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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	AOB item for the meeting of the “Agriculture and Fisheries” Council on 26 January 2026: Securing EU food security and sovereignty in an uncertain world - <i>Information from the Commission and the Presidency</i>

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The annex to this note contains a summary of the outcome of the political meeting of EU agriculture ministers that took place on 7 January 2026 at the invitation of the Commission and the Cyprus Presidency, as prepared by the Commission.

## **Securing EU food security and sovereignty in an uncertain world**

Recognising that agriculture is crucial for European sovereignty and that the EU agri-food sector is key to European competitiveness through millions of jobs and added value, and that farming contributes to the preservation of population in rural areas, the European Commission together with the Cypriot Presidency convened a meeting of EU agriculture Ministers on 7 January. The Ministers and Commissioners took stock politically of the challenges facing farmers and the agri-food sector. They exchanged views on expectations for 2026. Discussions focused on concerns arising from heightened volatility and uncertainty in the global markets, as well as on the need to preserve a strong competitive position of European farmers.

This meeting shows that the EU is aware of its responsibility and fully recognises the sense of urgency felt in the sector.

This is why actions have been directed towards alleviating pressures and creating new opportunities. The meeting concretely resulted in the following outcomes:

### **1. Securing CAP support: budget and MFF post-2027**

The combination of policy and budgetary tools will provide farmers and rural communities with an unprecedented level of support, including the possibility of preserving the level of income support.

To fulfil the aims of the CAP including safeguarding a reasonable living for farmers, public support is essential for providing predictable income support, incentives, crisis management, and investment capacity for farmers. This is duly recognised with the proposal for National and Regional Partnership Plans which ensures that farmers and rural communities across the EU will continue to rely on a secured budget at EU level. The National and Regional Partnership Fund will provide a ringfenced allocation of EUR 293.7 billion while providing Member States with additional resources to top up this secured allocation. The National and Regional Partnership Plan as a whole offers potential to achieve more than today, finding synergies of spending for actions benefitting agriculture and other policy areas, such as water management and energy.

In addition, the Commission proposed the Unity Safety Net of EUR 6.3 billion which effectively doubles the current crisis reserve and will shield farmers from the impact of potential market crisis. In addition, farmers will benefit from the possibility to receive crisis payments out of the 10% flexibility amount in the National and Regional Partnership Plans in case of natural disasters, adverse climatic events or animal diseases.

In addition, the Commission has proposed that at least 10% of the resources of each National and Regional Partnership Plan will have to be dedicated to supporting investments in rural areas. Member States will allocate their rural target share to measures to be implemented in the agricultural sector at the initial stage of programming, similar to what happens in the current budget cycle, unless they decide for measures dedicated to rural areas. This rural target will amount to EUR 48,7 billion, which may increase up to EUR 63,7 billion through the possibility offered by Catalyst Europe loans.

Furthermore, to ensure that **additional resources** are available as of 2028 for addressing the needs of farmers and rural communities, the Commission has proposed that Member States will have access, when submitting their initial plan from 2028, of up to two thirds of the amount normally available for the midterm review. This represents about EUR 45 billion that can be mobilised immediately to support farmers and rural communities.

The agri-food sector will also benefit from the European Competitiveness Fund and the Research programme, especially through its ‘window’ dedicated to biotech, bioeconomy, health and agriculture, which is proposed to amount to EUR 40 billion as a whole.

## **2. Fertilisers: improving availability and affordability, strengthening domestic production, and reducing dependencies.**

The availability and affordability of fertilisers are essential for farming and food security, while supporting the EU domestic fertiliser industry is crucial to avoid harmful strategic dependencies. While fertiliser prices have stabilised, they remain around 60% higher than in 2020.

In December 2025, the Commission already proposed EU-level action focused on fertilisers. An exception to the standard calculation rules was introduced, to reduce the impact of the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) on fertilisers, making them the only commodity to benefit from such an exception. Additionally, the Commission has just published further key data determining the pricing of CBAM obligations, so as to provide the necessary clarity.

The Commission now proposes an **additional measure in the form of tariff reductions**. The Commission will temporarily suspend the remaining Most-Favoured-Nation (MFN) tariffs on ammonia, urea and, where needed, certain other fertilisers. Safeguards would be put in place to ensure the measures are targeted and that the benefits are passed on to the farmers. This measure could enter into force quickly in 2026 and would be broadly in the same area of magnitude as the costs arising from CBAM. At the same time, the Commission will continue to work towards lowering fertilisers costs through trade agreements, including Mercosur, the implementation of the EU-US Joint Statement, and ongoing negotiations with gas-rich partners like the United Arab Emirates with a view to securing supply and strengthening Europe's resilience.

This short-term measure on conventional tariff duties would be accompanied by **guidance on the CBAM mechanism**. In its legislative proposal amending the CBAM Regulation adopted on 16 December 2025, the Commission has included a measure (new Article 27a) that enables monitoring the impact of CBAM on the internal market and allows for temporary suspension of the application of CBAM for specific goods in case of unforeseen circumstances. This provision enables the Commission to assess the situation of fertilisers with a view to triggering a temporary suspension. The Commission's guidance or Q&A guidance could clarify furthermore that such a suspension could also apply retroactively from 1 January 2026.

The Commission will continue to carefully monitor the price of fertilisers, in particular through the Fertilisers Market Observatory.

