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Joint Statement

EU Leaders' Retreat – 12 February

An ambitious EU competitiveness agenda must place the future of the European agri-food chain at its core

Agriculture and food have always been at the heart of the European project, a pillar of our economy, our security and our way of life. It is a strategic sector of the economy, be it at EU or national level.

Taken together, the entire agrifood value chain generates more than €1 trillion in gross value added to the EU economy, surpassing the economic footprint of other EU industries¹.

Every day, Europe's farmers and the entire agri-food chain provide citizens with safe, high-quality and nutritious food, both across the continent and beyond. In a world shaped by geopolitical instability, conflict and uncertainty, farmers and all actors along the value chain remain a stabilising force and a strategic asset for food security, resilience, sustainability, culture and peace.

In light of the above, **the sector's potential to contribute to the EU's strategic goals — ranging from economic competitiveness to security — must be recognized.**

Yet the agri-food sector is under increasing strain. Global uncertainty, legal uncertainty, growing regulatory complexity, outdated rules that hinder innovation, and rising administrative burdens are putting entire value chains at risk. These obstacles delay essential investments, weaken resilience, slow innovation and make it harder to deliver the transitions society expects.

¹ (Havlík, van Meijl et al. 2025); Havlík, P., van Meijl, H., Krisztin, T., Müller, M., van Berkum, S., Fellmann, T., Gocht, A., Guyomard, H., Haniotis, T., Matthews, A., Sckokai, P., Stepanyan, D., Witzke, P., Balázs, K., Bos, D. (2025). Sustainable agricultural sector: A key component of EU economic prosperity and security – An economic modellers' perspective. A joint perspective paper by Horizon Europe projects ACT4CAP27, BrightSpace and LAMASUS

Now more than ever, Europe must strengthen its strategic independence and security by investing in its agriculture and food sector. This means securing agricultural productivity and reliable supplies across all regions of the EU, ensuring food remains affordable for consumers, preserving the diversity of production, assuring generation renewal, maintaining highest quality and safety standards, and contributing to Europe's overall growth and preparedness.

Strengthening the agri-food sector also means reinforcing Europe's bioeconomy and circularity, where farmers and competitive agri-based industry play a key role in reducing strategic dependencies on fossil-based and imported inputs.

The signatory organisations of the agri-food chain, as already done, welcome the European Commission's 2024–2029 commitment to boost competitiveness by reducing administrative burdens, streamlining procedures and modernising legislation. **The time has come to make a real difference in the daily lives of millions of farmers, agri-cooperatives and hundreds of thousands of processors and operators,** by providing the clarity and predictability businesses need to operate, invest and innovate, while reinforcing consumer confidence.

As highlighted in the European Commission's Vision for Agriculture and Food, achieving its objectives requires genuine simplification for farmers, food processors and all actors across the value chain, supported by innovation that delivers practical, scalable solutions.

Initial steps have already been taken through some Omnibus proposals. This is a move in the right direction, but **more must be done to unlock the full potential of the agri-food chain.**

The Omnibus process must continue. EU institutions must go further by modernising legislation that discourages innovation, slows down permitting, and limits circularity. Europe should aim to become the global leader in smart, streamlined regulation, enabling businesses to compete on world markets and ensuring a well-functioning Single Market.

If Europe is committed about strengthening its strategic independence, it must start with agriculture and food.

Reducing strategic dependencies and reinforcing competitiveness in agriculture and the agri-food sector are essential foundations of a truly resilient Europe.

Simplification, modernisation and investment in the competitiveness of farming and the entire agri-food chain must be placed at the centre of the EU agenda.

Investing in the EU agri-food chain means investing in Europe's common security, and geopolitical resilience.

The time to deliver is now.

We call on EU leaders to hear the voice of the agri-food chain and take concrete action with the policies and investments needed to secure the future, resilience and competitiveness of the entire sector.

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On behalf of the following organisations:

Animal Health Europe - The voice of the animal medicines industry

AVEC - The voice of Europe's poultry meat sector

CEETTAR - European Organisation of Agricultural, Rural and Forestry Contractors

CEEV - Comité Européen des Entreprises Vins

CEFS - European Association of Sugar Manufacturers

CEJA - European Council of Young Farmers (CEJA)

CELCAA - European Liaison Committee for Agricultural and Agri-Food Trade

CEMA - European Agricultural Machinery Association

CEPM - European Confederation of Maize Production

CIBC-IMV-IBC - International Butchers Confederation

CIBE - International Confederation of European Beet Growers

CLITRAVI - Liaison Centre for the Meat Processing Industry in the European Union

Coceral - European association of trade in cereals, oilseeds, rice, pulses, olive oil, oils and fats, animal feed and agrosupply

Copa Cogeca - The United Voice of Farmers and their Cooperatives in the European Union

CropLife Europe - European organisation that represents the crop protection sector

EBB - European Biodiesel Board

EDA - European Dairy Association

EFFAB - European Forum of Farm Animal Breeders

ELO - European Landowners' Organization

ePure - European Renewable Ethanol

ERA - European Rabbit Association

ESA - European Spice Association

Euro Foie Gras - European Federation of Foie Gras

EUROMAISIRS - European maize milling sector

EUROMONTANA - European association of mountain areas

EuropaBio – European Association for Bioindustries

Europatat - European Potato Trade Association

European Flour Millers

Euroseeds - The voice of the European seed sector

EUWEP - European Union of Wholesale in Eggs, Egg-Products, Poultry and Game

FEAP - Federation of European Aquaculture Producers

FEDIOL - EU vegetable oil and proteinmeal industry association

FEFAC - European Feed Manufacturers' Federation

FEFANA - EU Specialty Feed Ingredients Industry

FESASS - Fédération Européenne pour la Santé Animale et la Sécurité Sanitaire

Food Drink Europe - Food and drink is the biggest manufacturing industry in Europe

IBMA - International Biocontrol Manufacturers Association

PFP - Primary Food Processors, association for the European primary food processing industry

Spirits Europe - Representative body for producers of spirit drinks

Starch Europe - European Starch Industry

Tomato Europe - Tomato processing industry from Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece and France

UECBV - European Livestock and Meat Trades Union

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