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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

EU strategy on livestock

{SWD(2026) 576 final}

1. INTRODUCTION

Livestock farming is one of humanity's oldest activities. Since animals were first domesticated over 10.000 years ago, it has played a pivotal role in the social and economic development of civilisations. Across the centuries, livestock farming has not only been an indispensable part of our food system. It has also sustained European livelihoods, has become a backbone of rural economies and a defining element of our landscapes.

In today's Europe, livestock farming is a diverse and complex economic activity which represents about 40% of EU agricultural added value and generates EUR 400 billion in turnover per year. It has a strong social and territorial impact: it employs around 7 million people and relies on 4 million farms distributed across the whole European geography, often in areas with few alternative economic activities. From the Alpine pastures to the Eastern border regions, from the Arctic areas to the Southern *dehesas* and the EU outermost regions as well as Mediterranean islands, Europe rural areas need livestock for their survival. With its crucial role in keeping population in rural areas and their economic vitality, it provides a strong contribution to EU security and preparedness objectives. The European Eastern border flank is at high risk of land abandonment, accompanied by fast reducing livestock population, which further reduces the resilience of these regions to respond to crisis and security risks ⁽¹⁾.

The EU livestock farming sector plays a crucial role in contributing to food security by providing high quality protein, not only in the EU but also at global level, with a positive EU trade balance and a growing demand for EU products thanks to world-leading standards, quality and sustainability ⁽²⁾, which allow them to carry the flag of European excellence across the globe.

As a key strategic sector for the Union competitiveness and open strategic autonomy, this strategy sets out actions to tackle its existing vulnerabilities and increase its resilience in a world of growing market competition. At the same time, the sector needs to better respond to the increasing societal expectations, in particular on animal welfare, turn its environmental footprint into positive externalities and strengthen its territorial anchorage. Improvements in the food chain integration and taking a full circular approach would enable the valorising of all by-products and biomass to generate additional income for farmers, while reducing the carbon footprint of livestock production.

As announced in the Vision for Agriculture and Food ⁽³⁾, the EU livestock sector deserves a long-term strategy that respects the diversity and specificities of livestock production across Europe. Continuing the transition towards a resilient, competitive and sustainable livestock sector in the EU is key to fighting depopulation in the most vulnerable territories while at the same time contributing to the goal of reaching climate neutrality by 2050. Such transition will be among the objectives supported by the CAP post-2027, thereby

⁽¹⁾ Communication on the EU's eastern regions bordering Russia, Belarus and Ukraine COM(2026) 82 final

⁽²⁾ Globally, meat consumption is expected to still grow due to rapid population and income growth. The Union is a leading global trader in animal products. In 2025, the EU exported EUR 53 billion worth of animal products, while imports amounted to EUR 16 billion. Dairy products are leading: in 2025 they were worth EUR 20.7 billion with a net trade surplus of EUR 18 billion. The EU's trade balance in animal products has been positive over the past decade.

⁽³⁾ A Vision for agriculture and food: Shaping together an attractive EU farming and food sector for future generations, COM/2025/75 final

underpinning the implementation of the Generational Renewal Strategy ⁽⁴⁾, the EU Bioeconomy Strategy ⁽⁵⁾, the forthcoming new rural action plan ⁽⁶⁾, the Fertiliser Action Plan ⁽⁷⁾ and the communication on wildfire risk management ⁽⁸⁾. At international level, the Commission engages with multilateral bodies to accompany that transition through the alignment of international standards, notably the FAO in the framework of the Global Plan of Action for Sustainable Livestock.

To ensure the long-term viability of the EU livestock sector, a strategy is needed to:

- Advance towards a **resilient livestock system** that withstands crisis and is better adapted to climate stress,
- Strengthen its **competitiveness** at EU and global level,
- Future-proof the sector by **strengthening animal welfare conditions** and **minimising its climate and environmental footprint**,
- Ensure that livestock production systems continue to **fit the unique characteristics of different regions**, sustain rural economies and traditions across Europe and continue to contribute to the maintenance of their rich biodiversity,
- Foster **excellence** in livestock production as a distinct European approach to livestock farming that is recognised and valued by consumers, in particular when it comes to animal welfare.

The strategy builds on extensive stakeholder engagement, framed by the Livestock Workstream, including more than one year of dialogue with Member States, farmers, industry representatives, and civil society, including the European Board on Agriculture and Food. It is accompanied by a protein plan to make the EU protein system more resilient and sustainable. This Communication, based on a diagnosis of the sector's strengths and weaknesses presented in the accompanying Commission Staff Working Document, takes account of the European Parliament's own initiative report *'How to secure a sustainable future for the EU livestock sector in light of the need to ensure food security, farmers' resilience and the challenges posed by animal diseases?'* ⁽⁹⁾.

2. THE EU LIVESTOCK SECTOR TODAY

2.1. Challenges and opportunities

The EU livestock sector is facing a combination of structural and day-to-day pressures. These pressures are already contributing to farm exits in some regions, particularly in cattle, sheep and goats, and raise concerns about the long-term continuity of livestock

⁽⁴⁾ Strategy for generational renewal in agriculture, COM (2025) 872 final

⁽⁵⁾ A Strategic Framework for a Competitive and Sustainable EU Bioeconomy, COM(2025) 960 final

⁽⁶⁾ Reviewed EU rural action plan Accompanying the document Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions The long-term vision for the EU's rural areas: key achievements and ways forward, SWD/2024/451 final

⁽⁷⁾ Fertiliser Action Plan: Partnership for ensuring the availability, affordability and strategic autonomy in home-grown EU fertilisers, COM (2026) 310 final

⁽⁸⁾ Communication on integrated wildfire risk management, COM (2026) 330 final

⁽⁹⁾ 2025/2053(INI)

activity in parts of the Union. For example, France lost 16% of its bovine population in the last decade and, in the same period, Germany lost 22% of its pig population.

A central challenge is **profitability**. High input costs, market volatility, and exposure to price fluctuations in feed and energy continue to compress margins. At the same time, compliance with high EU standards necessary to protect animal welfare, food safety, climate and environmental protection may generate production costs that are not always reflected in market prices. Farmers also face weak bargaining power towards the buyers.

The EU livestock sector also faces sustainability challenges. It is a major source of agricultural greenhouse gas emissions, ammonia and nutrient pollution, affecting climate, air, water quality and biodiversity. While emissions have been consistently declining, the pace is slow. The concentration of livestock production in some EU areas creates nutrient imbalances, resulting in nutrient pollution. At the same time, extensive grazing livestock is essential to maintain grasslands that support biodiversity, rural biotopes, conserve nature and help prevent land abandonment and depopulation of rural areas.

Several **structural vulnerabilities** further shape the sector's outlook. An ageing farming population, insufficient generational renewal, labour shortages—including in rural veterinary services—and demanding working conditions threaten its future capacity. Climate change impacts and animal disease outbreaks weigh on economic results.

The future of the EU livestock sector must build on its important strengths and opportunities. The EU livestock sector is rooted in tradition but underpinned by innovation and entrepreneurship. Its diversity of production systems, species, and territories enhances resilience and adaptability. High EU standards fortify consumer trust and enable strong positioning in premium markets. In several sectors, efficient production systems, advanced veterinary services and well-developed supply chains support productivity and export performance. Innovation and the adoption of circular bioeconomy approaches are improving both the competitiveness and environmental outcomes. Increasingly, farmers are not only food producers, but also guardians of nature, tourism accommodation providers and “energy-farmers”, producing renewable energy for on-farm purposes and in many cases for wider consumption, reducing EU dependencies on fossil-based alternatives.

