
The latest EU agriculture, environment & trade news

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FARM COUNCIL PREVIEW: UKRAINIAN IMPORTS SET TO DOMINATE, LUNCH 'NGT' DEBATE

Agriculture & Fisheries Ministers will gather in Luxembourg on Tuesday (April 25)* - & not on Monday, as stated in a previous edition of *Agra Facts* - for the third Council meeting under the stewardship of Swedish Minister for Rural Affairs Peter Kullgren. Following the adoption of the 'A' items, the meeting will kick off in earnest at around 10.15am with a policy debate on the agricultural & forestry aspects of the proposed regulation on the certification of carbon removals. Immediately afterwards, the Commission will provide information on its recent study on the use & future potential of invertebrate biological control agents in the bloc. From 12.30pm, Ministers will discuss an AOB point tabled by Denmark on the establishment of PFAS in foodstuffs, while just before lunch they will consider another agenda item, tabled by Latvia, on the sustainable use of PPPs & maintenance of an adequate plant health status in the EU. A "cold lunch" will be served at around 1.40pm, during which time they will be joined by the EU's Health Commissioner Stella Kyriakides for a discussion on the upcoming proposal on New Genomic Techniques (NGTs). *Following this week's Hebdo meeting, she is expected to confirm that the NGT file will be tabled on June 21 & not on June 7, as was previously planned. A number of potential dates were bandied about at the weekly meeting, with Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans' Cabinet strongly pushing in favour of June 21. As flagged up in a recent edition of Agra Facts, DG SANTE is working on a more comprehensive version of the Impact Assessment, before the proposal is unveiled later in June. It remains to be seen if the dossier will be up for a Ministerial discussion at the June 26 Farm Council in Luxembourg.*

At around 3.30pm, delegates will hold a discussion (in private session) on the market situation for agri-food products in the context of Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine that will include AOB points on the impact of Ukrainian imports on EU markets (SK, with support from BG, HU, PL & RO), market disturbances (PL & HU) & the critical situation in the dairy sector (LV & LT). During this time, Farm Commissioner Janusz Wojciechowski is also expected to clarify details of the €100 million support package for 'frontline' countries such as PL, HU, SK, RO & BG, worst impacted by the influx of Ukrainian imports. They will then adopt Council Conclusions on Opportunities of the Bioeconomy in the light of current challenges (in public session), with a focus on rural areas & exchange views on the state of play of Member States' CAP Strategic Plans. The final point on the agenda, tabled by Slovenia, will deal with a Commission report 'From the hives' & its relevance for the revision of the Council Directive on honey. Council proceedings are set to be wrapped up just before 8pm. ****Agriculture and Fisheries Council - Consilium (europa.eu)***

New Polish Agri Minister: Robert Telus, a member of Poland's Law & Justice (PiS) party, was appointed Minister of Agriculture & Rural Development on April 6, replacing Henry Kowalczyk, (also of the PiS), who had been Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Agriculture & Rural Development since Oct 26, 2021. Kowalczyk, who left the Ministerial post on April 5 over protests relating to grain imports from Ukraine, was reappointed as Deputy Prime Minister on April 6 by President Andrzej Duda. His decision to quit followed the Commission's decision to extend duty-free imports from Ukraine until June 2024 [see AF28-23]. Telus, who is from Opoczno in south-central Poland graduated from the Faculty of Sanitary & Water Engineering at the Cracow University of Technology. He worked as Director of the Voivodeship Inspectorate for Environmental Protection in Łódź & managed the Opoczno Public Utilities Company, as well as serving two terms as an Opoczno District Councillor. He also runs his own farm. Telus will hold a bilateral with the EU Farm chief on the margins of the Council meeting next week.

Estonia's new Cabinet sworn in: Twelve new ministers were sworn in alongside Prime Minister Kaja Kallas in Estonia's Parliament, the Riigikogu, on April 17. Roles were apportioned according to the April 8 coalition deal [see AF29-23], with Minister of Regional Affairs Madis Kallas, a Social Democrat, who is not related to the Premier, taking responsibility for agriculture. Among the dozen, there is also a Minister of Climate Kristen Michal, who is a member of PM Kallas' liberal Estonian Reform Party.

