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INFORMATION NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: Communication on a Vision for Agriculture and Food
Letter from Commissioner Hansen to agricultural ministers – Taking stock of the Vision

Delegations will find the letter from the Commissioner for Agriculture and Food, addressed to agricultural ministers, on the above mentioned subject, in the annex.



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Christophe Hansen
Commissioner for Agriculture and Food

Brussels, 19.02.2026

Dear Minister,

On the 19th February 2025, the European Commission presented its Vision for Agriculture and Food, a comprehensive strategy to make farming more attractive, resilient and sustainable.

One year after, it is a good moment to take stock of the implementation of this strategy and reflect on the concrete deliverables already put forward. This is a timely opportunity to reflect not only on what has been delivered, but also on why these actions have been implemented and how they fit into a coherent long-term direction for European agriculture and food systems. On top of the initiatives foreseen in the Vision, the Commission has and will deliver on **other initiatives** that are reinforcing the objectives of our Vision, showing its capabilities to adapt and address the current challenges of today and tomorrow.

An attractive agri-food sector

At the heart of the Vision lies a simple but fundamental premise: there can be no farmers in 2040 without **fair and stable remuneration**. This is why the deliverables set out in the Vision address both public and market-based sources of income.

Public support remains indispensable. Through a strong and targeted system of direct income support, investment aid and risk management instruments, the Commission continues to provide stability for farmers, particularly those most exposed to volatility or structural constraints. To this end, the Commission has secured an important financial support for the CAP in the next MFF 2028-2034 with a ring-fenced amount for income support.

The Vision marks a clear shift towards **improving remuneration from the market** and strengthening transparency. The reinforcement of rules against unfair trading practices, the strengthening of the Common Market Organisation (CMO), and transparency initiatives are designed to ensure that farmers are no longer the adjustment variable. Already in 2024, the Commission presented two legislative proposals aiming to strengthen the position of farmers in the food supply chain, including through a targeted amendment to the CMO Regulation and through new rules on cross-border enforcement against unfair trading practices (UTPs). In 2025, the Commission finalised the evaluation of the UTP Directive and presented the report to the co-legislators. Finally, the EU Agrifood Chain Observatory

H.E. Ms Maria Panayiotou
Minister of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment
Chair of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council of the European Union

Commission européenne/Europese Commissie, 1049 Bruxelles/Brussel, BELGIQUE/BELGIË – Tel. +32 22991111

has been consolidated and advanced on improving transparency in the agri-food supply chain by analysing prices, costs, and the distribution of margins and added value.

Complementing this, the Commission is opening **new income opportunities** linked to the bioeconomy, nature-based solutions and environmental services, recognising the role farmers play in managing their land. The Commission has published in November 2025 a Bioeconomy Strategy that aims to boost innovation and support European companies in making a success of the green transition. Additionally, a Roadmap towards Nature Credits has been launched in July 2025 to incentivise private investments into actions that protect and preserve nature. These actions respond to a structural challenge: the long-term sustainability of farming depends on well-functioning markets that reward quality, sustainability and innovation.

A fundamental objective of the Vision is **generational renewal**. Farmers in 2040 will be those who decide to enter the sector today. The Vision therefore places strong emphasis on access to land, finance, skills and innovation. Consequently, the Commission published in October 2025 a Strategy for generational renewal in agriculture, supported by concrete legislative proposals on the setting-up of the Starter Pack for Young Farmers and Farm Relief Services in the future CAP to make the sector attractive for the younger generations. In March 2026, the Commission will also launch the Women in farming Platform.

In 2026, the proposed legislation on cross-border enforcement against **unfair trading practices** (presented in December 2024) is expected to enter into force. This year, Commission will also work on reviewing the UTP Directive, notably to address the principle that farmers should not be forced to sell systematically under the production costs.

The Commission is also working towards establishing an **EU Observatory on Farmland**. The aim is to provide greater transparency and cooperation in land transactions and transfers of land use rights, price trends and market behaviours. In the next weeks, the Commission will launch the Expert Group on Farmland, which will constitute a forum of discussion between Member States, experts and policy makers. At the same time, a Pilot Project has been launched with a view to analyse the current state of farmland observation and monitoring in the EU (with a first deliverable this year). Furthermore, a study has been launched on the financialisation of farmland (to be finalised this year).

A competitive and resilient agri-food sector

Competitiveness is a defining pillar of the Vision. Farmers and agri-food businesses operate in a highly competitive global environment, and policy must enable rather than hinder their capacity to perform.