3. THE STRATEGY

The Union of 2040 must be a place where sustainable livestock farming not only survives but thrives.

The sector must be supported by a coherent policy framework that is simple, predictable and takes farming realities into account. In the next programming period and without prejudging ongoing MFF negotiations, the CAP will continue to be the key pillar of support, both for income, investments and incentives, within the future National and

Regional Partnership plans, complemented by the proposed Horizon Europe Programme ⁽¹⁰⁾ and European Competitiveness Fund (ECF) ⁽¹¹⁾ to stimulate innovation.

This strategy delivers a long-term direction for the sector's competitiveness and sustainability, in a context of increased preparedness. It translates into operational action points at EU, Member-State and stakeholder level, with an emphasis on targeted, territorial solutions adapted to different production systems and regions, taking a holistic, coherent, cross-policy approach.

The Commission intends to maintain the **livestock workstream** as a forum for discussion and further development of certain initiatives identified below, as it provides an inclusive way of delivering the Strategy.

3.1. A resilient livestock sector that withstands crisis

A resilient livestock system is essential for the Union's food security, strategic autonomy and rural vitality. Resilience means more than the capacity to recover after a shock. It also means being able to anticipate risks, reduce vulnerabilities, adapt to structural changes and continue to provide safe, sustainable and affordable food under increasingly difficult conditions. For the livestock sector, this is now a pressing priority. Producers face growing pressure from volatile markets, rising input and fixed costs, climate change, water scarcity, animal diseases, labour shortage and lack of skilled workers, geopolitical instability and unfair global competition. A stronger and more resilient sector is therefore necessary both to protect farmers' livelihoods and to preserve the Union's capacity to produce.

A first priority is to strengthen the framework for risk management. Livestock farmers need better access to finance, insurance, reinsurance, mutual funds and income stabilisation tools that reflect the specific risks of the sector, including climate events, market disruption and animal diseases. Future policy should improve coherence between risk management and crisis management so that emergency support does not substitute for preparedness but complements it.

In this context, the Commission is preparing the groundwork with financial institutions, including the European Investment Bank, to explore the possibility of developing a **dedicated risk-management financial scheme under the post-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework**, covering climate-related insurance and reinsurance needs and extending support to risks linked to animal diseases, to complement existing instruments ⁽¹²⁾.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL establishing Horizon Europe, the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, for the period 2028-2034 laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulation (EU) 2021/695, COM/2025/543 final

⁽¹¹⁾ Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on establishing the European Competitiveness Fund ('ECF'), including the specific programme for defence research and innovation activities, repealing Regulations (EU) 2021/522, (EU) 2021/694, (EU) 2021/697, (EU) 2021/783, repealing provisions of Regulations (EU) 2021/696, (EU) 2023/588, and amending Regulation (EU) [EDIP], COM/2025/555 final

⁽¹²⁾ fi-compass, 2025, an overview of agricultural climate risk trends across Europe under the current climate and in 2050 - Insurance and Risk Management Tools for Agriculture in the EU (https://www.fi-compass.eu/sites/default/files/publications/EAFRD_AGRI_Insurance_Risk_MA.pdf)

The risk management toolbox under the current and future CAP is already quite comprehensive ⁽¹³⁾, giving Member State options to choose and adapt those tools to their needs. The Commission will prepare a **manual with practical orientations on risk management**, drawing on EU and international expertise, so that Member States can better reflect these needs in their future NRP plans. This **will complement CAP recommendations** that will also cover risk management aspects. The Commission will also assess and reduce, where relevant, administrative barriers in the setting-up of specific risk management tools, as mutual funds, to address low uptake, particularly by small farms.

A second priority is to strengthen disease prevention and response. Animal diseases including zoonoses remain among the most serious threats to livestock resilience, biodiversity and potentially human health. Recent outbreaks, which have intensified strongly in their frequency, have shown the scale of the economic and social damage they can cause, including the destruction of large numbers of animals and disruptions to trade and rural activity. **Strong biosecurity measures** remain a first line of defence and are an essential element of prevention. Furthermore, the **evaluation of the Animal Health Law** will provide a basis for updating the Union's One Health approach to disease management, including a broader and science-based use of preventive vaccination where appropriate. To reinforce adaptability to emerging risks and diseases, the **Commission will review whether the current disease categorisation system remains fit for purpose** and whether the categorisation criteria adequately address specific challenges. To strengthen harmonised disease control measures across the EU, the Commission will continue to propose updates to legislation in line with the latest scientific developments and international standards as laid down by the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) and will adopt implementing rules to clarify roles and responsibilities more clearly. To support a wider and science-based use of preventive vaccination, the **Commission will also assess whether the current vaccination rules and principles remain appropriate.**

This work should be based on the latest scientific advice from the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and supported by stronger international engagement to promote acceptance of EU sanitary measures. To address the uneven recognition by third countries of regionalisation, the Commission will further support Member States by developing **guidance on the application of vaccination coupled with regionalisation and compartmentalisation**, while continuing to advocate recognition of the EU's regionalisation approach including vaccination with trading partners in bilateral and multilateral fora.

Continued **research and innovation in animal health and vaccination**, including DIVA vaccines ⁽¹⁴⁾, remain essential, including on potential vaccines for major transboundary diseases. The proposed dedicated window under the Horizon Europe framework will support this work.

As part of the preventive measures, the Commission will continue to support and strengthen Member States' capacity in the surveillance of the relevant animal diseases,

⁽¹³⁾ World Bank: Solutions for Better Agri-Risk Management in the European Union (<https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099032326044016306>)

⁽¹⁴⁾ DIVA (Differentiating Infected from Vaccinated Animals) vaccines are a specialised type of vaccine designed to distinguish between animals that have been vaccinated and those that have been naturally infected with a disease. This distinction is crucial for effective disease control, surveillance, and trade regulations in livestock and other animal.

ensuring **early detection and early action**. Early warning mechanisms are very important. The Commission will assess how to finance the improvement of existing systems, better integrate digitalisation in detection and warning, as well as how to improve information dissemination to the farmers across the EU (apps, hotlines).

At the same time, **adequate EU financing is key for prevention, surveillance, control and eradication**, especially for emergency measures in the event of outbreaks. The EU facility proposed under the MFF enables a common policy in the areas of health and safety (including for animals) and can provide dedicated support in case of animal diseases, subject to annual budgetary procedures. Member States could also provide within their NRP plans enhanced farmers' access to and uptake of preventive tools, including biosecurity and vaccines and ensure adequate advisory services and sufficient veterinary staffing by introducing financial incentives for veterinarians in rural areas, while stakeholders are expected to enhance on-farm biosecurity measures and mainstream best practices to prevent animal diseases.

A third priority is to invest more in climate change adaptation, mitigation and innovation. This could include support for innovations that reduce emissions intensity, improve nutrient management and strengthen the contribution of livestock systems to circular economy, alongside adaptation measures. Resilience depends increasingly on the sector's ability to cope with climate stress and use resources more efficiently. Increasing water use efficiency can contribute to both water and farmers' resilience. This includes the preservation and sustainable use of genetic resources and breeding strategies that improve resilience traits such as drought tolerance, heat resistance. Cutting-edge genomic and animal breeding techniques are a win-win for both economic and environmental outcomes. They lead to lower feed use and reduce emissions, meaning savings for the farmers and less exposure to volatile price fluctuations. Better resilience also requires improved housing and ventilation, flood protection and other climate-resilient infrastructure.