The wide responsibilities of the Minister of Rural Affairs include “planning & implementation of rural life policy, agricultural policy & fisheries policy,” according to the Estonian government, on its website. It also involves “organising the guaranteeing of food safety & compliance; coordinating activities pertaining to the protection & health of plants & animals; organising agricultural education & research & development.” Other responsibilities involve “developing & advising,” local government, “planning & coordination of regional development & administration,” dealing with planning in public transport, postal communication & shaping rural policy, the government said.

The Climate Minister’s responsibilities include, “overall implementation of green reforms; climate policy, *inc.* the drafting, implementation & supervision of climate plans in different sectors,” Tallinn said. He will also be called on to steer “enterprise towards the use of cleaner technologies,” & organise “transport based on the needs of a cleaner environment,” along with “expediting the development of renewable energy & coordinating the implementation of renewable energy projects; organising circular-economy & waste-handling policy; organising environmental & nature conservation.”

New Regional Affairs Minister Kallas is a 2004 graduate of Tallinn University in 2004 with a degree in physical education, who was formerly a professional athlete. Climate Minister Michal is a lawyer, who gained a Master’s Degree from the same academic institution in 2014.

DOMBROVSKIS, WOJCIECHOWSKI MEET BG, HU, PL, SK, RO PLUS UKRAINE

Executive Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis & Agriculture Commissioner Janusz Wojciechowski have told the Member States bordering Ukraine, BG, HU, PL, SK & RO that Commission proposals to address their concerns are contingent on them lifting unilateral measures. In a statement issued on April 19, they said they had met representatives of the five Member States that day, as well as holding talks with Ukraine.

“We presented the EU’s comprehensive proposals to address the concerns expressed by these five Member States regarding the deterioration in the situation of Union producers for specific products,” they said. “This proposed Commission package includes a second tranche of agricultural financial support to affected farmers, exceptional safeguard measures on key products & measures to facilitate the transit of Ukrainian grain exports via the Solidarity Lanes.” Commission President Ursula von der Leyen wrote to the leaders of the five countries on April 19, putting forward a plan to spend an extra €100 million on supporting their farmers in dealing with the disruption caused by imports from Ukraine [see AF31-23], in addition to the €56.3m tabled by Wojciechowski at the Council on March 20 [see AF23-23]. More details are likely to come out at the Farm Council in Luxembourg on April 25.

“The Commission’s proposed package is subject to Member States lifting their unilateral measures,” the two members of the College stressed. “We underlined the importance of rapidly following a common EU approach, rather than unilateral solutions to avoid multiple bans & solutions which put the internal market at risk,” they add. “The Commission took note of the views presented by participants,” they said. “We agreed to continue political consultations in the coming days in view of a swift solution.”

Romanian Farm Minister Petre Daea said Dombrovskis asked Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland & Slovakia to withdraw their individual import bans, adding that the Commission could approve a general ban of Ukrainian grain & oilseeds to the five countries affected until June 5, according to a report by the Reuters news agency. It pointed out that Romania is the only one of the five that has not put in place an import ban, also quoting newly-appointed Polish Agriculture Minister Robert Telus as telling state-controlled broadcaster TVP Info that “we agreed today that we will continue these talks,” with a further meeting on Monday or Tuesday of next week. “We, as frontline countries, will want to convince the European Union that we also want to protect other products,” he said.

Hungary adds honey: Hungarian Minister István Nagy met his Ukrainian counterpart Mykola Solskyi on Thursday & stressed that Budapest was calling for the introduction of “progressive EU transit support” for Ukrainian grain, currently stuck in Central & Eastern Europe & causing “significant market difficulties.” According to Reuters, Budapest has banned imports of honey & certain meat products as well as grains from Ukraine until June 30. Nagy said on Facebook that any EU-wide import ban should include “eggs, honey & poultry.”

COMAGRI VOTES THROUGH PLAN FOR NEW GI RULES & PROTECTIONS

The European Parliament’s Agriculture Committee voted unanimously through a report on the planned new rules governing Geographical Indications (GIs)* by 46 votes in favour, with none against & no abstentions on April 20.

