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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: AOB item for the meeting of the “Agriculture and Fisheries” Council
on 26 May 2026:
Classification of soya under the ILUC methodology: Ensuring coherence of
EU policies and safeguarding domestic protein production
- Information from Austria, supported by Hungary, Poland and Romania

On 13 April 2026, the European Commission presented Delegated Regulation C (2026) 2306 final, classifying soya as a crop with a high risk of indirect land-use change (ILUC). While a cautious approach to limiting global ILUC effects is supported, the current classification raises significant concerns in terms of proportionality, scientific robustness, and coherence with overarching EU policy objectives.

Available evidence shows that the expansion of global soya cultivation is concentrated outside the European Union, without a demonstrated causal pathway linking EU-produced soya under renewable energy policy to indirect land-use change. At the same time, agricultural production within the EU is subject to strict and harmonised environmental standards that are not comparable to those in many third countries. A uniform global classification that does not adequately reflect regional differences in production systems, environmental standards and real-world sustainability performance, risks creating competitive distortions and disproportionately penalising sustainable EU production.

Soya plays a strategic role for EU agriculture by enhancing food and feed security, supporting more diversified and resilient farming systems, and providing an important source of income for farmers. Expanding domestic protein crop production further reduces import dependency and supports the Union's climate objectives. This also aligns with the Union's commitment to establish an EU protein strategy. At a time of geopolitical uncertainty, fragile global supply chains and increasing pressure on food systems, this classification jeopardises EU food sovereignty. By weakening domestic protein production and undermining resilient European value chains, it directly contradicts the Union's commitment to establish an EU Protein Strategy and reduce Europe's dependency on imported proteins: if we destroy existing value chains now, we destroy the very foundation for the future expansion of EU soybean production.

More specifically, as a legume, soya contributes to climate change mitigation and adaptation by fixing atmospheric nitrogen, thereby reducing the need for mineral fertilisers and improving soil health and biodiversity through a valuable diversification of crop rotations. Furthermore, soya processing generates multiple value chains. Soybean oil, as a by-product, currently provides an important feedstock for biodiesel production, with some European oil mills selling up to 80% of their soybean oil into the renewable energy market. Removing this outlet would render European soybean crushing economically unviable and place existing processing infrastructure at serious risk. Without viable buyers for soybean oil, crushers would be forced to reduce or stop purchasing from European farmers all together, leading to a decline in domestic soya production. This would undermine the investment rationale for European crushing capacity and directly contradict EU food sovereignty objectives.

Moreover, the proposed classification appears inconsistent with other EU policy priorities, notably the objective of strengthening domestic protein production and reducing dependence on fossil fuels through the promotion of sustainable biofuels and renewable energy. The current approach risks creating conflicting policy signals and undermining both agricultural and energy policy goals.

Against this background, the undersigned Member States urge the European Commission to:

- 1. Reassess the ILUC classification of soya and introduce a regional differentiation while** ensuring that sustainable EU production is not disproportionately affected by a “one-size-fits all” approach. Comparable environmental and production standards, as well as region-specific sustainability performance, must be adequately reflected in the ILUC methodology, rather than applying a uniform global classification.
- 2. Recognise EU-produced soya as a feedstock with low ILUC-risk:** Strengthen and adapt certification frameworks to adequately reflect sustainable production practices.
- 3. Assess impact on EU agriculture:** Conduct a comprehensive analysis of the effects on EU protein crop production, farm incomes, and import dependencies.
- 4. Ensure policy coherence:** Align renewable energy, agricultural and climate policies to avoid conflicting policy objectives all while supporting a resilient and sustainable EU agricultural sector.

A coherent, evidence-based and regionally differentiated approach is essential to safeguard the competitiveness of EU agriculture, strengthen European protein production, and ensure that Union policies reflect real world sustainability performance rather than abstract global averages. Against this backdrop, and in light of the severe risks to the future of EU food sovereignty, the undersigned Members are not in a position to support the proposed classification in its present form.