Research and innovation on sustainable practices and technology are essential enablers of a more resilient EU livestock sector ⁽¹⁵⁾. **The EU should also focus on scaling up and deploying solutions**. This should comprise support for a stronger and more coordinated R&I effort on sustainable livestock systems, the **development and uptake** of practical tools such as decision-support systems, sensors, big data applications, robotics, early-warning solutions and precision livestock farming, while promoting a systems-based and place-based approach. To accelerate the impact on the ground, **innovation should be more closely aligned with farmers' needs**, so that resilient solutions are tested, scaled up and deployed more rapidly across regions and production systems. This will be supported by the upcoming new strategic approach to research and innovation AgRI 2040 and Food 2040. This new approach identifies livestock as a key area of action for research and innovation and puts emphasis on the better valorisation of research and innovation results into startups, scaleups and full industrial deployment.

Resilience also requires that the livestock sector must become less dependent on imported inputs and more capable of relying on domestic and circular resources, as developed in the Protein Plan and the Fertiliser Action Plan. At the same time, closer integration with candidate and partner countries offers opportunities to strengthen the

⁽¹⁵⁾ Different financial instruments under the MFF post-2027 could support a stronger and more coordinated R&I effort on sustainable and resilient livestock systems, covering animal health and welfare, disease prevention and vaccines, mixed systems, climate adaptation and mitigation, environmental impact reduction, feed and nutrient efficiency, genetic resources and breeding for resilience traits, circular bioeconomy solutions, social innovation, and digital technologies.

Union's resilience and strategic autonomy by gradually developing more integrated and sustainable agri-food value chains.

Example of cooperative investment projects for resilience:

- Installing on-farm solar panels and a shared biogas unit using manure, reducing dependence on external energy and fertilisers.
- Building a water storage and recycling system to cope with droughts and heatwaves.
- Joining a mutual fund and climate insurance scheme supported by Member State policies to stabilise income during extreme weather events.

Member States should **continue supporting agricultural practices that integrate resilience and sustainability into their business models, such as organic farming**, and incentivise transition to long-term resilience through transition payments. **Generational renewal** measures should better reflect the specific situation of livestock farming.

Better cooperation along the supply chain can help reduce price volatility and improve access to inputs, while participation in knowledge-sharing platforms and innovation partnerships can speed up the spread of good practices.

Example: In an area vulnerable to bluetongue, lumpy skin disease or avian influenza, authorities and stakeholders ensure a coordinated disease prevention system:

- Member States through NRP plans co-fund biosecurity upgrades (disinfection stations, controlled farm access, separation zones).
- Farmers receive, through NRPP funds, training via advisory services and EIP-AGRI groups on disease prevention and contingency planning.
- Member States and livestock value chain embark on a cost-sharing framework to jointly fund responses to disease outbreaks, including compensation for affected producers, based on pre-arranged financial mechanisms (costs for eradication, containment and recovery are split between public and private levies/insurance pools).
- A public-private vaccination and surveillance programme is rolled out as new vaccines become available through EU-supported R&I.

Member States have a central role in turning these objectives into practical support on the ground:

- by including resilience investments in their NRP plans and improving farmers' access to disease prevention tools,
- promoting insurance and mutual funds tailored to livestock sectors,
- ensuring that training and farm advisory services include strong expertise on livestock resilience,
- supporting investments and agri-environmental and climate actions (AECAs), including efficiency schemes, that help preserve and sustainably use **livestock genetic resources** that strengthen resilience of the livestock sector and support biodiversity, healthy soils and water resilience as a basis for livestock sector resilience,
- considering measures to address shortages in rural veterinary services, for example through targeted incentives or digital consultations, and support digital skills, connectivity and investment at farm level,

- supporting producer organisations, cooperative models and CAP sectoral interventions can help strengthen farmers' bargaining power and capacity to manage risk collectively.

3.2. A competitive livestock sector at EU and global level

To effectively compete in the global market, the livestock sector needs a more predictable long-term framework for investments, use the leverage of advanced technologies and innovative practices, while benefitting from a level playing field and reduced regulatory burden. The current trend of decapitalisation needs to be halted, and profitability increased, if the European value chain for livestock is to remain competitive and attract new entrants into the profession. The maintenance of high EU food safety and animal health, animal welfare and environmental standards must allow the sector to respond robustly to the pressure of global competition.

The priority is to help the sector close the investment gap, boost its uptake of innovation and digitalisation to modernise, bolster competitiveness and sustainability. For many livestock farmers, and in particular young and new ones, significant upfront capital is needed for modern infrastructure, machinery and manure management systems. The Fi-Compass estimates a financing gap for livestock sector of over 18 billion EUR ⁽¹⁶⁾.

While the Commission is assessing the impact of its animal welfare review, certain studies estimate that the transition to cage-free systems entails significant investment needs ⁽¹⁷⁾. **Such financing needs cannot be met from a single source but require a combination of instruments and measures by both the EU and Member States.** Those include better market remuneration, public support, access to financial instruments and private investments, as well as tapping into the potential of new circular business models and better valorising by-products. It requires also skills, financial literacy and adequate advice as well as more stable and clearer legal framework.

The CAP remains a key tool to support farmers' income, incentivise them to make sustainability efforts and provide investment support, and the next financing period offers opportunities tailored to different needs, from small to large farms. With a combination of various measures, including investments in infrastructure and support for innovative projects, the proposed NRP plans and the ECF could help scale up investments in sustainability, competitiveness and resilience.

⁽¹⁶⁾ <https://www.fi-compass.eu/library/market-analysis/financial-gap-eu-agricultural-sector?page=1>

⁽¹⁷⁾ *Studies commissioned by farmers organisations to estimate the impact of transitioning to cage-free systems in the laying hens and pig sector indicate investment needs at EU level of some €6.7 billion for the pig sector¹(EUR 0,02 per kg of pig meat for a 15 year depreciation period), and €2.6 billion for the laying hen sector² (EUR 0,0017 per egg for a 15 year depreciation period). Costs arise primarily from the need to convert or replace existing housing facilities and install the infrastructure and equipment required for cage-free production. These data are cited by way of example only. The Commission is preparing an impact assessment analysing all relevant data and issues linked to its planned proposals.*

¹ Potori et al. (2024). *An Assessment of the Impacts of the Phasing Out of Cages in EU Livestock Farming: The Pig Sector*. *Agriculture*, 14(1), 111.

² Majewski et al. (2024). *An Assessment of the Impacts of the Phasing Out of Cages in EU Livestock Farming: The Layer Sector*. *Agriculture*, 14(2), 187.

The Commission **will consider all options, including exploring a potential dedicated financial instrument for the livestock sector to bridge the financing gap for investments in the transition to higher levels of sustainability and animal welfare.**

Member States should also consider other initiatives, such as better access to loans, state-guaranteed loans, public procurement instruments, market measures and more favourable loan conditions for all farmers, in particular young and new entrants. The Commission will explore with the European Investment Bank preferential access to loans for farmers engaged in a transition to cage-free systems based on the outcome of the legislative revision. In parallel, schemes rewarding carbon farming and nature credits could provide additional value to farms investing in more sustainable livestock systems.

