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**The latest EU agriculture, environment & trade news**


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### **HEADS OF FAO, IMF, WBG, WFP, WTO ISSUE 2<sup>nd</sup> JOINT STATEMENT ON FOOD SECURITY**

The Heads of the FAO, IMF, World Bank Group (WBG), World Food Programme (WFP) & WTO have issued a joint statement calling for “urgent action to address the global food security crisis,” which they say requires a “continued comprehensive & coordinated effort to support efficient production & trade,” with improved transparency, accelerated innovation and joint planning & investments in food systems transformation. In the second of its kind, FAO Director General QU Dongyu, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva, WBG President David Malpass, WFP Executive Director David Beasley & WTO Director General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala underline that the war in Ukraine “continues to exacerbate the global food security & nutrition crisis, with high & volatile energy, food & fertilizer prices, restrictive trade policies, & supply chain disruptions.” Whilst acknowledging the recent “reprieve in global food prices & the resumption of grain exports from the Black Sea,” the five leaders insist that “food remains beyond reach for many due to high prices & weather shocks,” while “the number of people facing acute food insecurity worldwide is expected to continue to rise.” Against a background of conflict between Russia & Ukraine for over 200 days, they highlight that “fertilizer markets remain volatile, especially in Europe, where tight natural gas supplies & high prices have caused many producers of urea & ammonia to stop operations.” This, they say, may “reduce fertilizer application rates for the next crop season, prolonging & deepening the impact of the crisis.”

On a positive note, they say “announced or implemented” social assistance measures across all economies have quadrupled from 37 to 148, for the period between April & Sept 2022, while the five leaders welcome efforts by the Global Crisis Response Group & the Black Sea Grain Initiative, which has seen over 3 million tonnes of grain & foodstuffs already exported from Ukraine through the Joint Coordination Centre. They are also encouraged by the downward trend in trade restrictive measures implemented by countries & express their hope that this trend continues. Referring to international financial support to the most vulnerable countries, they recognise that this is “increasing from various initiatives,” mentioning a World Bank programme worth \$30 billion “to respond to the food security crisis & frontloading resources from the IDA20 Crisis Response Window,” while the IMF is proposing a new food shock window within its emergency lending instruments. Meanwhile, the Rome-based FAO has proposed a series of policy recommendations & launched detailed soil nutrition maps at country level to increase efficiencies in the use of fertilizers.

In the joint statement they set out four key areas for collaboration – i) **Support efficient production & trade**, whereby governments across the globe “need to urgently re-examine their agricultural trade & market interventions, such as subsidies & export restrictions, to identify & minimize distortions.” “Shorter interventions cause less harm than indefinite ones,” they underline, while promoting the production of nutritious foods & repurposing the US\$639 billion support per year provided to agriculture by governments can transform food systems & improve food security & nutrition. Open trade flows in food, agriculture, & energy are key, they add, which can “reduce price distortions that dilute incentives for efficient production.” The leaders call on countries to follow through on commitments made at the WTO’s 12<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference to restrain export restrictions on food & fertilizers and put in place trade facilitation measures. They would also like to see further clarifications of the “relevant regulations to allow critical agricultural inputs such as fertilizers to move swiftly to countries in need.” On ii) **improved transparency**, they urge governments to provide necessary data & resources to support Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS), which “enhances transparency in food markets through monitoring the prices & availability of major food crops & promoting policy responses.” In addition, they reference the Global Alliance for Food Security (GAFS), which is “harmonizing existing tracking systems in a dashboard to enable governments & country teams to identify needs & channel financing to respond to the crisis.” For this transformation to happen, there is an urgency to iii) **accelerate innovation & joint planning**, especially when agricultural research & development is “a chronically underinvested sector, while it has one of the highest returns on public spending.”

