



Ref. COMM(26)00293

11/02/2026

## 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 industries<sup>1</sup>.

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 Global uncertainty, legal uncertainty, growing regulatory complexity, outdated rules that hinder innovation, and rising administrative burdens are putting entire value chains at risk.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.

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<sup>1</sup> (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.**

**-END-**

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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

**EUROMAISIERS** - 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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EU Transparency Register Number | Copa 44856881231-49 | Cogeca 09586631237-74