In addition to funding, it is critical to ensure a **stable, predictable and clear legal framework** that allows for long-term planning and investments. This will boost investors' confidence and facilitate investment decisions which often take decades to repay. **Permit granting procedures** by national, regional and local authorities are driving some of this uncertainty and need to be addressed as a priority. To increase legal certainty for both economic operators and public authorities, at the end of 2025, the Commission made a proposal on acceleration of permit-granting procedures ⁽¹⁸⁾ and a proposal on speeding up environmental assessment. A stress test of the Birds and Habitats Directives is ongoing and the Commission will follow it up as appropriate with further actions.

To stimulate better reward from the market, it is necessary to work on better informing consumers, **aligning consumer expectations with fair pricing mechanisms and pursuing market diversification** to benefit from high value markets.

Enhanced competitiveness must be fair. Strengthening the position of farmers in the food chain and protecting them against unfair trading practices is a long-standing priority that will be strengthened with the review of the Unfair Trading Practices (UTP) Directive ⁽¹⁹⁾, building on experience to date. Farmers must get **better remuneration, including from emerging economic activities linked to the development of the bioeconomy and by-product valorisation.** The Commission will assess how best to integrate these aspects in the work of the EU agri-food chain Observatory to provide market transparency along the value chain and build trust.

Sustainability and circularity are a strong business case for the farmers. Circular practices and the bioeconomy enhance feed autonomy and maximise biomass valorisation (including animal by-products), which in turn reduce waste, and provide more predictable income for farmers. **By-products such as wool or manure are not a waste but rather a resource** that has value and serves multiple purposes in a circular bioeconomy, and legislation should recognise their characteristics and potential. Downstream actors (e.g. dairy or meat producers) increasingly see the business case for offering rewards to farmers that reduce on-farm emissions, making sustainable livestock operations more competitive.

Competitiveness must also be enhanced by **better food chain integration, and the development of meat quality standards.** The potential of dairy-beef integration should

⁽¹⁸⁾ Proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directives (EU) 2018/2001, (EU) 2019/944, (EU) 2024/1788 as regards acceleration of permit-granting procedures – COM(2025) 1007

⁽¹⁹⁾ Directive (EU) 2019/633 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on unfair trading practices in business-to-business relationships in the agricultural and food supply chain. ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2019/633/oj>

be further promoted. Better alignment across the supply chains could improve both economic and environmental performance of dairy and beef systems. High quality value chains in rural areas and infrastructure are equally important. Experience with the development of producer organisations and cooperatives shows how tools embedded in the Common Market Organisation (CMO) Regulation ⁽²⁰⁾ help strengthen farmers' position in the value chain and increase their share of the value created.

Fairness is not only internal, but also external. Fostering **reciprocity and greater alignment in production standards across the globe** requires appropriate controls, effective safeguards and a continuous drive for high standards. This is ongoing work and a clear priority. Import of products produced to lower standards not only disadvantage EU producers commercially but also displace rather than reduce global emissions. The enhancement of controls on food, animal and plant products entering the EU is under way and has been significantly strengthened ⁽²¹⁾. Safeguards are standard practices in agreements concluded by the Union, and they protect European farmers against any harmful imports. This includes well-calibrated quotas with volumes linked to EU market conditions and automatic safeguard clauses for certain agreements that provide an additional layer of protection. High food safety standards, especially on antimicrobial and hormone usage, are rigorously enforced. **Animal welfare rules are being reviewed to ensure better alignment of standards for imported products.** For the future financial period, the proposal to establish a Unity Safety Net with substantial budget will equip the Union to better protect the farmers in times of market volatility. At the same time, the Commission will engage in a dedicated **agri-food diplomacy, step up its high-level missions and promotion measures to open new market opportunities for European exports.**

Simplification is an essential component of competitiveness. Important work has been launched but further effort is needed to enable agri-food sector to benefit from a legal framework that is conducive to innovation and competitiveness, while respecting animal health, welfare and food and feed safety standards. The ongoing discussion on the food and feed safety omnibus will provide much needed simplification. There is a need to **make EU hygiene legislation** more agile and to make better use of the flexibility provisions therein, allowing adaptations to the structure and layout of low-capacity slaughterhouses, while respecting food safety and animal welfare standards and effectively combining them with operational practicality. The proposed amendment to the **feed additives** regulatory framework in the food and feed omnibus will provide a favourable environment for the development and availability of new innovative feed additives, while the work on further simplification needs is on-going, including as part of the broader implementation dialogues as well as **Food Dialogues**. In addition, the **animal by-product rules require adjustments** to better facilitate circular economy, without jeopardising animal health, food and feed safety standards.

3.3. A sustainable livestock sector

Investing in sustainability is an investment in farming's long-term future. Higher animal welfare standards can deliver improved economic results, reduced disease risk and

⁽²⁰⁾ Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 establishing a common organisation of the markets in agricultural products and repealing Council Regulations (EEC) No 922/72, (EEC) No 234/79, (EC) No 1037/2001 and (EC) No 1234/2007. ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2013/1308/oj>

⁽²¹⁾ [Commission announces reinforcement of controls on products imported into the EU](#)

broader-support, provided that welfare gains translate into measurable health, productivity or premium price benefits – a net effect that varies depending on the sector and market conditions. Nitrogen use efficiency in food and bioeconomy systems ⁽²²⁾, including through fertiliser efficiency, protects water and soils while reducing input costs. Climate-resilient infrastructure can withstand the impacts of extreme weather events and provide long-term return on investment.

Success depends on the ability of farmers to invest. This is why the transition to address sustainability challenges must be **fair and balanced**. Raising sustainability ambition brings questions about **how the costs are distributed along the value chain**. In some cases, transition to sustainability improvements can entail higher production costs for farmers, lower yields or reduced stocking densities. Some agricultural practices like organics allow to maintain high-environmental and animal welfare ambition with profitability for farmers. For other systems, when these costs cannot be fully absorbed by farmers or the rest of the supply chain, they are ultimately reflected in higher food prices, borne by consumers, without increasing producers' income and possibly leading to falling demand. This underlines the need for a carefully calibrated transition that delivers sustainability gains for farmers and society, while managing trade-offs and maintaining social acceptability.

The Union and Member States should enable the farmer to choose measures supporting the transition best suited for their individual farms and practices and facilitate the decision on how to make their business more sustainable.

Value chain sustainability agreements in which all actors, including the intermediary and retail sectors, assume part of the responsibility are promising tools for supporting a fair transition. They allow, for example, the retail sector to reward higher standards undertaken by the farmers. The Commission, Member States and private actors should further promote such form of cooperation.

Any long-term vision for the livestock sector needs to start with leveraging its diversity. The rich EU mosaic cannot be sustained through a one-size-fits-all approach. It requires tailored, place-based solutions that reflect local realities and build on regional strengths.

Building on progress already made, which cements the **European livestock sector among the most productive and environmentally efficient ⁽²³⁾ in the world**, the design of the new programming period is an opportunity to transform this diversity into tangible interventions that give long-term direction.