Innovation, they say, is “crucial for meeting the long-term challenges to global food security & nutrition posed by climate change, land & ecosystem degradation, pests, & transboundary plant & animal diseases.” They describe the dissemination of best practices by the FAO & supporting the Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centers (OneCGIAR) as “important actions to address these challenges,” while emphasising the need for “more systematic coordination & joint planning to connect short-, medium- & long-term opportunities & deliver support in a timely manner.” Finally iv) **investment in food systems transformation** is vital, as “strengthening the resilience of food systems to risks, *inc.* conflict, extreme weather events, economic shocks & diseases” is important for the longer-term response. They urge policy-makers to address both infrastructure bottlenecks & input supply bottlenecks (e.g. fertilizers & seeds), which “are critical to an efficient food supply system,” while they would like to see “effective & sustainable support to smallholder farmers,” which “will be vital to ensure they are part of the solution & to localize supply chains.” The private sector also has a role to play, they underline, referring to the International Finance Corporation (IFC) that will establish a Global Food Security Platform aimed at providing working capital & longer-term financing for sustainable agri-businesses & related sectors in the food supply chain. In conclusion, the five leaders “remain committed to working together to address immediate food security & nutrition needs, tackle structural market issues that may exacerbate adverse impacts, & build countries’ resilience to prevent & mitigate the impacts of future crises.”

### **BUFFER STOCKS OF STRATEGIC FEED & FOODSTUFFS CRUCIAL, SAYS EP**

The European Parliament (EP) is urging national capitals to prioritise the creation of buffer stocks of strategic feed & foodstuffs “as one means to mitigate the most dangerous aspects of drought, *inc.* big yield variations year-on-year,” & to introduce irrigation systems that do not use surface or groundwater, such as rainwater storage or wastewater recycling, in combination with efforts to reduce overall water use. In a 17½ -page resolution\* on increasing Europe’s efforts to fight climate change, adopted by 469 votes in favour, 34 against & 44 abstentions last week, MEPs are asking the Commission to table a “comprehensive EU water strategy,” while they are pushing for a Community-wide objective of “land degradation neutrality by 2030” & a more “integrated response” to forest fires, especially as a result of extreme weather events.

Voting through a series of recommendations at the plenary session in Strasbourg on Sept 15, following a summer of droughts, forest fires & extreme weather conditions across the bloc, the House is pushing for a comprehensive, ambitious & legally-binding European climate adaptation framework, with particular emphasis on the EU’s most vulnerable regions. It would also like to see an EU climate resilience “stress test” for key infrastructure put in place by next summer. The assembly says the bloc must step up its climate mitigation efforts, to contain global warming to 1.5°C compared to pre-industrial levels, & its climate adaptation plans, while MEPs would also like to see an EU-wide climate risk assessment, while paying “special attention” to the risks of droughts, forest fires & health threats. In light of increasingly frequent & severe climate disasters, the EU’s disaster response capacity such as the EU Civil Protection Mechanism must also be strengthened, MEPs underline, while also looking for a new permanent rescEU fleet to “be created quickly”, which would include an expansion of the current voluntary firefighting reserve. The joint motion for a resolution, tabled by Herbert Dorfmann & Lídia Pereira (EPP political group), Tiemo Wölken & Clara Aguilera (S&D), Irène Tolleret & María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos (Renew), Benoît Biteau (Greens), Pietro Fiocchi (ECR) & Marisa Matias (The Left), is also advocating the establishment of a permanent EU civil protection force.

\*[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0330\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0330_EN.html);

### **DE CASTRO (S&D) SETS OUT STALL ON GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS (GI) REFORM**

Italian MEP Paolo De Castro has presented the political guidelines that will guide his draft report on the revision of legislation governing EU Geographical Indications (GIs) for wine, spirit drinks & agricultural products and quality schemes for agri products, which will be officially presented at the EP’s Committee on Agriculture & Rural Development (COMAGRI) on Nov 8. The 6-page Working Document circulating this week will be presented at a COMAGRI meeting on Sept 29.