Simplification features prominently among the deliverables. Reducing administrative burden, streamlining requirements and improving regulatory coherence are essential to free up time and resources for productive activity. Last year, the Commission proposed to simplify the CAP and agriculture-related legislation through several omnibus packages.

Firstly, the CAP **simplification package** proposed in May 2025 was adopted by the EU co-legislators on 15th December. This will alleviate unnecessary administrative burden on farmers and administrations and move to a more flexible implementation of the CAP. Delivering concrete results in terms of simplification, the changes could save up to €1.7 billion annually for farmers and €232 million for national administrations.

Secondly, an **environmental omnibus**, presented on 10th December, will exempt farmers from certain reporting obligations. This process of simplification will continue in 2026 and will be informed by an implementation dialogue early 2026, notably on the Water Framework Directive, nature directives and Nitrates Directive.

Thirdly, in December, the Commission proposed a simplification of the **EU organic legislation** as well as a **Food and Feed Safety Omnibus** to give a boost to innovative and biocontrol products authorisation and allow targeted and efficient renewal procedures.

All these actions are in line with the goals established in the Communication A faster and simpler Europe published in February 2025. As announced in this communication, the Commission designed a comprehensive plan to thoroughly examine and “stress-test” the entire agricultural acquis that is beyond the CAP funding instrument until the end of the Commission’s mandate. Implementation dialogues with stakeholders and more technical reality checks aligned timewise with the stress-test planning will also be carried out.

Recent years have demonstrated how exposed agriculture is to external shocks — from climate extremes to geopolitical tensions and market disruptions. Ensuring food security and protecting farmers from crises are therefore essential objectives of the Vision. In March 2025, the Commission and High Representative launched the Preparedness Union Strategy to support Member States and enhance Europe's capability to prevent and respond to threats on vital societal functions as food security. In this respect, the Vision acknowledged the need to **strengthen the European Food Security Crisis Preparedness and Response Mechanism (EFSCM)**. Through its work in 2025 on the qualitative risk assessment, on stockpiling and stress testing, the EFSCM supported a shared understanding of risks and strengthened trust between public authorities and stakeholders. In 2026, the EFSCM will continue to contribute to policy developments. Future focus meetings will address best practices for managing agri-food strategic reserves (including private-public models) and developing food security preparedness plans. Furthermore, the Commission has put forward a specific range of measures to ensure Europe’s wine sector remains competitive, resilient and a vital economic force in times of several challenges facing the sector.

Trade policy and international cooperation also play a role to ensure competitiveness, by opening export opportunities while ensuring reciprocity so that European standards are not undercut by unfair competition. Trade policies support farmers in finding new market opportunities and securing the needed imports that are essential for the competitiveness of the EU agri-food sector. Trade deals represent an essential part of the equation, including the ones with Mercosur countries and India. At the same time, farmers’ interests are carefully considered, and the Commission acknowledged farmers’ sensitivities by proposing an unprecedented Safeguard clause in the agreement with Mercosur countries.

Deliverables in this area will also include strengthening risk management, crisis response and solidarity mechanisms at Union level. In the MFF proposal, the Commission proposed a **Unity Safety Net** of EUR 6.3 billion which doubles the current crisis reserve and will shield farmers from the impact of market crisis. In addition, farmers will benefit from the possibility to receive crisis payments out of the flexibility amount in the National and Regional Partnership Plans in case of natural disasters, climatic events or animal diseases.

Maintaining the sector’s competitiveness also requires ensuring a level playing field. This is why the Commission is committed to act **to ensure level playing field and reciprocity**. As highlighted in the Vision, 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 taken action: firstly, we launched a study and an impact assessment (as mentioned in the Vision); secondly, we already proposed to amend the existing legal framework for the possibility of not allowing the import of products with residues of the most hazardous pesticides; thirdly, we also proposed a draft regulation lowering all maximum residue levels to the technical zero for carbendazim, benomyl and thiophanate-methyl, following developments in international standards, and forbidding the import of products containing such residues.

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 provide support to Member States carrying out most of these additional checks. A dedicated EU Task Force has been launched in January 2026, pulling expertise from the Commission and Member States, to make import controls more efficient.

The Commission has also proposed an extension of the country of **origin labelling** in line with sectoral specificities and Single Market rules and has intensified **its promotion policy** with higher budget for 2026 together with an EU-wide “Buy European” campaign. The Vision acknowledges that agriculture sits at the centre of broader geopolitical dynamics, including enlargement and strengthened relations with like-minded partners.