Animal welfare is at the heart of citizens' concerns when it comes to livestock farming. As stated by the European Parliament, "the expected global increase in animal protein consumption represents an opportunity for the EU to position itself as a global leader in climate- and animal-friendly agriculture". Enforcement of existing rules and a progressive follow-up to the European Citizens' Initiative "End the Cage Age" is needed to address citizens' concerns, focusing on sectors where a transition to non-confined housing system

⁽²²⁾ The [EU Bioeconomy Strategy](#) "A Strategic Framework for a Competitive and Sustainable EU Bioeconomy. COM/2025/960 final" will work on assessing best bioeconomy practices and innovations to increase nitrogen use efficiencies in bioeconomy systems and value networks

⁽²³⁾ FAO: Greenhouse gas emissions from agrifood systems, Global, regional and country trends, 2000–2022

is feasible, is evidence-based and accompanied by sufficient transition periods and financial support allowing farmers to adapt. Given the scale of the investments needed, the transition will require support that spans the next financing period and beyond.

High welfare standards improve resource efficiency for example by reducing mortality rates, extending animals' productive lifespans and improving feed conversion. While today the laying hens' sector mainly relies on the killing of **male day-old chicks**, citizens' ethical demands can be addressed by stopping this practice by relying on in-ovo sexing technologies, which are now available. They can strengthen the EU's egg sector's reputation for premium, ethically produced goods. While being available and used in certain Member States, the technology is not yet fully accessible and affordable for small and medium-sized hatcheries across the EU. This requires further efforts to bring down the costs and scale up the deployment. By the end of 2026, the Commission intends to propose a **targeted revision of animal welfare rules for laying hens and broilers**, focusing on the phasing-out of cages, practical on-farm welfare indicators, ending the systematic killing of male chicks and equivalent import requirements. To valorise the transition away from male day-old chick killing, the Commission will explore the possibility to update egg marking rules to better inform consumers, including in third countries, about improvements made by farmers. By Q2 2027, a similar proposal will address **pig welfare**, including the transition from crates to pen systems.

The debate around the export of live animals to third countries, especially for immediate slaughter, has become pivotal in recent years. New outbreaks and reoccurring animal diseases in EU Member States result in – sometimes unjustified – frequent trade barriers. At the same time, natural disasters and fluctuating security situations around destination countries threaten the plannability of such practices both on road and on sea. These may also raise animal welfare concerns. Therefore, the Commission will closely exchange with relevant stakeholders, civil society and destination third countries, and depending on the outcome of these exchanges, will consider further steps, including possible alternatives to the export of animals for slaughter from the EU to third countries, while maintaining the market positions of European livestock producers.

These high standards for EU producers must be met with reciprocal requirements for imported products, with adequate enforcement tools. Third countries may have lower animal welfare practices while EU citizens expect all products on the EU market to follow high welfare standards. The modernisation of EU's animal welfare rules and the EU's Trade agreements provide an essential opportunity to **introduce equivalent animal welfare requirements for imported products**, in line with WTO standards.

Sustained efforts to reduce emissions from livestock remains one of the priorities. While EU enteric methane emissions from livestock represent a small share at the global level, they represent the largest source ⁽²⁴⁾ of agricultural emissions in the EU. Addressing these emissions requires a science- and systems-based approach, building on existing good practices and further supported by innovation and technology. Different livestock productions have different climate externalities and potentials to address them, which must be taken into account too.

(24) BOSCO, S., CHEN, M., BIELZA, M., MONTERO CASTAÑO, A., SCHIEVANO, A. et al., Livestock Feeding and Sustainability: Mapping Environmental, Climate, and Productivity Outcomes, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2025, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2760/3398918> (online), JRC143817.

First and foremost, **effective methane reduction policy requires accurate measurement**. Certain existing methodologies for estimating livestock emissions do not fully reflect the actual variation in emissions across diverse production systems, breeds and feeding regimes. The IPCC methodology Tier 1 and Tier 2 approaches could underrepresent the value of on-farm improvements and genetic diversity. At the same time, discussions are on-going to explore the need to take account of the biogenic nature of methane emissions as part of a short-term carbon cycle. More refined approaches are needed to better reflect real management practices and ensure a more accurate and fair assessment of livestock's climate performance. The Commission will therefore work on a **harmonised methodology for livestock GHG emissions at farm level and will promote monitoring tools** that better reflect measures implemented at farm level and are more adapted to the needs of EU livestock sector. It will build on the work started by certain Member States ⁽²⁵⁾ aimed at developing Tier 3 emissions that enable more accurate and differentiated emissions accounting. This work will link to the further development of production methods under the marketing standards and the EU excellence approach (see point 3.5 below). Results should also help to improve the accuracy of Member States' national GHG inventories. The EU also stands ready to exchange on measurement and mitigation practices with global partners in accordance with its global leadership on methane abatement through the Global Methane Pledge and related initiatives. In close cooperation with farmers representatives and stakeholders of the food value chain, the Commission is developing a **voluntary, on-farm sustainability compass for farmers**. This science-based framework will enable practical and comparable assessment of the key dimensions of sustainability across diverse farming systems. The compass can also be used as a management tool to guide decisions, track progress, and report performance transparently over time, and to engage in premium schemes or contracts that reward verified emission reductions, improved animal welfare, and the delivery of ecosystem services. It will enable the assessment of **performance based on results achieved on the ground**, gradually moving away from a requirements-based approach. In addition, based on a pilot certification methodology, the Commission is assessing the inclusion of livestock emission reductions in the scope of the Carbon Removals and Carbon Farming (CRCF) Regulation.

It also needs to take into account the fact that food production is inherently rooted in natural biological processes and that in spite of complying with high EU standards causes **unavoidable endogenic emissions** that entail certain trade-offs that cannot be entirely eliminated. Demand is an important driver of transition, as explained in the protein Plan, and it is important to acknowledge that reduced EU production could lead to increased imports and higher emissions in non-EU regions.

Further advances in reducing GHG emissions must be based on a combination of effective policy measures and incentives, the potential of genetic improvements, innovation and technology including in feeding strategies. The Commission will provide **recommendations to the Member States** in the context of the future CAP and provide them with a **toolbox of most effective practices**. Member States can design their strategies based on their specific situations, as reflected in the 2020 EU Methane Strategy taking into consideration investments in efficiencies that reduce emissions, including methane-reducing breeds, precision feeding, and advanced manure management such as biogas and improved treatment technologies, as well as emission-reducing solutions in indoor farming systems. Furthermore, technological solutions offer significant mitigation potential that

⁽²⁵⁾ Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF): <https://www.icbf.com/methane/>

could lead to at least a 16% decline of GHG emissions by 2040 ⁽²⁶⁾. Therefore, a combination of ambitious measures and incentives from the CAP, together with technology and innovation, could deliver very significant emissions reductions and contribute to the 2040 climate target.

Member States have the opportunity to include **biogas and biomethane investments** in their future NRPPs and/or support them through other national programmes. The State Aid Framework also offers various options for such support. Biogas installation transforms manure and agricultural residues into renewable energy, digestate for fertilising and in some cases dewatered digestate in bedding material for livestock. The produced energy can be used on-farm or even sold on the market, notably by using the EU biomethane mechanism, thus creating complementary income, enhancing resilience and business viability of agricultural holdings while reducing reliance on imported fossil fuels and synthetic fertilisers.