*To recap [see AF65-22], De Castro (S&D), Rapporteur on the revision of the GI systems in agricultural products & foodstuffs, wines & spirit drinks, is expected to send his draft report for translation on Oct 11, with the EP’s COMAGRI to consider the text on Nov 8. The deadline for tabling amendments is slated for Nov 11 at 1pm. The consideration of amendments will take place on Dec 8, while the deadline for ‘opinions’ from the other relevant Committees is on Dec 10. A vote on the draft report (amendments & final vote) is set for Feb-March next year, with trilogues to continue from March until Sept, 2023 (under the Swedish - until June 30 & then Spanish Presidency - from July 1). The COMAGRI vote on the provisional agreement resulting from the interinstitutional negotiations has been*

*pencilled in for Oct 2023, with a plenary vote to follow at the Nov 1 mini-session in Brussels (8-9). The Council signature is set for Dec 2023, with the EP then expected to go into campaign mode from early 2024 onwards, ahead of parliamentary elections in May.*

In specific terms, the S&D euro-deputy underlines that the Commission's proposal to reform the quality policy "has the objective of strengthening the Union system of GIs, increasing the uptake of GIs across the Union, shortening the registration time & increasing correct market perception & consumer awareness of the GI policy & Union symbols." The measures, he says, "would enable consumers to make informed purchasing choices & achieve a higher level of protection, particularly online." The former Agriculture Minister (from Oct 1998 until April 2000 and again from May 2006 until May 2008) acknowledges that the Union's GI framework is robust, but points to the evaluation of the policy & the impact assessment accompanying the proposal that showed there was "some room for improvement, intending in particular to strengthen the system of GIs, which is key to the provision of high-quality food & the protection of cultural, gastronomic & local heritage across the Union." The rapporteur welcomes the objective of the proposal, which "offers the possibility of creating for the first time a genuine single Union text on quality products, with greater alignment & clarity between all different sectors, while preserving their specificities." But the Professor of Agricultural Science underlines that the text "needs to be improved & expanded in order that the reform results in strengthening & renewing a system without equal in the world, capable of creating value without the need to invest in any public funds."

The veteran politician from San Pietro Vernotico (Apulia) - on the most south-eastern part of Italy's 'heel' - identifies four main pillars on which to "hinge the work." These are i) strengthening the role of producer groups; ii) greater protection; iii) simplification & the role of the EUIPO & iv) sustainability. While welcoming moves to strengthen producer groups, the academic says that all of them "should have the possibility to include in their product specification the obligation of indicating on the label the name of the producer, in a clear, visible & legible way." He would also like to see further improvements when it comes to GI protection, "starting with the definition of 'evocation'," whereby "any such definition should represent only a minimum basis, which does not limit the possibility for the Court of Justice of the EU to broaden its interpretation." On simplification & the role of the EUIPO, he underlines that a "clear timeframe for the Commission's scrutiny of the GI registration request needs to be set, reducing it to five months, which could be extended by a further three months only in duly justified cases." Noting that the "number of dossiers to be analysed at Union level ... will therefore be significantly reduced," he highlights that there is "no need for greater involvement in the scrutiny of registrations & amendments to the product specifications of the EUIPO," which he says, "does not have those agricultural competences, inherent in rural development, which can be made available by DG AGRI." He acknowledges that the Alicante-based agency "will make an important contribution to the protection & promotion of GIs & the elimination of infringements in the internal market, in third markets & online" [*see below for AGRI & JURI agreement on competences*]. On the last point on sustainability, the 64-year-old MEP says "there will be no need for the Commission to adopt delegated acts laying down sustainability standards in different sectors & criteria for the recognition of existing sustainability standards ... as such a generalisation would run counter to the protection of the specific characteristics of individual products & sectors." Given the "very nature of GIs" & their centuries-old tradition, producer groups "should better communicate what they already do in terms of social & environmental sustainability, as well as animal health & welfare, in an *ad hoc* sustainability report accompanying their product specification," & available on the Union portal. This would allow consumers to "better understand all the different quality aspects behind GI products."

