian) breed of pigs. The product is distinguished by its rounded shape, the use of pepper during curing, the absence of smoking & a high-temperature drying & maturation process. Boneless hams must be cured for at least seven months, while bone-in products require a minimum of nine months.

According to the Commission, the recipe has been passed down through generations. During the 20th century, production techniques developed by small local producers were adopted by the regional meat-processing industry while retaining the product's traditional characteristics.

The official product specification provides further details on the distinctive sensory characteristics of the ham, describing a mildly salty flavour with peppery notes, umami & slight bitterness, together with aromas of cured meat but no smokiness. Production requires the use of sea salt & pepper, while optional spices include paprika, garlic, juniper, bay leaf & rosemary.

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The geographical area covers much of inland Catalonia, including districts such as Cerdanya, Berguedà, Osona, Garrotxa, Bages & Segrià, while excluding the coastal municipalities of Blanes, Lloret de Mar & Tossa de Mar. All production stages, including curing, slicing & packaging, must take place within the designated area. The specification says the product's reputation dates back to Roman times, when *pernac cerretanae* was mentioned in Emperor Diocletian's Edict on Maximum Prices & by classical writers including Strabo & Martial. It also cites medieval & later historical references documenting the continued production & trade of the ham throughout Catalonia.

***https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C_202602141**

PDO for ES olive oil: The Commission has approved the registration of *'Aceite de las Sierras Espadán y Calderona'* from the mountainous areas of Spain's Valencia region as a Protected Designation of Origin (PDO). The registration, announced on Aug 4, covers extra virgin & virgin olive oils produced mainly from the local Serrana de Espadán olive variety, together with smaller proportions of Villalonga, Canetera, Morruda & Arbequina olives.

The oil is characterised by a sweet, smooth & fruity flavour, with bitterness & pungency of medium intensity & colours ranging between green & yellow. It attributed these characteristics to the mountainous terrain, sea breezes & night-time dew, together with traditional cultivation methods developed over generations. According to the official product specification, the oil also displays aromas of green almond, fresh grass, olives, artichoke & outdoor-grown tomatoes, with a balanced sweetness & light bitterness. Production is confined to 28 municipalities across the provinces of Castellón & Valencia, where olive groves are generally located on steep terraced slopes between 350 & 850 metres above sea level.

The proximity of the Mediterranean provides moisture-bearing sea breezes & night-time dew, reducing water stress during the summer & helping olives retain higher chlorophyll & carotenoid levels. The Serrana de Espadán variety is naturally resistant to many common olive pests, allowing producers to use very few plant protection treatments. Olives are harvested early & picked directly from the tree to preserve quality.

***https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C_202601460**

PL apple gets PGI: The Executive has approved the registration of *'Jabłka krajeńskie'* apples grown in the northern Krajna region of Poland as a Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), it emerged on Aug 4.

The indication covers fresh dessert apples of the Gala, Golden Delicious, Jonagold & Champion varieties, together with their 'sports' (a word referring to cultivated mutations of an apple variety), produced in southern Krajna. The apples are distinguished by higher sugar content & greater firmness than the same varieties grown elsewhere in Poland. It attributed these characteristics to the region's relatively high number of sunny days, moderate rainfall & the experience of local growers passed down through generations.

According to the official product specification, the apples must comply with recognised food quality schemes such as Integrated Production (IP) &/or GLOBALG.A.P. The fruit's high sugar levels, firmness & colour are linked to fertile soils, large day-night temperature differences & a growing season of about 210 days. The protected geographical area covers parts of the Kujawsko-Pomorskie & Wielkopolskie regions, including districts around Bydgoszcz, Nakło & Piła. Harvesting, storage & packing must all take place within the production area to preserve quality & maintain traceability. Apples are stored in controlled-atmosphere cold stores before being packed either individually or in bulk.

***https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C_202602143**

PL sausage PGI: On Aug 7, the Commission announced its approval for registration of Poland's *'Kiełbasa pradziada z Dukli'*, a traditionally smoked pork & liver sausage from the country's southeastern Podkarpackie region, as a Protected Geographical Indication (PGI).

The sausage, the name of which means 'great-grandfather's sausage from Dukla', is produced in the municipality of Dukla, in Krosno district, using meat & liver exclusively from Puławska pigs or crossbreeds. All stages of production, including grinding, mixing, filling the casings, smoking, cooling & chilling, must take place within the designated area. The finished sausage combines ham meat with unusually large pieces of pig's liver, cut into cubes of 2-4 cm. According to the 5-page Official Journal single document accompanying the application, pork accounts for 75%, plus or minus five percentage points, & fresh liver 25%, also plus or minus five points. The finished sausage has a fat content of no more than 5%.