Protection of natural resources against pollution and ensuring good soil health are essential attributes of a long-term strategy for the future of livestock farming. Considering its wide diversity, certain livestock practices have a significant impact on the environment linked to negative externalities (such as nutrient losses, air emissions...), in particular in areas with high livestock concentrations, while other practices like extensive grazing and organic farming positively contribute to nature management and conservation. Therefore, environmental challenges must be addressed in a tailored way and in partnership with farmers.

The future CAP is an opportunity to make advancements towards higher environmental performance.

Member States should promote cooperation across the value chain and could provide support, particularly in high livestock density areas, to improve manure and nutrient management and reduce pressure on natural resources, including by making use of the new interventions that the Commission has put forward in its CAP proposal. Member States have tools at their disposal to provide enhanced support for grazing-based systems based on their needs. They are also encouraged to expand the use of cover crops, diverse crop rotations and alternative feed sources, grant support to increase manure storage capacities, and to simplify procedures for investments in renewable energy, nutrient recycling infrastructure and precision farming. Continued support for organic farming is important for the delivery of these objectives.

The Commission, assisted by the Livestock Workstream, will promote the exchange of knowledge and best practices, with the objective of building a **Livestock Platform with a comprehensive repository of proven solutions** for climate, environment and animal welfare by 2027. This repository will identify effective mitigation measures, showcase successful on-farm approaches, and provide guidance on the CAP instruments and support mechanisms available to facilitate their uptake.

EU farmers already respect high environmental standards laid down in different pieces of legislation, some with significant impact on farmers' operations. **The Commission is evaluating and stress-testing some of these rules in the context of wider simplification effort.**

⁽²⁶⁾ DG AGRI estimation based on own calculations and scenarios described in the [2022 agricultural outlook report](#)

The evaluation of the **Nitrates Directive** ⁽²⁷⁾ will be published shortly. As a follow-up to the report, the Commission will continue to work together with Member States to identify best practice and simplification potential on how to improve nutrient management at farm level, calendar farming, record keeping and fertilisation for small farms. It will aim at optimising the implementation of rules reflect technological pressures and climate change, while both minimising unnecessary burden and ensuring that measures are proportionate and effective in reaching EU water quality standards. The Commission will advise Member States about the possibilities to **simplify the implementation of the Directive, for example for certain sustainable livestock practices, and will also exchange with the Nitrates Committee on the evaluation report.**

The Commission is also stress-testing the rules of Birds and Habitats Directives which will be integrated into a report due end of 2026 and will allow to inform future decisions. The proposal on the acceleration of **permit-granting procedures and the proposal for a regulation on speeding up environmental assessments** (2025/0391 (COD)) already partially addresses some of the long-standing demands to accelerate and make more predictable permitting process. Targeted facilitation of permitting procedures is also important to accompany the legislative revision phasing out cages in the laying hens and pig sectors and is justified considering that the number of animals kept would remain constant in adapted barns. **The potential for better alignment between environmental goals and agricultural vitality lies also in innovation.** In the EU, livestock farming generated annually more than 1.4 billion tonnes of manure during the period 2016–2019. While associated with nitrogen pollution in certain regions, using innovation, manure can also present an opportunity. The Commission is exploring the possibility to extend the RENURE act for certain types of liquid digestates based on manure with appropriate environmental safeguards and will deliver a first preliminary assessment in Q3 2026. Equally, the use of digestate from bio-waste to be used as fertilisers as such or for the production of other bio-based fertilisers, can limit livestock negative externalities, enable better distribution of carbon-rich bio-fertilisers, reduce dependence on synthetic fertilisers and strengthen EU feed and food production autonomy, while contributing to the domestic energy production (biomethane). The Commission will work on **facilitating the use of animal by-products** without jeopardising animal health, food and feed safety standards and **review potential regulatory bottlenecks.**

A key element is better spatial balancing and enabling nutrient transfer from surplus to deficit regions to both optimise use and reduce local environmental pressures. Building on this, the Commission, assisted by the **Livestock Workstream, will develop a dedicated roadmap** to support practical implementation, strengthen logistics, reduce pressure, better implement the regulatory framework in a coherent way, and regulatory coherence, and enable a more efficient and sustainable circulation of nutrients across the EU.

3.4. A livestock sector fitting European territorial diversity

European territorial diversity requires diverse livestock production systems tailored to the unique characteristics of different regions across Europe.

Livestock farming plays a crucial role in sustaining rural economies and supporting employment across many regions. It is often the sole economic opportunity in certain

⁽²⁷⁾ Council Directive 91/676/EEC of 12 December 1991 concerning the protection of waters against pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources. OJ L 375, 31.12.1991, pp. 1–8 (ES, DA, DE, EL, EN, FR, IT, NL, PT). ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/1991/676/oj>

regions. The sector is especially important in less-favoured areas such as mountainous regions, northern areas, grasslands and other intermediate and marginal territories where crop production may be difficult or less profitable. Grazing animals help maintain traditional landscapes, prevent overgrowth, limit wildfire-risk and contribute to the preservation of biodiversity by sustaining diverse habitats ⁽²⁸⁾. It helps maintain population in rural areas and reduces the risk of land abandonment, which can lead to environmental degradation and the loss of traditional landscapes. Innovative business models can effectively address the current challenges by recovering the centrality of livestock farming in these territories.

Decline in livestock farming is closely linked with land abandonment in many European regions. The JRC estimates ⁽²⁹⁾ that around 11% of EU agricultural land could be abandoned by 2030, whilst almost a quarter (1.38 million ha) of all agricultural abandonment in the EU will likely occur in mountain areas. This also has significant demographic implications. These challenges should be addressed in a coherent and integrated manner, including through our future policies on demography. Rural areas hold incredible potential to become a **powerhouse of European resilience, sustainable growth and preparedness**. Creating economically attractive and liveable rural areas will help retain and attract people, thereby contributing to the long-term vitality of these regions.

The **opportunity to turn rural vulnerabilities into a tangible long-term asset is greater than ever**. The EU is embarking on a more coordinated and integrated planning to support its sustainable economic growth, using the NRP as integrated planning tool.

To address this challenge, the Commission will work with the Member States to develop a plan on how to address the specific needs of **regions and rural areas at risk of abandonment**, taking into account the specific situation in the Eastern Border Region bordering Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. The aim is to **bring back sustainable livestock production** where it naturally belongs and is desirable for its environmental, social and economic benefits, while securing the performance of more competitive regions and communities. Such a move could be driven by attracting all actors needed for an effective **value chain to be anchored in rural communities**, from farmers to consumers via slaughterhouses, artisan processors and local markets.

The future **European Land Observatory** ⁽³⁰⁾ will contribute to this process by exchanging information and best practices to address land abandonment and by advancing on the analysis on land use changes and sustainable land management.

With the future CAP, Member States have many tools at their disposal to target support to vulnerable livestock areas. Targeted coupled income and support for areas with natural constraints should be focused on sectors and areas where they are most needed. One of the key tasks will be to **attract a new generation of farmers** in areas where livestock has left a social gap, through start-up aid, social innovation, entrepreneurship and investment, land access policies, income support and incentives. However, the challenge goes beyond what the CAP alone can deliver. The development of locally integrated livestock value chains

⁽²⁸⁾ [Extensive livestock systems and nature in Europe | Publications | European Environment Agency \(EEA\)](#), 07/2026. EEA's briefing states that one-third of Annex I habitats under the Habitats Directive depend on extensive grazing

⁽²⁹⁾ <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC113718>

⁽³⁰⁾ Strategy for generational renewal in agriculture. [COM/2025/872 final](#)

requires coordinated investments in infrastructure, processing facilities, digitalisation and market structures, supported by social and labour policies and, where relevant, by practical support to help farmers address wildlife-related pressure.