Furthermore, specific attention is paid to sectors facing challenges, including **livestock**, where economic viability, environmental performance and social acceptance must be addressed together. The Vision provides a framework to accompany these sectors through tailored, forward-looking solutions. In May 2025, the Commission launched the Livestock workstream to work in constant dialogue with all stakeholders and Member States. The workstream will lead to the presentation of a Livestock Strategy in spring. The strategy aims at creating supportive conditions for the livestock sector to be resilient, competitive at global level, sustainable in all meanings and fitting European diversity.

Linked to the delivery of the strategy, the Commission will deliver a **plan to address the protein supply** in the EU. Furthermore, the Commission will also review the animal welfare legislation. To further reduce critical dependencies, the Commission will put forward a Fertiliser Action Plan in 2026.

Beyond crisis response, **robust risk-management tools** are essential to protect farmers against increasingly complex and interconnected risks, which often reinforce one another. The NRP and CAP proposals jointly address this challenge by requiring Member States to explain how their NRP plans contribute to improved risk management at farm level and by encouraging the deployment of a comprehensive and effective toolbox of risk-management instruments for farmers. Along 2026, the Commission will continue to work on these issues with relevant institutions notably the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the World Bank, with upcoming studies and exchanges to contribute to the debate.

A future-proof agri-food system

Farmers are key actors in the environmental transition. The Vision is clear that a well-functioning ecosystem is the backbone of agriculture. Soil health, water availability and climate adaptation are not external constraints but conditions for long-term productivity. Measures to accelerate access to biopesticides, foster innovation in alternatives, and reward positive environmental practices are therefore designed to support farmers in doing better and not to place additional strain on them. These have been delivered throughout 2025 in the CAP proposal (July) and the Food and Feed Safety Omnibus (December). The

Commission has also launched a Water Resilience Strategy and is delivering towards the Carbon Removals and Carbon Farming Certification.

In 2026, the work towards the establishment of the **EU On-Farm Sustainability Compass** will continue and aim to enhance the ability of farmers to measure and benchmark their sustainability performance. This year, the Commission has launched the technical work with a first workshop in March, followed by various technical and sectorial discussions with the experts and representatives of the agri-food chain.

Finally, the European Commission's **Climate Adaptation Plan** foreseen for end 2026 aims to strengthen the EU's overall resilience to climate change through a more coherent and risk-based framework. Agriculture is a key sector where improved climate risk management is essential to safeguard food security and rural livelihoods. The plan will importantly emphasize anticipating and managing increasing climate risks, such as extreme weather and long-term climate stress.

Valuing food and supporting rural areas

The success of the Vision depends on the vitality of Europe's **rural areas** and the strength of rural communities. Farming cannot thrive without attractive territories that offer quality of life, services, infrastructure and economic opportunities. Rural development and territorial cohesion are therefore core pillars of this Vision. To this end, the Commission has put forward a clear rural target of 10% in the National and Regional Partnership Plans, ensuring that a meaningful share of EU funding contributes directly to rural development objectives. This commitment will support place-based approaches, notably through LEADER, which empowers local communities, and through support for Outermost Regions, in recognition of the specific constraints of agriculture in these regions. With a coherent framework, the Commission places rural communities at the centre of the transition and reinforces their role as drivers of cohesion and long-term sustainability.

The Commission has also delivered in 2025 to **Strengthen the Rural Pact**. The two main commitments here were to hold the Rural Pact conference (which took place on September 16-17, 2025) and to renew the Pact facilitation contract with the Rural Pact Support Office. The contract was signed on December for two years, with activities beginning in January.

Moreover, the **updated Rural Action Plan**, foreseen for Q1 2026, will reinforce actions across EU policies to respond to the new European policy priorities post-2027. Notably, the updated Rural Action Plan aims, among others, to enable the right of rural people to stay - by creating the conditions for people to remain in or return to their home areas, contributing to counteract demographic changes due to lack of opportunities, and ensuring that women, young people and more marginalised groups can build lives in rural areas.

