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Report Highlights:

This quarterly report covers January through March 2021 and provides details on the status of the EU Green Deal objectives and strategies including the Farm to Fork Strategy (F2F), Biodiversity Strategy, the Climate Target Plan, the EU Methane Strategy, and the Circular Economy Action Plan.

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Background

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has prioritized her presidency around greening and transforming the EU economy to become carbon neutral by 2050 through the politically ambitious “[EU Green Deal](#).” As part of the European Green Deal, the European Commission is publishing sector-specific strategies to reach the objective of carbon neutrality by 2050 and to transform the EU economy to be more sustainable such as the Farm to Fork Strategy (F2F) or the Biodiversity Strategy. This quarterly update report includes details on what was proposed and what has progressed during the period January-March 2021. The previous report covering September-December 2020 can be found [here](#).

The Commission has started preparatory work, but most draft legislative proposals are expected in the coming years. On October 20, 2020, the European Commission adopted its [2021 Work Program](#) setting out the actions the Commission aims to take in 2021. To achieve the Green Deal objective of climate neutrality by 2050, the Commission announced that in 2021 it will table a legislative package (“Fit for 55”) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55 percent by 2030. This will cover wide-ranging policy areas including renewable energy, land use and forestry. The Commission will also publish a proposal for a Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism on the risk of carbon leakage¹. In addition, the Commission will propose legislation to implement Europe's Circular Economy Action Plan, the EU Biodiversity Strategy, and the F2F. For more information about the Work Program, see: [EU Commission Presents its 2021 Work Program](#).

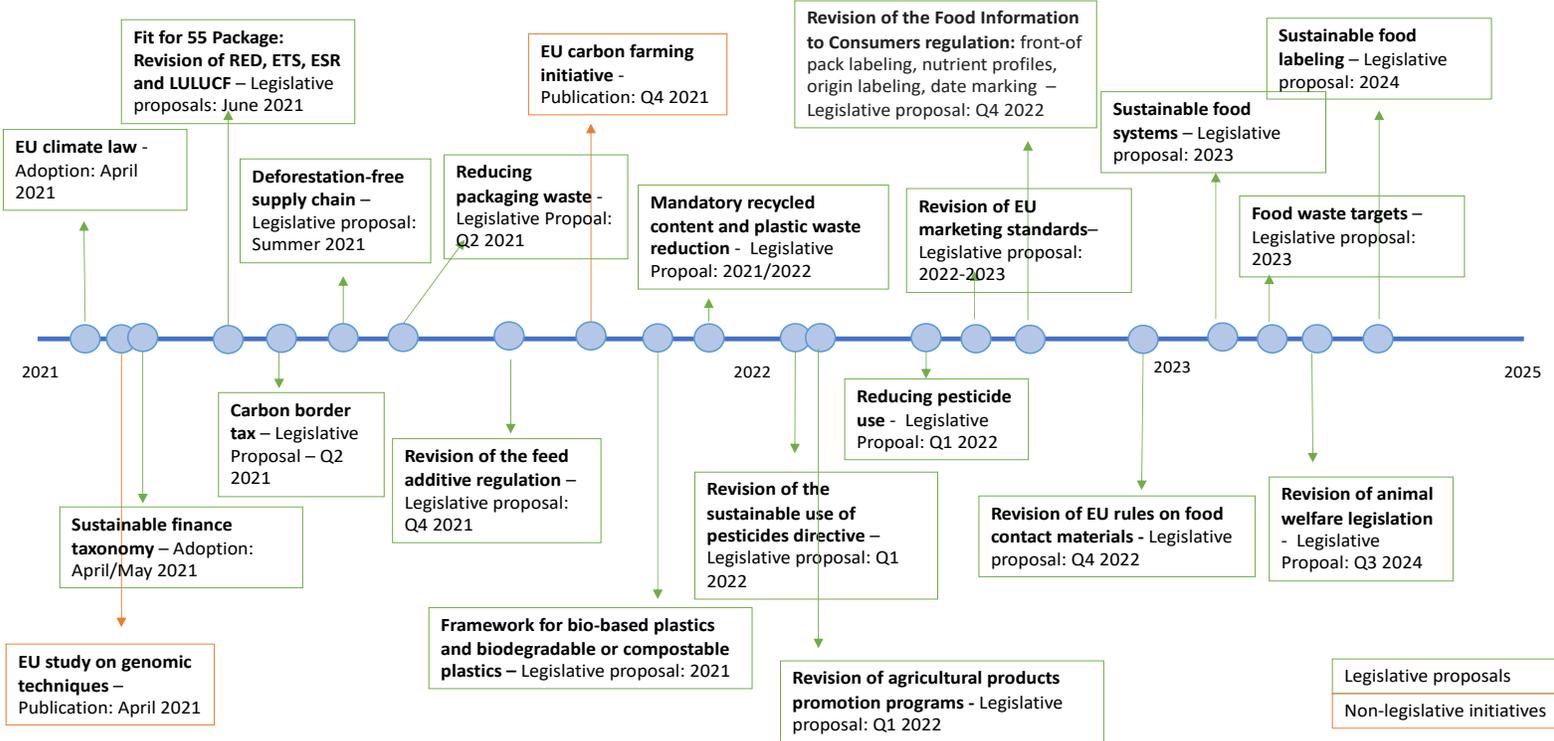
Representatives across all sectors, including producers, food retailers, Parliamentarians and Commission officials, have been speaking out on F2F. Stakeholders are pushing the Commission to complete impact assessments before releasing any draft proposal, to ensure the feasibility of any new requirements. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) negotiations may also affect the ability of the EU to meet the F2F targets, such as the final share of the total budget to be earmarked for eco-schemes payments or the alignment of the Member States national CAP Strategic Plans with the F2F objectives.

