

Brussels, 1 July 2025
(OR. en)

10940/25

AGRI 316
AGRIORG 89

NOTE

From:	Presidency
To:	SCA/Council
Subject:	Proteins for food and feed – supply, production and sustainability - <i>Exchange of views</i>

With a view to the meetings of the SCA on 7 July and the “Agriculture and Fisheries” Council on 14 July 2025, delegations will find in the Annex a Presidency note on the above-mentioned subject with two questions to steer ministers’ exchange of views.

Proteins for food and feed – supply, production and sustainability

Protein is a fundamental nutrient for both humans and animals. There is a need to secure stable supply chains to meet the demand for protein in the EU, while ensuring the sustainability of planet and human health. With this exchange, the Presidency intends to bring forth the views of the Council in order to inform ongoing and future work of the European Commission on this important issue. The exchange also seeks to share experiences from Member States that can be replicated or scaled up to the EU level. It builds on the discussion at the informal meeting of ministers for agriculture during the Belgian Presidency on 9 April 2024 on possible options to improve the EU's protein crop supply.¹

As the European Commission highlighted in its communication of 19 February 2025, “A Vision for Agriculture and Food”, the EU's “protein supply is heavily reliant on high-quality imports from a limited number of origins, making our food system vulnerable to global market fluctuations and sustainability risks. We need to consider both the way protein is produced and consumed in the EU. The Commission will therefore develop a comprehensive plan to address these challenges, integrating policy, research and on the ground efforts to create a more self-sufficient and sustainable EU protein system, while at the same time diversifying imports.”

¹ <https://belgian-presidency.consilium.europa.eu/en/news/european-agriculture-ministers-gathered-to-work-on-food-as-strategic-sector-for-europe-1/>

According to the European Commission, 75 percent of the protein used to feed EU livestock was produced in the EU in 2022/23.² However, for certain sources of feed protein, such as oilseed meals, and in particular for soya, the EU imports most of the quantities used in its livestock sector. The EU's dependence on imports is influenced by factors such as the smaller size of holdings, available land on the continent, competitiveness of different crops, and less favorable soil and climate for specific products, like soya beans. Meanwhile some progress can be observed. The EU's production of protein-rich plants has increased by 28 percent in the last 15 years.³

Given the import dependence, international trade is important to ensure the EU's strategic autonomy when it comes to proteins. Mercosur, the United States and Ukraine are important sources of proteins for feed⁴. The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and recent geopolitical developments have shown the importance of stable, global supply chains for EU resilience.

The European Parliament adopted its European Protein Strategy resolution on 19 October 2023, where it called on the European Commission to take action by providing a framework to boost protein production within the EU⁵. Furthermore, the recommendations of the Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture, published in September 2024, called for the creation of an EU action plan for plant-based foods in 2026 to strengthen the plant-based agri-food chains from farmers to consumers.⁶

² European Commission: [Protein supply and demand](#), September 2024

³ [Feed protein: overview of EU production and options to diversify sources - European Commission](#)

⁴ European Commission: [Protein supply and demand](#) September 2024

⁵ [Texts adopted - European protein strategy - Thursday, 19 October 2023](#)

⁶ [Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture](#)

Member States have undertaken various initiatives to promote diversified production and consumption of proteins, including both plant-based and animal-based proteins. Some Member States have developed national protein strategies or action plans aimed at reducing the EU's dependence on imported plant proteins by encouraging a more diverse protein supply. These initiatives typically support the entire value chain – from farm to fork – and often include measures to enhance local protein production and foster market development⁷. EU farmers and food producers have also started diversifying their protein supply in ways that promote sustainability – for example by integrating sustainability concerns in global supply chains for proteins and by cultivating crops that improve soil health and biodiversity.

Under the Common Agricultural Policy, Member States may already use several instruments, e.g. agri-environmental measures, eco-schemes, and coupled support, to encourage the cultivation of protein crops. Investment support and demonstration projects are among other instruments that can be used.

New plant-based products and business models can contribute to making both the production and consumption of proteins more financially attractive, resilient and sustainable. This includes for example the further development and scaling up of protein-rich crops for food and feed, such as peas, lupins, and fava beans, which would also support European companies in the fast-growing global market for plant-based alternative protein. More plant-based proteins can also create a new income for farmers and the agri-food sector as a whole.

⁷ [Factsheet: EU countries' initiatives to a more sustainable and resilient protein-supply system \(October 2024\)](#)

In light of the above, the Presidency proposes the following questions to frame the debate at the Council meeting:

1. What initiatives have been taken *by the Member States* to diversify protein sources for food and feed?
 2. What actions should be taken *at EU level* to support the diversification of protein sources for food and feed?
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