In 2026, the Commission will also hold the first **Food Dialogues** with the food system's actors, including consumers, primary producers, industry, retailers, public authorities and civil society. Special attention will be paid to the competitiveness of the food value chain, the role of public procurement, the development of short supply chains, and engaging with local authorities to shape favourable food environments. More broadly, the Commission will further engage in assessing issues of food affordability and food poverty. Additionally, the work has been launched on a scientific opinion in relation to the impact of the consumption of the so-called **Ultra-Processed Food**. Finally, the Commission has also proposed to strengthen the **EU School Scheme**, by making it mandatory. The proposal aims to improve healthy eating habits by integrating the relevant topics into awareness-raising measures for all the children participating in the EU school scheme.

At the core of the Vision is the strengthening of the enabling framework for **innovation, research and skills**. New genomic techniques, **digital solutions** and knowledge transfer are critical tools to unlock productivity gains while reducing environmental impacts. In this spirit, the Commission will work in 2026 towards a European Biotech Act II and a new strategic approach to Research and Innovation. Additionally, the CAP/MFF proposal for 2028-2034 is putting R&I at the centre, with a budget of EUR 40 billion accessible from the Horizon Europe and the European Competitiveness Fund, through its ‘window’ dedicated to biotech, bioeconomy, health and agriculture.

New way of working: Building trust and dialogue

In 2025, the European Commission intensified its **dialogue** with farmers, stakeholders and citizens to inform and shape EU agricultural policy. This was the main goal of the specific conference "Shaping the future of farming and the agri-food sector" which took place on 8 May 2025 about the specific pathways of the Vision. Throughout the year, the new European Board on Agriculture and Food (EBAF) — established in January 2025 as a high-level multi-stakeholder advisory body — held regular meetings to advise the Commission on strategic policy developments. Later in the year, the EU Agri-Food Days served as a major public forum for dialogue on securing Europe’s food and agriculture. As foreseen in the Vision, the Commission continued to facilitate exchanges using the EU CAP Network and I also had the chance to participate at several Youth Policy Dialogues with young citizens and farmers.

The European agri-food sector has many strengths and is a leader when it comes to health, safety, quality, sustainability and innovation in food production. As indicated in the Vision, we must build on these strengths and sharpen the Union responses to the challenges farmers and the agri-food sector are facing. In the current geopolitical context, we need to prepare ourselves for the future with a more assertive policy response in favour of our strategic autonomy and food sovereignty.

In the last year, thanks to our cooperation, we managed to deliver many important policy responses to our farming community. I would like to thank you for your support during the first year of the implementation of this Vision.

Together, we are advancing towards an agrifood sector which is attractive, competitive, future-proof and fair for current and future generations.

Yours faithfully,



Christophe Hansen

Annex: Implementing the Vision for Agriculture and Food - Tracking progress on flagship initiatives

Implementing the Vision for Agriculture and Food

Tracking progress on flagship initiatives

An attractive agri-food sector

Timeline

DELIVERED		
1. Generational Renewal Strategy	Q4 2025 (Presentation 25 November 2025)	2025
2. Evaluation of Unfair Trading Practices (UTP) Directive	Q4 2025 (Presentation of evaluation report)	
3. Bioeconomy Strategy	Q4 2025	
4. EU Agrifood Chain observatory (AFCO)	2025 – continued its work	2025/ 2026
IN PROGRESS/ UPCOMING		
5. Women in Farming Platform	Q1 2026	2026
6. Revision of Unfair Trading Practices (UTP) directive	Q3 2026 Review of the UTP Directive	
7. European Farmland Observatory	Q3 2025 Launch of the pilot project 2026 launch of an Expert Group. The Commission will also have new deliveries from the on-going Pilot Project. 2027 Establishment of the Observatory	2026/ 2027

A competitive and resilient agri-food sector

Timeline

DELIVERED		
8. CAP Simplification Package (Third Omnibus on agriculture)	Q2 2025 14 May 2025 Presentation of Package Q4 2025 Adopted 2025/2026 Further improvements on the CAP's secondary legislation	2025
9. Other simplification packages to the benefit of the farmers	Q4 2025 Food and feed safety omnibus Q4 2025 Presentation of the environmental omnibus package Q4 2025 Simplification of the organic regulation Q1 2026 18 February 2026 Implementation dialogue on environmental legislation impacting the farming community	
10. Reciprocity: imports bearing residues of banned hazardous pesticides	November 2025 Impact assessment launched with a study	