Under the COMAGRI version of reformed rules on registering & protecting GIs for wine, spirit drinks & agricultural products, & quality schemes for agricultural products, online domains abusing GI names would be closed down automatically, there would be protection for GI products used in processed food & consumers would have access to reports on the sustainability of the quality products. There would also be more rights &

funds for producer groups. AGRI MEPs backed provisions, which would ensure that all domains abusing the name of a GI are automatically closed or assigned to a producer group using the GI legally.

They propose that the EU Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) should establish an alert system monitoring the registration of domain names. Makers of processed products will not be allowed to use a GI in the name of a product with a GI ingredient, unless they have the permission of a producer group. To simplify the registration procedure, MEPs propose to cut the time the Commission has to register a GI from six to five months, with a limit to the possible extension period of three months, which would only be applied in duly justified cases. Most requests for changes to existing GI registrations would be handled by national authorities.

The Committee members want the Commission, with its agricultural expertise, to administer the system, instead of the EUIPO, as proposed in the original draft. They note the sustainable characteristics of GI products, & propose that producers explain their commitment to social & environmental sustainability in reports that will be made available to consumers on an EU portal. They also want recognised producer groups to have greater responsibilities, for example establishing minimum conditions for the use of a GI name or supervising the fair use of GIs. Recognised groups should also be able to get compulsory financial contributions from GI producers.

Commenting after the vote, Rapporteur Paolo De Castro (S&D, IT) said that the “GI economy is worth, at EU level, almost €80 billion.” “This is no longer merely a cultural issue affecting a few countries or a region, but has unique economic, social & political significance, creating value without the need of any public fund,” he added. “With this regulation, we will strengthen this unique EU regime, which is more & more appreciated by European & global consumers, increasing the protection, the promotion & the sustainability of GI products, which are recognised worldwide as synonymous with excellence & quality, thanks to the passion & savoir-faire of our farmers & producers.” His colleague, Norbert Lins, COMAGRI chair, congratulated the Italian on the vote during the meeting, calling him a “real compromise machine.” The dossier will next be voted on by plenary, possibly during the May 31-June 1 session. After that negotiations with the Council can start as soon as Member States are ready, with June 7 [see AF30-23] provisionally slated for the first trilogue.

*[https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2022/0089\(COD\)&l=en](https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2022/0089(COD)&l=en)

oriGIn EU hails “great work” on GIs: The **European branch of the Geographical Indications (GIs)** global alliance, congratulated AGRI MEPs on its rejection of “any delegation of competencies to the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) regarding the analysis of GI product specifications.” “EUIPO can contribute to the IP component of the system, facilitating the protection & enforcement of GIs, including online, as well as strengthening the EU GI system on international export markets,” but stressed that DG AGRI should “stay at the heart of the management of GI system.” “**OriGIn EU** is particularly pleased about the strengthening of protection online, in the domain names environment, when GIs are used as ingredients & in relation to potential evocation & the use of traditional terms,” the Swiss-based organisation said in an April 20 statement from its Brussels office. It also expressed the hope that “this new framework will favour the development & strengthening of GI producer groups in all Member States.”

“oriGIn EU congratulates the rapporteurs on the great work done on this key dossier for the future of GIs,” said the group’s President, Charles Deparis. “The approach adopted by COMAGRI sets out an ambitious European Geographical Indication (GI) system to ensure that producers can continue contributing to the sustainable development of rural areas across the EU.” He urged “Member States, in the context of the trilogues, not to overturn the ambitious approach of the Committee, with a view to secure a rapid conclusion of this reform.”