The Commission describes its flavour as combining ham & noticeable pieces of pork liver with a deep smoky aroma. The specification describes the dominant taste as well-seasoned pork, accompanied by mild pepper, garlic & a pronounced taste of roasted pig's liver. A slight sweet or sour cherry flavour & aroma can also be perceptible. Its distinctive smoking process uses beech & alder wood supplemented by sweet cherry or sour cherry wood. Smokers with an offset firebox are used in a three-stage process comprising drying, smoking & baking. The specification says the unusual addition of cherry wood gives the sausage its characteristic colour, taste & aroma.

The production technique also requires the filling to be mixed considerably longer than for other sausages. This allows the relatively large pieces of liver & ham to bind without the finished sausage disintegrating. The specification says the technique is not found elsewhere in Poland & requires considerable skill passed between generations of local butchers. The product's history is linked closely to Dukla's butchery tradition, which the document traces back to the 16th century.

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A guild grouping eight slaughterers & meat curers operated in the town between 1920 & 1939. The oldest surviving written recipe specifically for 'Kiełbasa pradziada z Dukli' dates from 1896 & remains in the archives of a local company. According to the specification, it developed from two names formerly used interchangeably - 'Kiełbasa dukielska' & 'Kiełbasa pradziada z Dukli' - with the latter emphasising the product's transmission through earlier generations.
See **https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C_202602144*

IN BRIEF: IT aid approved; SE aid gets green light; Hansen seeks simplification ideas;

IT aid approved: The Commission has approved a €20 million Italian State aid scheme to help agricultural, fisheries & aquaculture businesses in the autonomous region of Friuli Venezia Giulia cope with higher fuel & fertiliser prices resulting from the Middle East crisis. The scheme, announced on Aug 3, was approved under the EU's Middle East Crisis Temporary State Aid Framework (METSAF), adopted by the Commission on April 29, 2026. The support will remain in force until Dec 31, 2026, & is intended to mitigate rising costs for agricultural fuel & fertilisers, as well as fuel used in the fisheries & aquaculture sectors.

Aid will be provided through direct grants & subsidised loans. For agricultural producers, support will be calculated according to the area of land used for primary agricultural production, while aid for fisheries & aquaculture operators will be based on estimated fuel consumption. Assistance will be capped at €50,000 per beneficiary & will be paid by the autonomous region of Friuli Venezia Giulia. The Commission said the measure was necessary, appropriate & proportionate to facilitate the development of the affected economic activities & would not distort competition or trade to an extent contrary to the common interest.
The non-confidential versions of the decision will be published in the Commission's **State aid register under case number **SA.123315,** once confidentiality issues have been resolved.*

Exec approves €149m Swedish fuel & fertiliser aid scheme: The Commission has approved a €149 million (SEK 1.6 billion) Swedish State aid scheme to support agricultural, fishing & aquaculture companies facing higher fuel & fertiliser costs resulting from the Middle East crisis. The measure was approved under the Middle East Crisis Temporary State Aid Framework (METSAF), adopted by the Commission on April 29, 2026. It will remain in force until Dec 31, 2026.

Under the scheme, aid will be paid as direct grants to companies active in the primary production of agricultural, fishery & aquaculture products. Support will be based on increases in fuel & fertiliser prices, with the aid intensity set at 85% of the estimated increase in fuel & nitrogen fertiliser costs for agricultural companies & fuel costs for fishing & aquaculture businesses. Payments will be capped at €50,000 per company. **The non-confidential versions of the decision will be published in the Commission's **State aid register** under case number **SA.123975,** once confidentiality issues have been resolved.*

Hansen seeks simplification ideas: Farm Commissioner Christophe Hansen broke the Summer purdah on Aug 6 to take to social media *(Agra Facts saw it on **BlueSky**)* & urged farmers to give the Executive their ideas on CAP simplification. "The best ideas for simplification come from those on the ground," the Luxembourg politician tweeted. "If you're a farmer, forester, producer or part of the agri-food chain, tell us where EU rules can work better & be easier to implement." "Your feedback can make a difference," he added, with a ***link*** to the Commission's simplification platform website.