One example that could regenerate local economy and at the same time improve animal welfare are investments into low-capacity and mobile slaughterhouses in remote areas. The Commission, assisted by the Livestock Workstream, will dedicate specific resources to developing a **roadmap on slaughterhouses, examining how to foster their presence in rural areas, whether fixed or mobile**, drawing on projects already financed ⁽³¹⁾ and taking into account animal welfare aspects.

Example: Flexible local processing network with low-capacity and mobile slaughterhouses (rural value chain resilience model). In sparsely populated or mountainous regions, Member States support a hybrid processing system combining small permanent facilities with mobile slaughterhouses.

- A regional livestock cooperative is established, pooling farmers' resources to manage logistics and scheduling.
- The Member State co-finances mobile slaughter units that travel between farms or designated collection points while maintaining animal health and food safety standards.
- Legislative simplification and optimisation at EU and national level, including for registration and recognition.
- This is complemented by small cutting and packaging facilities and cold storage located in rural towns, modernised with EU support.
- The system is integrated into a quality certification scheme reflecting EU excellence to reinforce product identity and value.
- Digital tools (booking platforms, traceability systems) are introduced to optimise routes, ensure animal welfare compliance and reduce waiting times. With more local slaughter, animal welfare is improved thanks to less long-distance transport for live animals.

Modern digital infrastructure is crucial for the attractiveness of rural areas and enhancing livestock farming's contribution to rural livelihoods. Member States should accelerate investments in high-speed broadband, 5G, satellite and off-grid connectivity to enable deployment of smart farming technologies, remote livestock management systems and access to online services.

Social resilience is of critical importance too. The EU livestock farmers' wellbeing and mental health are influenced not only by income pressures but also by demanding working conditions, long hours and social isolation, particularly in more remote rural areas. Access to replacement and relief services is therefore important, as it allows farmers to take leave, in case of illness or family responsibilities, and reduce stress and burnout. Gender-specific needs and differences should also be adequately addressed. Skills development is another key social factor, with farmers increasingly training in animal welfare, environmental practices, digital tools and business management to remain resilient and adapt to changing

⁽³¹⁾ Examples of projects funded under EAFRD for innovation and improvement of animal welfare in DE: [TadeLoS - Onfarm Slaughtering of Cattle without Stress | EU CAP Network](#) and [Fully mobile slaughter unit in Thuringia | EU CAP Network](#). see also example of project funded under H2020 to implement a mobile slaughter house in France: [Practical case: Mobile Slaughter Unit | EU CAP Network](#)

policy and market demands. The role of advisory services and rural development policies is critical in this regard.

Regional feed resources enhance resilience, sustainability, and strategic autonomy while reducing import dependencies. By integrating grasslands, co-products, and EU-grown protein crops, these systems cut emissions, support rural economies, and align with circular bioeconomy goals. These are key drivers of the Commission Plan for resilience, strategic autonomy and sustainability of the EU protein system.

3.5. Excellence in livestock production

Quality is one of Europe's strategic assets. In a context of growing societal expectations, global competition and territorial fragilities, the European Union must maintain and develop its ambition for excellence in livestock production.

The future of the EU livestock sector will depend not only on its capacity to remain competitive and resilient, but also on its ability to **make visible, credible and economically rewarding what distinguishes the European model of production**. It reflects a model of livestock farming that is not based on the lowest cost, but on value creation through good practices, quality, sustainability, ethics and responsibility.

Excellence must be understood broadly, not limited to niche or premium products. It should progressively characterise all livestock value chains and all production models. Every livestock farm should have the possibility to perform at its best, to improve continuously, and to have these efforts recognised and rewarded by the market and by public policy.

The Commission intends to develop an **ambitious pathway for excellence in livestock production with the Livestock Workstream**. This pathway should allow the Union to articulate more clearly what distinguishes European livestock production, both within the internal market and in global competition.

A first priority is improving the market recognition and valorisation of excellence. Farmers can sustain ambitious standards only if these are economically rewarded. Greater transparency across the food chain, including clearer information and labelling, is essential. The Commission will help consumers make informed choices and recognise the value of EU livestock products.

A key element is **clearer identification of EU origin**. The Commission intends to gradually strengthen the role of EU origin in livestock marketing through marketing standards, exploring an expanded legal basis under the Common Market Organisation. It will first **build on poultry meat rules** to enhance origin communication and draw lessons for other sectors.

The Commission will work on valorising the higher standards and specific characteristics of EU livestock production through optional reserved terms under the Common Market Organisation. This would enable, on a voluntary basis, a clearly identifiable **“European excellence” term**, supported by regulatory specifications, allowing credible and harmonised communication of defined characteristics. The Commission will assess criteria such as low-carbon production, environment-friendly practices, local feed use, rearing and slaughter, and high animal welfare standards. These optional reserved terms could be used to demonstrate compliance with the sustainability requirements requested by national or European funds for access to investments, allowing farmers to access funding

opportunities without having to repeatedly submit the same evidence ('once-only principle').

The Commission will also consider how existing tools can better support the valorisation of quality in livestock production, **including meat quality**. The current Union carcass classification framework is based mainly on quantitative criteria. While it ensures a common market language and price transparency, it does not reflect the full range of quality attributes relevant to consumers and market valorisation. The Commission will assess whether, on a voluntary basis, it could be further developed to include certain qualitative characteristics, such as organoleptic or production-method attributes, and whether these could be supported by optional reserved terms to enhance differentiation, value creation, and recognition of quality.

As a second priority, the Commission will give greater visibility to territorially embedded livestock systems. It will use **EU promotion policy** to highlight the quality, sustainability, high welfare standards, in particular cage-free farming systems and egg production without male chick culling, and territorial anchoring of EU livestock products in both internal and external markets. Stronger support will be directed to systems closely linked to rural areas, improving communication of added value and reinforcing premium positioning where justified.

To maximise market returns, stakeholders and Member States are encouraged to cooperate notably on **territorial product branding** that links livestock products to the historical identity and natural characteristics of their specific regions or breed; agri-tourism and diversification initiatives; and collective landscape management to protect biodiversity and manage landscapes within livestock-based ecosystems.

To support these efforts on a larger scale, the **EU Agricultural Promotion Policy could dedicate a specialised promotional window** focusing on territorially embedded livestock systems, accelerating their market penetration.

The third priority builds on the EU's existing quality policy, in particular Geographical Indications (GIs) and organic production. The Commission will continue to support their uptake, promotion, and protection as key tools. To strengthen these frameworks, the Commission will review the organic and GI action plans.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In an increasingly hard-edged global economy, the Union response is to make the objectives of resilience, competitiveness, sustainability, territoriality and excellence mutually reinforcing as the European way of livestock farming.

The EU livestock strategy presents a cohesive vision for the future of the livestock sector. The Commission promotes a positive, balanced narrative on livestock, recognising both its challenges, including the environmental and climate footprint, and the sector's contributions to food supply, employment, territorial cohesion, biodiversity, and cultural value.

Resilience will be bolstered through coordinated efforts to combat climate change, strengthen biosecurity, tackle social challenges and enhance market and supply chain robustness.