¹ According to the EU, carbon leakage refers to the situation that may occur if, for reasons of costs related to climate policies, business were to transfer production to other countries with less stringent emission constraints.

PART I: REGULATORY UPDATES

Below is a visual timeline of upcoming initiatives that could have potential trade implications:

EU Green Deal – Timeline of upcoming initiatives with potential trade implications



The EU Climate Law

On March 4, 2020, the European Commission published the founding legislative proposal of the EU Green Deal: [the EU Climate Law](#). This proposal aims to write into EU law the goal set out in the European Green Deal: climate neutrality by 2050 while achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions. The Climate Law will make the objectives of the EU Green Deal legally binding for the European Union and the Member States. The proposal also includes a reduction of net GHG emissions by at least 55 percent compared to 1990 levels by 2030. The proposed text would also empower the Commission to adopt legislation setting out a trajectory to reach carbon-neutrality by 2050, starting from the 2030 target.

2020 target	Current 2030 target	Proposed 2030 target	Proposed 2050 target
- 20%	- 40%	- 55%	- 100%

Table 1: EU targets and Commission’s proposed targets for net reduction of GHG emissions compared to 1990 levels.

What's new?

The EU Climate Law is currently going through the EU's legislative process. It is currently in the trilogue stage where the Commission, Council and European Parliament negotiate to find an agreement. The Portuguese Presidency of the Council has stated that they want to wrap up the negotiations by April, ahead of the publication of the "Fit for 55." Members of the European Parliament seem less optimistic with the timing. For more information, please see [EU Parliament and Council Move Forward on Landmark EU Climate Law](#).

Agricultural Impact

The EU Climate Law requires the Commission to propose revisions of key EU climate and energy legislation in line with the revised 2030 target by June 30, 2021. This includes the European Emissions Trading System (EU-ETS) Directive, the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) Regulation and the Renewable Energy Directive (REDII).

This report reviews the below sector strategies that are likely to impact agriculture and food:

- The Farm to Fork Strategy
- The Biodiversity Strategy
- The EU Climate Target Plan For 2030
- The EU Methane Strategy
- The Circular Economy Action Plan

The EU Taxonomy for Sustainable Activities

In June 2020, in order to meet the EU's climate targets for 2030 and reach the objectives of the European Green Deal, the European Commission adopted the [Taxonomy Regulation](#). This Regulation establishes the framework for an EU taxonomy for sustainable activities by setting out four overarching conditions that an economic activity has to meet in order to qualify as "environmentally sustainable." The Taxonomy Regulation aims to act as a screening mechanism to define sustainable activities to steer private investment to activities the Commission deems sustainable. It creates three different categories: "sustainable activities", "transitional activities and "enabling activities." The Commission shall now adopt secondary legislation (delegated acts) that sets up the technical screening criteria to develop the taxonomy further. The first delegated act shall concern activities that substantially contribute to climate change mitigation or climate change adaptation, including agriculture and bioenergy.

Additionally, throughout 2020, the European Commission has published many sectoral communications and strategies that lay out a vision (with proposed measures) to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 (which will be enshrined into EU law by the EU Climate Law). The Commission will continue to publish new strategies in 2021. More information on the status of the EU Green deal strategies can be found [here](#).