There was also a positive response from the **Assembly of European Wine Regions (AREV)**, which noted in a statement of April 21 that “the result maintains the management of the specifications within the European Commission, reinforces the protection of GIs in terms of their use as ingredients & online, & preserves the specificities of the wine sector.” “AREV hopes that the plenary session of the European Parliament will give a strong mandate to the rapporteurs for the trilogue negotiations & that the Council will align its position with the expectations of the Parliament, particularly concerning the role of the EUIPO,” it says. A response from the **wine sector group CEEV**, also published on April 21, is also positive. “We believe that the revision of the Geographical Indications system represents an opportunity for the wine sector & we welcome the content of the report adopted yesterday in Comagri,” said Mauricio González Gordon, President of the Brussels-based group, thanking Paolo de Castro & the shadow rapporteurs for their hard work. “We consider the approach validated yesterday the best possible solution,” he added. CEEV Secretary General Ignacio Sánchez Recarte urged the EP, meeting in plenary at the end of May (May 31-June 1) to validate the Committee’s approach & called on the Council “to work in the same direction.” “Considering the importance of this reform at political level, we hope it can be achieved in 2023 under the Spanish Presidency,” (running from July 1 until Dec 31), he said.

EFOW, the European Federation of Origin Wines, also urged the plenum “to support this strong mandate which reinforces the GI schemes & maintains the specificities of European GI wines. EFOW also invites the Council to support such vision.” “EFOW & its members support the AGRI Committee vote on the

GI review file,” the Brussels-based organisation said in an April 20 release. “We believe this outcome safeguards & reinforces the EU's GI system as it does not externalise the management of GI specifications to the EUIPO, increases the protection afforded to GIs with regard to their use as ingredients & online, while maintaining the specificities of the wine sector.” “We hope the EP plenary will give a strong mandate to the Rapporteurs in view of the trilogue negotiations & that the Council will follow suit, in particular with regards to the role of the EUIPO & the so-called wine package.” President Bernard Farges said that “on behalf of EFOW's members, I would like to thank the Rapporteurs for their strong commitment in supporting GI producers & in particular GI wine producers.” “The report is a clear & robust answer to the main concerns we have been voicing this past year,” Farges added. “We hope this positive vision for the future of our sector will be shared by the Council.”

DG ENVI'S CHILD TELLS COMMITTEE EMISSIONS REDUCTION VITAL FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

A top Commission environment official has reminded agriculture MEPs that methane & ammonia emissions are a growing problem & that livestock rearing is responsible for much of what goes into the air. Patrick Child, Deputy Director General of DG ENVI, described the proposal for the revision of the Industrial Emissions Directive (IED), as “a central piece of legislation in our zero pollution action plan &, more generally, in the European Green Deal.”

He “vividly,” remembered meeting COMAGRI “last September where your Rapporteur & other members shared very clear messages about the potential implications of proposals for the agricultural sector,” [see AF85-22] & welcomed what he said was “the recognition in this Committee that methane & ammonia emissions from agriculture are a serious & growing problem in our overall fight against climate change.” It was “also vital for public health in rural communities & environment sustainability of intensive livestock rearing that we take action in this area.”

“Livestock rearing accounts for over half of the EU's emissions of methane & two-thirds of ammonia emissions,” he pointed out, explaining that cattle represent over half of the ammonia, & 90% of the methane emitted & “therefore, honourable members without significant reductions, it would be very difficult for the European Union & our Member States to achieve the European Green Deal's target & to comply with European law on air & water quality as well as our objectives for climate change mitigation.”

The CAP had “not yet provided adequate solutions, notwithstanding the welcome steps towards greening agriculture in Farm to Fork,” the Cambridge-educated mathematician (1984-87) continued. “The upcoming review of national Strategic Plans agreed in the ‘Fit for 55’ package will, however, give an opportunity for Member States to step up action under the CAP to reduce emissions of methane further.” He noted that doubts expressed by AGRI MEPs on “the timing of our proposals in relation to the Russian invasion of Ukraine & the potential implication for food security, energy prices & inflation pressures,” as well as “about the appropriateness of applying measures designed for industrial processes to the very different context of agriculture.” During his address, he also alluded to “strong concerns about the potential administrative burden of bringing more farms within the scope of the directive given the other economic challenges they are facing today.” “Also, we heard calls for much higher thresholds for livestock units for pigs, poultry, & particularly cattle to ensure that only the largest industrial scale farms are covered & finally the need for flexibility in the application of the directive to reflect different farming methods,” he reminded MEPs.