Competitiveness will be enhanced by addressing the financing gap and declining livestock situation in certain regions, fostering innovation, digitalisation, skilling and ensuring fairness in trade.

Sustainability will be achieved by reducing environmental footprints, supporting biodiversity, and promoting circular and animal welfare-oriented farming systems that sustain rural vitality.

Territoriality recognises Europe's varied landscapes and local conditions, empowering new generations of farmers and strengthening regional economies.

Collectively, these coordinated efforts by the Commission, Member States, and stakeholders will construct a robust framework of **excellence** that supports the livestock sector in thriving amid global competition.

The Commission, assisted by the Livestock Workstream, will monitor and report on progress. By actively engaging in these strategic initiatives, the sector can look forward to a sustainable, fair, and prosperous future.



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ANNEX

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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

EU strategy on livestock

{SWD(2026) 576 final}

ANNEX: Commission key actions

For a successful strategy on livestock, the Commission will deliver on the following **key actions**. The **livestock workstream** will accompany the implementation of the strategy, continuing to act as a forum for exchanging ideas and best practices.

For the strategy to be fully realised, Member States will need to take steps to offer the relevant tools, and stakeholders will have to seize the opportunities offered. **Member States and stakeholders need to continue investing for making the livestock sector resilient, competitive, sustainable, territorially fitting and delivering on excellence.**

Actions for a resilient livestock sector that withstands crisis
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1. Work with financial institutions, including the European Investment Bank, for exploring the possibility of **developing a dedicated risk-management financial scheme under the post-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework**, covering climate-related insurance and reinsurance needs and extending support to risks linked to animal diseases.
2. Include relevant risk management aspects and needs in the **CAP recommendations** to Member States for their National and Regional Partnership Plans.
3. Ensure adequate financing of **prevention, surveillance**, control and **eradication** of animal diseases and zoonoses, **especially for emergency measures** in case of major outbreaks.
4. Prepare a **manual with practical orientations to Member States on risk management**, drawing on EU and international expertise. Through a Livestock Platform, promote **exchange of good practices** to facilitate dialogue and dissemination of lessons learned across Member States.
5. **Review** whether the **current animal disease categorisation system** remains fit for purpose and whether the **disease categorisation criteria** adequately address specific challenges. Propose updates to legislation in line with the latest scientific developments and international standards as laid down by the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) and adopt implementing rules to clarify roles and responsibilities.
6. Support a **wider and science-based use of preventive vaccination** and assess whether the current vaccination rules and principles remain appropriate. Develop **guidance on the application of vaccination** coupled with regionalisation and compartmentalisation, while continuing to **advocate recognition of the EU's regionalisation approach with trading partners**. .
7. **Explore ways to improve and finance early-warning systems**, digital detection tools and farmer information channels.
8. **Support research, innovation, and knowledge exchange** to accelerate the deployment of resilient farming solutions. Cover livestock-related needs in the communication “New strategic approach to research and innovation Agri2040 and Food 2040”.

Actions for a competitive livestock sector at EU and global level

9. Consider a **potential dedicated financial instrument** for the livestock sector to bridge the financing gap for investments in the transition to **higher levels of sustainability and animal welfare**.
10. Explore with the European Investment Bank **preferential access to loans for farmers engaged in a transition to cage-free systems**.
11. Continue facilitation of **permitting procedures** at EU and national level, including for enabling the phasing-out of cages.
12. Support and facilitate circularity, bioeconomy and biomass valorisation. Assess how transparency on farmers' remuneration for bioeconomy activities and by-product valorisation can be integrated in the work of the **EU agri-food chain Observatory**.
13. Pursue alignment of standards for imported products for animal welfare and ensure strict enforcement of EU food safety rules. Engage in a **dedicated agri-food diplomacy**, enhance **high-level missions** and **promotion measures** to open new market opportunities for European exports.
14. Pursue further simplification of agri-food legislation and make **better use of existing flexibility provisions**, including on animal by-products legislation and EU hygiene framework. Hold an **implementation dialogue** in Q4 2026 on the feed legal framework.

Actions for a sustainable livestock sector

15. **Promote value chain sustainability cooperation across the food chain** to support sustainability and socio-economic objectives.
16. By the end of 2026, propose a **targeted revision of animal welfare rules for laying hens and broilers**, focusing on the phasing-out of cages, practical on-farm welfare indicators, ending the systematic killing of male chicks and introducing WTO-compliant equivalent import requirements.
17. By Q2 of 2027, propose a **targeted revision of animal welfare rules for pigs**, including the transition from crates to pen systems, practical on-farm welfare indicators, and introducing WTO-compliant equivalent import requirements.
18. Closely exchange with relevant stakeholders, civil society and destination third countries and, depending on the outcome of these exchanges, consider further steps, including possible alternatives to **the export of animals for slaughter from the EU to third countries**, while maintaining the market positions of European livestock producers.
19. Develop a **harmonised methodology for livestock GHG emissions at farm level** and promote monitoring tools that better reflect measures implemented at farm level and are more adapted to the needs of EU livestock sector. In addition, exchange on **measurement and mitigation practices with global partners** through the **Global Methane Pledge** and related initiatives. Assess the inclusion of livestock emission reductions in the Carbon Removal and Carbon Farming regulation.

20. When issuing the future CAP recommendations, ask Member States to support the reduction of environmental pressure including from nutrients in areas with high livestock concentrations.
21. Build a **Livestock Platform with a comprehensive repository of proven solutions** for climate, environment and animal welfare by 2027.
22. In September 2026, launch a process to **identify best practice and simplification potential** in the implementation of the Nitrates Directive, notably on calendar farming practices, certain sustainable livestock practices and nutrient management at farm level, adapted to local circumstances. In the context of the future CAP, the Member States are invited to make use of the tools available to support farmers to reduce pressure from nutrients on the environment in areas with high concentration of livestock.
23. By the end of 2026, publish a report **stress-testing the rules of the Birds and Habitats Directives**.
24. By Q3 2026, present the first assessment of the action to **extend the RENURE act** for certain types of liquid digestates based on manure with appropriate environmental safeguards.
25. Develop a dedicated roadmap to **enable a more efficient and sustainable circulation of nutrients across the EU**.

Actions for a livestock sector fitting European territorial diversity
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26. Develop a plan on how to **address the specific needs of regions at risk of abandonment** with the aim to **bring back sustainable livestock production, in conjunction with the work on the Land Observatory**.
27. Develop a **roadmap on slaughterhouses**, examining how **to foster their presence in rural areas**.

Actions to foster excellence in livestock production

28. **Strengthen the role of EU origin information** in livestock marketing standards and labelling.
29. Develop European Excellence scheme to **valorise the higher standards** and specific characteristics of EU livestock production **through optional reserved terms** under the Common Market Organisation, including criteria for **recognising low-carbon, environmentally friendly, locally sourced and high-welfare livestock production systems**.
30. Explore ways to **better recognise and communicate livestock quality attributes** beyond current carcass-classification criteria.
31. Consider a special window under the EU promotion policy to **highlight the quality, sustainability, high welfare standards and territorial anchoring of EU livestock products** in both internal and external markets.

32. Continue supporting the **uptake, promotion, and protection of geographical indications and organic production**. Review the **EU organic action plan** and the **Geographical Indications action plan**.