The Farm to Fork Strategy

The Commission published the Farm to Fork (F2F) Strategy on May 20, 2020. The Strategy lists 27 actions aimed to transform the way EU food is produced, processed, transported, presented, and sold. The full Strategy can be found [here](#). The Commission identified these actions to further the Green Deal goals, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and pursuing economic growth decoupled from resource use. This report only highlights specific aspects of the F2F that may impact U.S. agricultural product market access, EU competitiveness, and/or create technical barriers to trade.

On October 19, 2020, the 27 EU Ministers of Agriculture adopted [Council Conclusions on the Farm to Fork Strategy](#) (F2F). This document is the official position of the Member States on the F2F. More information can be found in the previous report.

The European Parliament is in the process of adopting an own-initiative report on the F2F. While non-binding, this document will serve as the official position of parliamentarians on the Strategy. The Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI) and Environment, Health and Food Safety (ENVI) Committees are responsible for the report. Other Parliament's Committees will also weight in the report such as the International Trade Committee. The [draft report](#) was published on December 17, 2020. There were more than 2297 amendments submitted by members of the European Parliament (MEPs). The ENVI and AGRI rapporteurs for the file are currently working on compromises. A first vote at the committee level is expected for June 2021.

1. Proposal for a harmonized mandatory front-of-pack nutrition label

The Commission announced that it would propose EU-harmonized mandatory front-of-pack nutrition labeling before the end of 2022. In a [specific report](#) on the subject, the Commission states that front-of-pack labeling has the potential to help consumers make health-conscious food choices and that harmonized mandatory front-of-pack nutrition labeling (FOPNL) at the EU-level could help inform consumer decisions. Health and Food Safety Commissioner Kyriakides underlined that at this stage the Commission would not be recommending any specific schemes and would rather first launch an impact assessment on the different options while soliciting input from stakeholders through a public consultation. European media suggest that the French Nutri-Score labeling scheme is the frontrunner labeling approach to be widely adopted across the EU. France, Belgium², Spain, The Netherlands³ and Germany have already adopted the Nutri-Score system domestically. The Nutri-Score scheme has also been adopted by leading food manufacturers such as Nestlé and Danone.

On December 23, 2020, the European Commission published [a roadmap](#) laying down its intention to put forward a legislative proposal for a revision of [Regulation \(EU\) 1169/2011](#) on the provision of food information to consumers (FIC Regulation). With this roadmap, the Commission announces that it will prepare an impact assessment in 2021. A legislative proposal is foreseen for the fourth quarter of 2022. This roadmap covers the proposal for a harmonized mandatory front-of-pack nutrition label. For more information, please see: [Commission Publishes Roadmap on the Upcoming Revision of Food Labeling Requirements](#).

What's new?

² See, e.g., [Belgium Adopts Nutri-Score for Front of Pack Nutritional Labeling](#)

³ See, e.g., [Dutch Food Company Adds Nutri-score to Packaged Products](#)

On February 3, 2021, the European Commission asked the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) to provide scientific advice on harmonized front-of-pack labeling. EFSA [was asked to provide advice](#) on:

- Nutrients of public health importance for European populations, including non-nutrient components of food (e.g.: energy, dietary fiber)
- Food groups which have important roles in the diets of European populations and subgroups
- Criteria to guide the choice of nutrients and other non-nutrient components of food for nutrient profiling.

EFSA is required to deliver its scientific opinion by March 2022 and will consult publicly on the draft by the end of 2021.

Additionally, the debate regarding the Nutri-Score is raging, especially in the South of Europe. Italy's new Agriculture Minister, Stefano Patuanelli, [told](#) leading farm lobby Coldiretti that he would fight against the Nutri-Score's deployment across the EU: "For me, it is unacceptable that, in our country, we move to a labeling system in which a carbonated, sugary drink, produced in a lab, is rated as healthier than our olive oil or than our Parmigiano." Group of food producers from Mediterranean countries (Italy, Spain, Greece, Cyprus) that produce cured ham, cheeses or olive oil have also been vocal in the press against the Nutri-Score. These concerns have been echoed by Spanish and Italian members of the European Parliament.

2. Nutrient profiles in the context of nutrition and health claims

The Commission announced that it would set nutrient profiles to restrict promotion of food high in salt, sugars and/or fat as required by [Regulation 1924/2006](#) before the end of 2022. Currently, the implementation of Regulation 1924/2006 on nutrition and health claims made on foods remains incomplete since the Commission did not establish nutrient profiles that had to be set by January 2009.

On December 15, 2020, European Ministers of Agriculture discussed this issue in conjunction with discussions about the FOPNL and the extension or origin labeling. The [Presidency Conclusions](#) underline the importance of basing the proposal on nutrient profiles on science and evidence and a thorough impact assessment, and call upon the Commission to examine the impact of different nutrient profiling models and the need for exemptions.