More medium-term, the Commission has already announced a Fertiliser Action Plan which will be presented in Q2 2026. This would tackle other measures, such as market transparency and the increased availability and use of recycled nutrients and alternatives, including through modifications of the regulatory framework if required.

### 3. Global competitiveness: level playing field and reciprocity

The global competitiveness of the EU agri-food sector is a strong asset for the EU's prosperity. The EU agricultural sector is already an exporting powerhouse, with agrifood export amounting to EUR 235 billion in 2024, and a surplus of EUR 64 billion. Trade is also vital for EU farming jobs, supporting 3 million jobs in the EU, i.e. 1 in 4 jobs in the sector. Continuing to keep markets open in third countries through the EU trade agreements agenda is therefore key for the economic success of the sector. The EU-Mercosur agreement itself is expected to increase EU agri-food exports to the region by 50% while ensuring the protection of 344 EU geographical indications, protecting emblematic EU food and drink products from imitation.

At the same time, farmers' interests are always carefully considered in the EU's approach to trade negotiations. Each agreement has built-in safeguards with limited market opening, carefully calibrated quotas on sensitive products, phased in gradually through slow/progressive liberalisation, bilateral safeguards. For Mercosur, the Commission acknowledged the farmers' sensitivities by going beyond the usual approach and proposing an unprecedented safeguard instrument, which defines how the safeguard clause is to be applied by the EU. The safeguard is coupled with a very reliable and strong monitoring process, a "handbrake" mechanism to respond swiftly if an unexpected surge in imports threatens any sector, a semi-automatic trigger of the safeguard investigation if certain changes of volume and prices are observed, and very short procedural timelines to conduct and finalise the investigation.

In addition, the current market emergency reserve (EUR 450 million/year) and the future Unity Safety Net (with a more significant budget of EUR 6.3 billion) can act in case major market disturbances would occur.

Maintaining the sector's competitiveness also requires ensuring a level playing field, as well as an EU regulatory environment which enables competitiveness, resilience and innovation. This is why the Commission is committed to act on the following initiatives to ensure **level playing field and reciprocity**.

The EU's food and feed safety rules are among the strongest in the world. As highlighted in the Vision for agriculture and food, the Commission pursues a stronger alignment of production standards applied to imported products. As regards the most hazardous pesticides banned in the EU, the Commission has already established a principle that such pesticide residues are not allowed back to the EU through imported products. Concrete actions under this principle are:

- Launch of a study feeding into the impact assessment mentioned in the Vision for agriculture and food.
- Proposal to amend the existing legal framework for the possibility of not allowing the import of products with residues of the most hazardous pesticides (food and feed safety omnibus).
- A draft regulation lowering all maximum residue levels to the technical zero for active substances carbendazim, benomyl and thiophanate-methyl, following developments in international standards, and forbidding the import of products containing such residues. This is relevant for imports of citrus fruit, mango and papaya.

The Commission is also stepping up its actions in relation to import controls. The number of audits carried out on non-EU countries are increased by 50%, and those carried out on EU Border Control Posts are increased by 33% in 2026-2027. The Commission will update the level of checks of official controls at the borders more frequently and will provide support to Member States carrying out most of these additional checks. A dedicated EU Task Force will be launched in late January, pulling expertise and forces from the Commission and Member States, to make import controls more efficient throughout the EU.

In addition to these measures, the Commission has already proposed an extension of the country of origin labelling in line with sectoral specificities and Single Market rules, has intensified its promotion policy with higher budget for 2026 and launched an EU-wide “Buy European” campaign.

Year 2026 is projected to remain relatively stable in terms of market situations, with some exceptions which require careful monitoring. Pressures such as falling prices for certain commodities, combined with projected increase in certain input costs, impacts of more intense and frequent weather-related events and animal diseases weigh particularly heavy on certain sectors.

The Commission, as always, closely monitors the market situation and is ready to deploy instruments at its disposal if the market situation for certain commodities deteriorates.

The unexpected spread of transboundary animal diseases also poses challenges to national authorities, farmers and industry. Within its capabilities, the Commission continuously provides technical and financial assistance combatting and eradicating these diseases. The impact of animal diseases will require continued attention both in terms of prevention and financial support instruments.

Specifically for the livestock sector, the Commission will present a Strategy in Q2 2026 which will work on strengthening the competitiveness, resilience and sustainability of the EU livestock sector, helping to ensure its long-term future.

#### **4. Further simplification**

The Commission has proposed several simplification packages to the benefit of the farmers. Two CAP packages have been successfully adopted already and are in their implementation phase. Recent environmental and food/feed packages have been proposed by the Commission and are now in the legislative procedure. The Commission expects they will be treated with utmost expedience and urgency allowing farmers to benefit from them as quickly as possible.

The Commission has announced in the environment omnibus that for certain legislation, further assessment and dialogue will take place, notably on the Water Framework Directive, nature directives and Nitrates Directive. The Commission has heard the requests to consider in this process the cumulative impact of these rules and consider in particular their proportionality.

To this end, in Q1 2026, Commission will hold an implementation dialogue with the farming community on all three acts together, with the participation of both Commissioner in charge of environment and Commissioner in charge of agriculture/food.

#### **Conclusion**

Food security is a key component of the EU's overall security and sovereignty. The future of farming and a competitive agrifood sector in Europe therefore needs to be ensured. The EU stands ready to act to where needed, in the short and longer term. The Union will continue to rigorously defend its interests in the area of farming and food security and turn the Vision for agriculture and food into reality.