**AGRI & JURI agree on competences:** Just before the summer break, the EP's Committee on Agriculture & Rural Development (COMAGRI) and Committee on Legal Affairs (JURI) reached an agreement on the division of competences on amending Regulations (EU) No 1308/2013 (CMO), (EU) 2017/1001 (Intellectual Property) & (EU) 2019/787 (Spirit drinks) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 (food quality). In a 2-page correspondence sent to Bernd Lange, Chair of Conference of Committee Chairs, both Norbert Lins (COMAGRI Chair) & Adrián Vázquez Lázara (JURI Chair) note that "after some constructive meetings," both agreed that JURI will be "granted associated status (Rule 57) with shared & exclusive competences," as outlined in the Annex,\* while AGRI remains the "responsible Committee." Furthermore, both Chairs agreed to a joint mission to Alicante to visit EUIPO in the context of the work on this proposal. \**Article 4 (1d) (1e) Objectives (shared competence); Articles 17 to 27 (shared competence); Art. 31 Trademarks (exclusive competence to JURI); Art. 34 Protection of geographical indication rights in domain names (shared competence); Art. 35 Conflicting trademarks (exclusive competence to JURI); Art. 36 Right of use (shared competence); Art. 38 Controls & enforcement - Scope (shared competence); Art. 39 Verification of compliance with the product specification (shared competence); Art. 42 Controls & enforcement of GIs in the marketplace (shared competence); Art. 46 Scrutiny of 3<sup>rd</sup> country GIs (shared competence); Art. 47 Monitoring & reporting (shared competence); Art. 82 Amendments to Reg(EU) 2017/1001 (exclusive competence to JURI);*

**IN BRIEF: EMF symposium on sustainable food systems; PT fruit preserve gains GI;**

**EMF symposium on sustainable food systems:** The European Milk Forum (EMF) is hosting a symposium entitled *'European Dairy - Pathways to a more sustainable food system'*\* at the TownHall Europe, located at No.5, Square De Meeûs, in Brussels next Tuesday afternoon (Sept 27). Kicking off just after 2pm, Belgian MEP Tom Vandenkendelaere (EPP) & EMF President Laurent Damiens will deliver the introductory remarks, with the latter explaining in greater detail EMF's role & the dairy sector's ambitions & engagement in transitioning to a more sustainable food system.

Standing in for EU Farm Commissioner Janusz Wojciechowski, who is attending the G20 Ministerial in Bali (Indonesia) this week [see AF79-22], DG AGRI's Head of Unit on Animal Products, Brigitte Misonne, will deliver the keynote address. From around 2.30pm, participants will hear the results of EMF research on consumers' perceptions of the dairy sector & dairy products. This will be followed by presentations on carbon neutral dairy farming by Professor John Gilliland OBE (Northern Ireland), who is Director of Agriculture & Sustainability at the animal-nutrition company Devenish, & on methane mitigation strategies by Leen Vandaele (Belgium), who is Senior Researcher at Flanders Institute for Agriculture, Fisheries & Food (ILVO). The last session will be dedicated to 'Testimonies from the field' & includes interventions from French dairy farmer Ghislain de Viron (in person) and Belgian farmers Kris & Ginny Heirbaut (video) about their initiatives on carbon farming & carbon credits. The event, which will wrap up at around 4.15pm, allowing participants some time to network afterwards, will be moderated by AGRA FACTS' Rose O'Donovan. \*To register go to - <https://adviceas.typeform.com/to/d7R0wHD8>

**Portuguese fruit preserve added to Community register:** The Commission confirmed the approval of the Portuguese speciality *'Marmelada Branca de Odivelas'* in the Community register of Geographical Indications (GIs)\* on Sept 19. *'Marmelada Branca de Odivelas'* is a fruit preserve made by cooking quince mesocarp with white sugar, water & lemon juice only. The speciality dates back to a very ancient tradition, when the Cistercian nuns of the St Denis convent in the municipality of Odivelas (Lisbon District) used to make so-called "convent sweets". Pans & cutters have been unearthed on the historical site dating back more than one hundred years. The famous sweet treat, which carries a distinctive black label, has specific characteristics that can be attributed to the traditional methods that were used by the Sisters. These methods "have been consistently & faithfully followed & passed down through the generations" in the area, which is located 10km northwest of the capital city. The latest denomination has been added to the list of 1 592 agricultural products already protected under EU law.

\*See both [eAmbrosia \(europa.eu\)](http://eAmbrosia.europa.eu) & [Giview \(tmdn.org\)](http://Giview.tmdn.org) for further details;

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