On the effect of the Ukraine war, he pointed out that “the EU response to the crisis has thus far avoided serious supply difficulties, even if there been significant price inflation for consumers.” “We also have high hopes that by the time when the standards will be applicable under this revision of the IED, which is (at the) earliest in 2029, that we will have moved beyond the Ukraine crisis & the economic consequences that it is currently exerting on our economy & society.”

Turning to the relevance of the IED, he accepted that “the Commission obviously recognises that intensive industrial scale livestock rearing is very different, for example, from steelmaking, but one of the strengths of this directive, which is already applied, as you know, to pigs & poultry, is that it has flexibility to cater for very different sectors.” “The Commission is very attentive to the challenges of the farming community & shares strongly the objective of minimising administered burdens & ensuring proportionate compliance costs in delivering environmental benefits,” the former Deputy Director-General for Research & Innovation (DG RTD) from April 2016 until Sept 2021 stated.

Child also noted that “the size of farms as defined by the livestock unit thresholds has undoubtedly been the main topic of discussion both in the Parliament & Council,” explaining that “the Commission proposals were calibrated to make significant improvements in emission reductions, while concentrating on only the largest farms.” “I know this Committee is also very aware that there are a growing number of industrial scale livestock businesses raising cattle, pigs & poultry,” he added, making the point that “this is confirmed by latest Eurostat data from 2020.” “This means that at any given LSU threshold, we now capture more emissions from fewer farms,” he said, insisting that “there was never any intention this target small family farms.”

COMAGRI MEPs underline opposition: There is still considerable opposition to the plan among Committee members with some suggesting that cattle production should not be subject to any obligatory emissions

reductions. The Belgian MEP Benoît Lutgen complained that the Council had received the new information “months ago & that shows the consideration which is given to us by the Commission.” (*Child later pointed out for the benefit of the offended Walloon that the updated statistics had been made available to both institutions at the end of Jan*). Agriculture had “no place in this directive,” Lutgen from the EPP political group insisted. “There are consequences which can be dramatic for an entire series of farmers.” “We cannot say... we defend, we want to protect these kinds of family farms, these small & medium sized farms & at the same time take these kind of measures which are going to whip those farmers,” he stressed. “We need to think about food production in order to be able to meet the needs of European consumers, not just today or tomorrow but for the long-term future,” he added, “ensuring that as time goes by, the production of food does not end up in just the hands of a few, or even one day, be reliant on imports from abroad.”

He complained that “there are those that have a vision of tomorrow, which is a form of a dependence.” “They don’t think it is too important if we depend on imports to feed the people,” he went on. “It is not a problem if farmers disappear ... well if there is one country, which is dependent on imports & is stable at the same time.” “I think we need to give very clear signs & support our food security & end the burden, be it financial or administrative on farmers,” he concluded.

Paolo De Castro, the S&D group’s Shadow shared Lutgen’s view. “We have to look at the consequences for farmers as well & we have to take into consideration the terrible challenges that we have right now with the ... aftermath of the pandemic, the energy crisis, the invasion of Ukraine,” the Italian politician said. “So, including bovine... in a directive that makes reference to industrial sectors is erroneous from a technical point of view, but from the scientific point of view, as well.”

French Renew Europe MEP Jérémy Decerle felt that “in this room, the only party that still believes that this text may have a truly significant effect in combating climate change is the Commission.” “I am not sure they believe it,” he added. “We have been telling you since Oct that we made a bad start & this directive is not going in the right direction, is not really adapted to the farming world.”

The Saint-Rémy native (Bourgogne) insisted that “any livestock farmer on this continent is ready to do anything to diminish these emissions that you call industrial emissions & you are putting forward a directive that so far is totally irrelevant to the fight against climate change.” French Green MEP Benoît Biteau, expressed concern about concentration in the cattle raising sector, noting that “there are more & more very large holdings, & there are fewer farms in numbers overall.” “What is at stake here for cattle raising is huge, is tremendous,” he said. “One might accept that the Commission’s original proposal with its absolute threshold was not the right approach. I would continue to make the point that it was not right approach.” He noted that it had not commanded a majority in the AGRI Committee. “We have tried to make proposals regarding a more extensive form of cattle raising, which would not be affected by this Directive,” he said. “We have got to try & come up with public policies to reverse this trend.” Dutch euro-deputy Bert-Jan Ruissen (ECR) highlighted that “there is a very accentuated form of concentration or consolidation taking place in the sector & small & medium-sized holdings are going to be disappearing very, very quickly, & that is not so desirable.”