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HANSEN HIGHLIGHTS CAP BUDGET DURING LIBRAMONT CENTENARY VISIT

Agriculture Commissioner Christophe Hansen underlined the importance of generational renewal in farming & pressed the case for a strong CAP backed by an adequate long-term EU budget, during a visit to the Libramont Agricultural, Forestry & Agri-Food Fair* in Belgium on July 27.

Celebrating the show's 100th anniversary, this year's edition focused on young people, reflecting the European Commission's emphasis on attracting a new generation into agriculture through its Strategy for Generational Renewal in Agriculture. During his time there, he toured the exhibition with Belgian Prime Minister Bart De Wever, Deputy Prime Minister & Agriculture Minister David Clarinval, & Walloon Agriculture Minister Anne-Catherine Dalcq. The delegation visited the livestock hall, stands dedicated to One Health & bio-solutions, the Parc Mecanic Show featuring agricultural innovations, & the 'Tomorrow Food' exhibition.

Hansen did not give a speech at the annual gathering, but highlighted the themes of the event on the social media site 'X'. "Libramont Fair shows all the richness of our rural areas: agriculture, food, forests, innovation & entrepreneurship," he wrote (in French). "We must ensure that new generations can still choose this profession & make a decent living from it." The Commissioner also met De Wever & Clarinval to discuss the Commission's proposals for the future CAP post-2027 & the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). "The negotiations must meet the expectations of our farmers," he stressed. "A strong Europe needs strong agriculture, capable of ensuring our food security & investing in the future."

For more info - **https://foiredelibramont.com/ - running from July 24-27;*

COMMISSION AGREES FINAL ADOPTION OF FERTILISER CRISIS SUPPORT MEASURES

The Commission confirmed on July 31 that it had passed the final adoption of support measures to help farmers cope with sharply rising fertiliser costs, describing the package as intended to safeguard food security while providing Member States with greater flexibility to assist producers.

The measures include a new rural development liquidity scheme for crisis support that can be co-financed by up to 65% from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). The scheme can make use of unused EAFRD funds that might otherwise be lost, while Member States will be able to add national financing of up to 200%. They were proposed on June 12 *[see AF62-26],* & follow the Fertiliser Action Plan unveiled on May 19 *[see AF53-26].* To speed up delivery & reduce administrative burdens, the support may be paid as a fixed amount per hectare & implemented through Member States' CAP Strategic Plans.

The Commission has also authorised national capitals to make advance direct payments to farmers before October 16 by increasing the rate of advance payments, with the aim of improving farm cash flow. In addition, Member States will be given greater flexibility to adjust their allocations for direct support for the 2027 calendar year in order to respond to the impact of high fertiliser prices. According to the Commission, the new CAP measures complement the exceptional €540 million financial support package announced in the Fertilisers Action Plan & adopted on July 27. Officials said it would continue implementing the Fertilisers Action Plan to reduce farmers' exposure to future crises & that the latest measures would help strengthen EU food security, strategic autonomy & competitiveness.

EU AGRI-FOOD TRADE SURPLUS WIDENS AS COCOA PRICES DRIVE IMPORTS LOWER

The European Union's agri-food trade surplus widened during the first five months of 2026 as falling cocoa prices & lower import values more than offset a decline in exports, the Commission's latest monthly trade report shows. In the ten-page report, *'Monitoring EU agri-food trade developments until May 2026'*,* DG AGRI says that the EU generated a cumulative agri-food trade surplus of €19.4 billion between Jan & May, €1.1 billion higher than a year earlier. While exports fell by 3% year on year to €96.9 billion, imports declined by a steeper 5% to €77.5 billion, largely reflecting sharply lower cocoa prices.

In May alone, EU agri-food exports totalled €19.3 billion, down 5% from April & 4% below the level recorded in May 2025. Imports reached €15.4 billion, 7% lower than the previous month & 10% below a year earlier. The monthly trade surplus edged up 1% to €3.9 billion, 31% higher than in May 2025.

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The United Kingdom remained the EU's largest export destination, although exports during Jan-May fell by €782 million, or 3%, compared with the same period of 2025. The decline was mainly due to lower pigmeat exports, falling cocoa product prices, reduced cereal shipments & weaker dairy prices, although rape oil export volumes almost tripled. Exports to the United States, the EU's second-largest export market, fell by €1.6 billion, or 13%. The Commission attributes this largely to exceptionally strong exports during the first months of 2025, when shipments were potentially brought forward ahead of announced US tariffs. Drinks, olive oil & cocoa products accounted for much of the decline.

