



European Commission introduces vision for the future of the EU agri-food sector

In its [Vision for Agriculture and Food](#) (“**Vision**”), the European Commission (“**Commission**”) introduces its strategy for the EU agri-food sector for 2040. The Vision builds on the [Strategic Dialogue on the future of EU agriculture](#). The Commission presents four priority areas: an attractive agricultural sector; a competitive and resilient sector; a future-proof sector; and fair living and working conditions in rural areas. In this news update, we discuss the Vision’s background, objectives and potential implications.

Background: recent EU developments

In September 2024, the Commission received the final report of the Strategic Dialogue on the future of EU agriculture. The dialogue brought together stakeholders from across the agri-food chain, as well as other parties such as financial institutions and non-governmental organisations, with the aim of shaping a shared vision for the future of the agri-food sector. This dialogue produced a series of [recommendations](#), which helped inform the Vision. The recommendations had previously prompted the Commission to propose facilitating cooperation within the agri-food chain by amending the Common Market Organisation Regulation. At the same time, it published a proposal for a new Regulation to address cross-border unfair trading practices. In addition, the Commission set up the European Board on Agriculture and Food (“**EBAF**”), an advisory body consisting of the Commissioner for Agriculture and Food and a select group of stakeholders. The package of measures and the EBAF’s formation have already been discussed in a previous [update](#).

Objectives of the Vision

The Commission has developed the Vision and the four priority areas with the aim of ensuring food safety in Europe, both in the present and in the future. According to the Commission, this requires a prosperous, attractive and competitive agri-food sector. These objectives call for a simplification of policy, paired with the promotion and acceleration of innovation and digitalisation. The Commission clearly identified the objectives and their necessary measures in [this factsheet](#). They can be summarised as follows:

- An **attractive agricultural sector** ensures sufficient stability to appeal to young people, which is essential due to the sector's ageing population. A Commission [press release](#) shows that the average age of farmers is currently 57. Actions aimed at making farming a more appealing career include updating the Common Agricultural Policy (“CAP”) and reviewing the [Unfair Trading Practices Directive](#). Further, access to loan and investment options will be improved and a generational renewal strategy will be developed.
- **Competitiveness and resilience** are seen by the Commission as vital characteristics for the agri-food sector in the future, partly in light of geopolitical and geoeconomic tensions. The Vision refers to the [Draghi report](#), which states that our dependencies are becoming vulnerabilities. To ensure a resilient sector, the Commission intends to reduce the European agri-food sector's dependence on non-EU countries. To improve competitiveness, the Commission suggests aligning the production standards applied to imported food products with European production standards. The dialogue shows that this is particularly necessary as regards pesticide use and animal welfare standards.
- A **future-proof agricultural sector** focuses mainly on reducing emissions. Carbon emission reductions are necessary to achieve the EU's climate objectives, as set out in the [European Green Deal, for example](#). The agricultural and food sectors play a key role in ensuring the necessary reduction of total EU carbon emissions. By incentivising sustainability, the Commission hopes to drive this reduction in a positive way. The Commission also proposes a simplification and streamlining of the current regulatory framework. It also refers to the upcoming [Water Resilience Strategy](#), which will outline its response to future water-related problems.
- To foster **fair living and working conditions** in rural areas, the Commission will launch or expand various initiatives. Examples include the [Women in Farming Platform](#) and the [Rural Pact](#). These initiatives, which will be rolled out at both European and local level, aim to ensure that rural areas are not neglected, that local workers' rights are protected, and that local small and medium-sized enterprises receive more effective support.

The vision's implications for the agri-food sector

Each of the four priority areas includes specific measures and strategies to achieve the objectives. The agri-food sector's course until 2040 thus seems mapped out to a fair degree. Besides the numerous initiatives, some of which have been discussed in this news update, the Commission is soon to introduce a number of major legislative and regulatory reforms. For example, the agricultural legislative framework will be simplified later this year and an EU digital strategy for agriculture will be launched to enable the transition to a digital-ready farming sector. The goal is to make the next CAP fairer, simpler and more focused, with support more directed towards farmers that actively engage in food production and with particular attention given to young farmers and farmers in areas with natural constraints. This is in line with the EU CAP Network's [report](#) on generational renewal in the agricultural sector, which was published in January 2025. The new [EU agri-food chain Observatory \(“AFCO”\)](#) will improve transparency in the agri-food supply chain by analysing prices, costs, and the distribution of margins. In the area of global competition, the Commission will create a Unity Safety Net, enabling the use of all available means to protect the agri-food sector from economic coercion by non-EU countries.

With stakeholders closely involved in its creation, the Vision reflects the measures necessary to better protect farmers and to encourage them to meet the required standards. If its objectives are actually to be met, the Vision's implementation will require a host of initiatives and regulatory reforms.

Contact

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