Comagri to meet Kyriakides, Ukrainian Deputy: Agriculture MEPs will have a regular exchange of views with Health & Food Safety Commissioner Stella Kyriakides at their meeting on April 24 (15:00-18:30), as well as a chance to talk to Deputy Minister of Agrarian Policy & Food of Ukraine Markian Dmytrasevych. They will also consider an opinion on packaging & packaging waste.

The following day (April 25), a first session, from 09:00 to 11:30 will be taken up by a Public Hearing on the ‘*Sustainable management of water resources in agriculture*’ organised jointly with the ENVI Committee. The last part of the morning will be taken up with a coordinators’ meeting, to be held in private. That afternoon there will be a series of votes, starting with the adoption of the draft report on labelling of organic pet food, Rapporteur Martin Häusling (Greens/EFA, DE), followed by another on ‘*Ensuring food security & long-term resilience of the EU agriculture*’ by the German EPP MEP Marlene Mortler & Lutgen’s report on the IED. After that, members will consider a report on ‘*Generational renewal in the EU farms of the future*’, by Rapporteur Isabel Carvalhais (S&D, PT), listen to a presentation of a study on ‘*The impact of the extreme climate events on agricultural production in the EU*’, organised by the Commission’s Policy Department B & consider another draft report on the European Protein Strategy, by Rapporteur Emma Wiesner (RE, SE)

DRAFT STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT SETS OUT STALL ON ANIMAL WELFARE OPTIONS

Cage bans, transport time limits, an end to practices like certain castrations & beak trimming, are likely to be enshrined into EU legislation on animal welfare if thinking displayed by the Commission in a Staff Working Document [see AF31-23] becomes law.

Delivering on the call from the ‘End the Cage Age’ citizens’ initiative heads a list of preferred options put forward in a 75-page draft Impact Assessment report being prepared by DG SANTE, with cages for birds, sow stalls & farrowing crates for pigs, pens instead of cages for fattening rabbits & the tethering of cows all banned. Under draft plans covered by *AGRA FACTS* in the last edition & still subject to change, the phase in period would be ten years, with the exception of five years for tethering & 15 years for a requirement for the partial group housing of female breeding rabbits. There are also plans to end beak trimming after a 15-year

transition, while there would also be a phase in of ten years for a ban on tail docking of pigs. The surgical castration of pigs, with a derogation for production of heavy pigs of more than 130kg (but with anaesthesia & analgesia), would come in over ten years & dehorning in dairy cows would be prohibited after five years. Disbudding (when the horn buds are removed before the horn attaches to the skull), would be allowed in calves only with anaesthesia/analgesia after a five-year transition period.

A third set of measures under consideration by DG SANTE would involve providing “sufficient & appropriate enrichment & roughage in line with EFSA recommendations for chickens, ducks & geese (water to dive their heads), calves (roughage high in fibre), pigs,” DG SANTE officials outline in the draft, with a requirement for the use of solid, rather than slatted, floors for pigs, calves & dairy cows. There would be “incentives for covered verandas for chickens through increased space allowance,” the authors suggest, also putting forward a requirement for access to the outdoors for calves & dairy cows & minimum space allowances for pigs, laying hens, broilers, calves, dairy cows & rabbits, with a ten-year transition period.

Officials also float a ban on “the systematic killing of male day-old male chicks after five years (for brown eggs) & after ten years (for white eggs), with a reporting obligation for the Commission on methods available for white eggs after seven years.” In the text which precedes its “preferred options,” the EU’s executive explains that sexing is considerably more expensive for white eggs. Also phased in over ten years would be “requirements for equivalent standards at import of relevant products as regards the use of cages, mutilations, space allowances, enrichments, the killing of male day-old chicks, & the welfare dogs & cats & fur animals.”