Other notable export declines included Japan, down €460 million or 13%, largely due to lower pigmeat volumes following Spain's African Swine Fever outbreak, & the United Arab Emirates, where exports fell €371 million, or 28%, after the closure of the Strait of Hormuz in March disrupted trade with Gulf countries. By contrast, exports to Egypt rose by €289 million, or 36%, driven mainly by wheat shipments, while exports to Ukraine increased by €187 million, or 11%, led by spirits.

By product, coffee, tea, cocoa & spices recorded the largest fall in export value, down €981 million, or 17%, reflecting lower prices & volumes for cocoa paste, butter & powder. Pigmeat exports declined by €688 million, or 13%, while olives & olive oil fell by €424 million, or 15%. Wine & wine-based products were down €359 million, or 5%. The strongest increase came from fruit & nuts, up €223 million, or 8%, mainly due to higher exports of apples, kiwis & raspberries.

On the import side, lower cocoa prices reduced purchases from several West African suppliers. Imports from Côte d'Ivoire fell by €788 million, or 18%, Nigeria by €507 million, or 48%, Cameroon by €450 million, or 42%, & Guinea by €224 million, or 95%. Imports from the United States declined by €433 million, or 7%, mainly because of sharply lower soybean & tobacco imports, while imports from the United Kingdom fell by €400 million, or 6%. Argentina & Vietnam bucked the trend, with imports rising by €220 million & €213 million respectively, driven by sunflower seeds & coffee. Among product categories, imports of coffee, tea, cocoa & spices showed the largest decline, falling by €2.9 billion, or 16%, mainly because cocoa product prices dropped by 24%. Cereal imports fell by €801 million, or 19%, largely through lower wheat volumes, while oilseeds & protein crops declined by €536 million, or 6%. In contrast, fruit & nut imports increased by €465 million, or 4%, beef & veal imports rose by €330 million, or 28%, reflecting tight EU supplies & high prices, & imports of margarine & other vegetable oils increased by €176 million, or 9%. **Click **here** for more;*

EU MOBILISES AIRCRAFT, FIREFIGHTERS AS LAHBIB VISITS FR WILDFIRE FRONTLINE

The European Union has deployed firefighting aircraft, helicopters & personnel to support France & Spain as both countries battle major wildfires, with Preparedness, Crisis Management & Equality Commissioner Hadja Lahbib visiting south-west France to underline the bloc's solidarity with frontline responders. Lahbib travelled to Gironde, one of the French regions hardest hit by the fires, where she met the local authorities & emergency personnel to thank them for their efforts & observe the response on the ground.

Following France's activation of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, the Commission has coordinated the deployment of eight firefighting aircraft from Croatia, Luxembourg, Portugal, Sweden & Turkey, together with four helicopters from Czechia, Germany & Slovakia. The Commission is also coordinating assistance to Spain, where authorities are battling what it described as the country's largest wildfires on record. Support includes six firefighting aircraft from Greece, Italy & Turkey, one helicopter from Serbia, & 174 emergency personnel & 60 vehicles from Portugal & Serbia. Ahead of the wildfire season, the EU pre-positioned 331 firefighters from Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania & Slovakia in high-risk areas of France & Spain, while it is also providing rapid emergency mapping through the Copernicus satellite service.

Lahbib said the fires had demonstrated the value of European cooperation. "In the midst of these unprecedented wildfires, there are images that will forever remain etched in our minds, such as columns of farmers' trucks heading to Gironde to support firefighters with water supplies," she said. "This human solidarity is exactly what we are doing at the European level." The Commissioner said the bloc had strengthened its preparedness before the fire season. "Since June, nearly 800 firefighters from 14 countries have been stationed in high-risk areas," she reported. "Across Europe, firefighters are leaving their own homes to protect others. The first face people see when they flee the flames may come from another European country. They may wear different uniforms, speak different languages, but they are fighting the same fire with the same European spirit." "Thanks to our European solidarity mechanism, when France or Spain called, Europe responded with boots on the ground, planes in the air, & even satellites in space mapping the emergency in real time," Lahbib highlighted. Warning that increasingly severe wildfire seasons are linked to climate change, she concluded that "climate change is no longer knocking on Europe's door, it is already inside. The only answer is more unity, more solidarity. More Europe."

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