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	<p>December 2025 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)</p> <p>2026: Proposal for a Regulation lowering all maximum residue levels to the technical zero for active substances carbendazim, benomyl and thiophanate-methyl</p>	
11. Task force of import controls	<p>Proposed in December 2025, launch Q1 2026</p> <p>2026/2027: increased audits carried out on non-EU countries (by 50%), and those carried out on EU Border Control Posts (by 33%)</p>	
12. Team Europe approach with key International Organisations	Line of action on reciprocity at multilateral level: Q4 2025 presentation of state of play of activities – AOB in AGRIFISH, November.	
13. Agrifood promotion and economic diplomacy	Intensified its promotion policy with higher budget for 2026 and announced launch of an EU-wide “Buy European” campaign.	
14. Agrifood policy partnership dialogues	Reinforced bilateral policy dialogues	
15. Unity Safety Net	Developing a Unity Safety Net with EUR 6.3 billion foreseen in the MFF proposal 2028-2034	
16. Further develop EFSCM	Ongoing	
17. Livestock workstream	<p>Q2 2025 – Q3 2026 Stakeholder engagement</p> <p>Q2 2026 Presentation of Strategy</p>	2025/2026
18. Implementation of the recommendations of the High-Level Group on Wine	Q1 2025 Presentation of the Wine Package	2025
UPCOMING		
19. Revision of animal welfare legislation and phase out of cages	<p>Q2 2025 18 June 2025 Call for evidence launched</p> <p>19 September – 12 December 2025 Public consultation</p> <p>Q4 2026 Presentation of legislative proposals</p>	2025/ 2026
20. Diversify supply chains	Q2 2026	

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	Protein strategy Q2 2026 Fertiliser Action Plan	
21. Climate adaptation plan	Q4 2026 Presentation of the Plan	
22. Insurance initiatives for EU agriculture	2025 – 1st FI - Compass study finalised 2 nd FI-Compass study launched Q1 2026 Presentation of World Bank study results on agricultural risk management Q4 2026 Follow-up work on our FI-compass Insurance study: <i>Feasibility and Design of an EU Catastrophe Risk Financing Instruments</i> 2027 Presentation of potential initiatives	2025/2026
23. Hazardous chemicals – prohibiting production for export of chemicals banned in the European Union	TBD	

A future-proof agri-food system

Timeline

DELIVERED		
24. Water Resilience Strategy	Q2 2025 4 June 2025 Presentation of the Strategy	2025
25. Nature credits	Q3 2025 4 July 2025 Presentation of Roadmap	
26. Carbon Removals and Carbon Farming Certification	24 October 2025 Implementing act on verification rules 2026 Delegated acts for carbon farming methodologies -The Commission will assess whether to expand the scope of carbon farming to the reduction of livestock-related GHG emissions.	
UPCOMING		
27. Evaluation of the Nitrates Directive	Q1 2024-Q1 2025 Public and targeted consultations Q2 2026 Presentation of Evaluation Report	2026
28. Revision of the LULUCF Regulation	Completion of any revision by Q4 2026	

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29. On-Farm Sustainability Compass	Q2 2026 Publication of the study of existing EU farm-level benchmarking and certification schemes 2026 Multi-stakeholders workshop/Expert Group meetings	2026/2027
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Valuing food and supporting rural areas Timeline

DELIVERED		
30. Creation of an Agri-food Transition Pathway Platform	2024 Publication of Agri-food Transition Pathway 16 June 2025 Creation of Platform	2024/2025
31. Strengthening the Rural Pact	Q3 2025 - September 2025 Rural Pact conference December 2025 Rural Pact Support Office	2025
UPCOMING		
32. Impact of the consumption of ultra-processed foods	2026 Opinion from the Scientific Advisory Mechanism (SAM) to the European Commission	2026
33. Updating the Rural Action Plan	Q1 2026 Updated action plan	
34. Food Dialogues	Q1 2026 Stakeholder Dialogue	
35. Revision of Public Procurement Directives	Q2 2026 Presentation of legislative proposals	
36. EU Digital Strategy for Agriculture	TBC	
37. New EU strategic approach to R&I	Q4 2026 Conference	
38. Action plan to promote the uptake of geographical indications (GIs)	2027 Presentation of the action plan	2027

Key transversal initiatives

DELIVERED	
39. CAP proposal under new MFF	Q3 2025
40. CMO proposal under new MFF	Q3 2025
41. Conference on the Vision “ <i>Shaping the future of farming and the agri-food sector</i> ”	Q2 2025
42. European Board for AgriFood (EBAF)	Q4 2025
43. AGRIFOOD days	Q4 2025