There are plans under consideration for Member States to monitor, & report to the Commission, policy indicators on animal welfare, while farms would be obliged to have a risk-based plan & be visited by a vet for welfare advice. “As a mitigating measure, small family farms selling directly to consumers are exempted,” the Commission outlines. It also puts forward the idea of a ban on housing of cats & dogs in tiered or stacked boxes, rules for their thermal comfort, minimum & maximum ages & limits on frequency for breeding. There should be an approval requirement for breeding establishments, with a logo & identification & registration requirements for cats & dogs. Those rules would be phased in over five years. DG SANTE suggests there should be “basic welfare requirements for beef cattle, turkeys, sheep & goats, rabbits, cats and dogs, & farmed aquatic animals, with empowerments for the Commission to lay down specific welfare standards, based on future EFSA opinions,” but notes that “pending political decision, no preferred option has been selected as regards fur farming.”

Turning to welfare at the time of killing, the writers put forward the idea of compulsory video-surveillance in slaughterhouses, with pre-approval of stunning equipment. They propose a “ban on waterbath stunning for poultry & for small & medium slaughterhouses,” with a further “ban on CO2 stunning of pigs but with 15 years’ transition period as a mitigating measure & an obligation for the Commission to present a report on existing alternatives after seven years.” On the welfare of animals during transport, they suggest time limits, for example, nine hours by road for ruminants exported by road, & 21 hours for those transported for other reasons. There are other conditions, such as the presence of a veterinarian or animal welfare officer, for sea transport. These measures would be phased in over five years. Transport should be subject to weather forecast, with, for example, transport only allowed at night if the temperature is above 30 degrees, they suggest. There should be real-time positioning, with a central database & digital application, phased in over five years.

IN BRIEF: Expert group to hold second regular meeting; WTO on farm productivity; Food policy;

EFSCM to hold 2nd plenary meeting: The second regular meeting of the Expert Group on the European Food Security Crisis Preparedness & Response Mechanism (EFSCM) is set to take place on April 28 via videoconference* from 09:30 to 17:00. The first regular meeting was on March 23, 2022 [see AF28-22]. The group’s other gatherings have been held on an *ad hoc* basis.

Under the chairmanship of outgoing DG AGRI Deputy Director General Michael Scannell - on his last working day in the Commission - Members will examine the results of a survey on the preparedness of national authorities to ensure food supply/food security & have a brief look back on 2022. Then they will consider the work of the three working subgroups on ‘Dashboard for the monitoring of food supply & food security’, ‘Crisis Communication on food supply & food security’ & ‘Improving the diversity of sources of supply’ including a presentation of the draft recommendations. After that, they will look at a study on mapping risks & vulnerabilities & consider the outlook ahead. There will be a discussion of the Single Market Emergency Instrument (SMEI) & food security, after which, following AOB, the meeting will be closed at around 5pm on Friday evening.

***Register of Commission expert groups and other similar entities (europa.eu);**

WTO discusses farm productivity: Members of the WTO’s working group on food security, meeting earlier this week (April 17), highlighted the need to improve agricultural productivity in least-developed countries (LDCs) & net food-importing developing countries (NFIDCs) to improve their resilience to the acute food security crisis. They discussed the result of a workshop on production resilience, which took place on April 12, with many referring to the challenges facing vulnerable countries, including a lack of technology & access

to inputs including seed, fertilisers & farm machinery. They highlighted poor infrastructure in countries, with limited access to credit & insurance, & funding limitations. WTO members suggested potential ways to increase agricultural productivity including technology transfer, innovation, research & development, & public funding for research. The representative of the Republic of Korea talked about their country's experience with new high-yield varieties, while other members emphasized the importance of well-functioning agricultural markets, a science-based regulatory infrastructure, & the role of WTO rules in supporting trade across the supply chains. Members agreed that trade is a natural driver of achieving resilience. The next working group meeting is scheduled for June 8.

Visek address food policy event: The EU Food Policy Coalition (FPC) is hosting an event on the future of EU food policies* on April 25, with Lukas Visek, Member of Cabinet of Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans, set to deliver the keynote address. Kicking off at 10am on Tuesday morning, the gathering seeks to delve into the legislative framework for sustainable food systems, exploring how the initiative has the potential to influence the way citizens approach food, from production to distribution & consumption. On the same day, Slow Food's Madeleine Coste (also from the FPC) will present a report on '*Sustainable Food Systems Law – Policy Recommendations for a meaningful transition*'.

Other speakers include Rianne van Zandbrink, from the 'Farm between the hedges' in the Netherlands & Researcher at Wageningen University, Alexis Descampe, co-founder & CEO of färm, a cooperative network of 17 stores offering organic, local & ethical produce, Joke Schauvliege, Vice-President of the Flemish Parliament, Rapporteur for the Committee of the Regions on the legislative framework for sustainable food systems & Erik Mathijs, Vice-Dean & Professor at the Faculty of Bioscience Engineering at KU Leuven & member of the KU Leuven Plant Institute. The panel discussion, moderated by Politico reporter Susannah Savage, will be followed by a walking lunch. On a related note, the next plenary meeting of the Advisory Group on Sustainable Food Systems is pencilled in for May 12 from 10am-5pm. The agenda is not yet available. [*Save the Date | Shifting Plates: European Appetite for Sustainable Food Systems \(mailchi.mp\)](#);

TIMETABLE: Week ahead (in Brussels unless otherwise stated), all Councils are in Lux;

- April 24** EU-Australia bilateral trade talks (15th round) in Brussels until April 28, led by Chief Negotiators Christophe Kiener (EU, DG TRADE) & Alison Burrows (Australia, First Assistant Secretary at the Dept of Foreign Affairs & Trade); **President Ursula von der Leyen** receives Jonas Gahr Støre, Prime Minister of Norway; participates in the Leaders' Summit on offshore wind in the North Sea, hosted by Alexander De Croo, Prime Minister of Belgium; **Executive Vice-President Margrethe Vestager** meets with Claude Turmes, Minister for Energy & Spatial Planning of Luxembourg (via videoconference); **Executive Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis** participates in the event '*Integration, multilateralism & sovereignty: building a Europe fit for new global dynamics*', organised by European Central Bank & Bruegel & receives Wang Wentao, Minister of Commerce of China; **Health Commissioner Stella Kyriakides** receives Keit Pentus-Rosimannus, member of the Court of Auditors (ECA);
- April 25** **Farm Council**; **Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans** receives administrators of Green10, a coalition of ten of the largest European environmental organisations; **Farm Commissioner Janusz Wojciechowski** meets bilaterally with Agriculture Ministers Zdeněk Nekula (Czechia) & Robert Telus (Poland) on the margins of the Agri Fish Council; **Kyriakides** receives Nicholas Papadopoulos, President of the Cyprus Democratic Party; **Environment Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius** receives organisers of the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) '*Save Bees & Farmers*'; European Food Policy Coalition (FPC) event [Save the Date | Shifting Plates: European Appetite for Sustainable Food Systems \(mailchi.mp\)](#);
- April 26** College Meeting; **Timmermans** receives Habtamu de Hoop, Member of the Dutch Parliament; **Energy Commissioner Kadri Simson** delivers a keynote speech at the **7th Just Transition Platform Conference '*International dimension of just transition and closing remarks*'**;
- April 27** **Dombrovskis** in Stockholm (& April 28) participates in the **Eurofi High Level Seminar 2023**; **Wojciechowski** receives Dr Antoine Hoxha, Director General of Fertilisers Europe & Mindaugas Maciulevičius, President of the Farm Union of the district of Kaunas in Lithuania; **Commissioner for Financial Markets & Financial Services Mairead McGuinness** in Stockholm (until April 29), speaks at the **Eurofi High Level Seminar 2023** & delivers a pre-recorded speech at a reception to mark 50 years of the Brussels offices of the Irish Farmers' Association (IFA) & Irish Co-operative Organisation Society (ICOS);
- April 28** **Kyriakides** in Madrid, meets with Spanish Ministers José Manuel Miñones (Health) & Luis Planas (Agriculture) & visits a Health Research Centre; **Sinkevičius** in Vilnius, meets with Simonas Gentvilas, Minister for Environment & delivers a speech for the Environmental Implementation Review dialogue & participates in the conference '*30 Years of the Single Market - Achievements & Pitfalls*';

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