On December 23, 2020, the European Commission published [a roadmap](#) laying down its intention to put forward a legislative proposal for a revision of [Regulation \(EU\) 1169/2011](#) on the provision of food information to consumers (FIC Regulation). With this roadmap, the Commission announces that it will prepare an impact assessment in 2021. A legislative proposal is foreseen for the fourth quarter of 2022. This roadmap covers the setting up of nutrient profiles and notes that the Commission plans to develop "in a coherent manner" harmonized front-of-pack nutrition labelling and the setting of nutrient profiles. For more information, please see: [Commission Publishes Roadmap on the Upcoming Revision of Food Labeling Requirements](#).

3. Extension of origin indication for certain products

The Commission announced that it will “consider proposing the extension of mandatory origin or provenance indications to certain products, while fully taking into account impacts on the single market” before the end of 2022. Currently, origin labeling is already mandatory in the EU for honey, fruits and vegetables, olive oil, fishery and aquaculture products as well as fresh, chilled and frozen beef, pork, sheep and goat meat and poultry. However, it is still possible for EU Member States to introduce, under certain conditions, national mandatory origin rules.

On December 23, 2020, the European Commission published [a roadmap](#) laying down its intention to put forward a legislative proposal for a revision of [Regulation \(EU\) 1169/2011](#) on the provision of food information to consumers (FIC Regulation). With this roadmap, the Commission announces that it will prepare an impact assessment in 2021. A legislative proposal is foreseen for the fourth quarter of 2022. This roadmap covers the extension of mandatory origin or provenance indications to certain products. In this roadmap, the Commission identified foods for which the impact of the extension of mandatory origin labelling will be assessed in the impact assessment: milk and milk used as an ingredient, meat used as an ingredient, rabbit and game meat, rice, durum wheat used in pasta, potatoes and tomato used in certain tomato products. For more information, please see: [Commission Publishes Roadmap on the Upcoming Revision of Food Labeling Requirements](#).

What’s new?

On March 2, 2021, the European Food Forum organized a webinar on the extension of origin labeling: “Mandatory indication of origin: challenges, opportunities and myths.” Sabine Juelicher, DG SANTE Director for Food and feed safety and innovation, was the keynote speaker. During her introductory remarks she explained that the Commission is working on the impact assessment of the future proposal. She explained that there is strong demand from consumers and calls for shorter supply chains that intensified during the COVID pandemic. There are many national measures currently in place and that causes a risk of fragmentation of the Single Market, which is why the Commission wants to act at the EU level. However, she stressed that she did not want to link food safety to food origin. Origin labeling is not an insurance of food safety; the EU has other tools for that.

On March 10, 2021, the French Conseil d’Etat (one of France’s highest courts) annulled the 2016 French law requirement mandatory origin labelling for milk and dairy products placed on the French market. France was one of the first EU countries to introduce national requirements on origin labeling. This decision from the Conseil d’Etat comes after a judgement delivered on October 1, 2020 by the European Court of Justice (ECJ). The ECJ had stated that, to comply with EU law, national rules on origin labeling must be justified by proving that there is a link between the qualities of the foods and their origin and that the majority of consumers attach significant value to the provision of that information. This decision was welcomed by European industry. The European Dairy Association [noted](#) that: “The decision by the French Conseil d’Etat represents a solid support of the Single Market principle and gives a clear sign to both, the European Commission and the national legislators. The European dairy industry is confident that the EU Commission, as guardian of the treaty, will now take up the fight for the single market principle and stop all national(istic) initiatives for mandatory origin labelling of milk and dairy.” For more information, please see GAIN Report [European Court of Justice Rules That National Schemes for Origin Labelling Should Be Justified](#).

4. Revision of the EU rules on date marking

According to the Farm to Fork Strategy, food waste at all steps of the product lifecycle in the EU, accounts for at least 6 percent of total EU GHG emissions. As a way to reduce food waste and food loss in the EU, the Commission also announced that it will propose revisions to EU rules relating to date marking ('use by' and 'best before' dates) before the end of 2022.

On December 23, 2020, the European Commission published [a roadmap](#) laying down its intention to put forward a legislative proposal for a revision of [Regulation \(EU\) 1169/2011](#) on the provision of food information to consumers (FIC Regulation). With this roadmap, the Commission announces that it will prepare an impact assessment in 2021. A legislative proposal is foreseen for the fourth quarter of 2022. For more information, please see: [Commission Publishes Roadmap on the Upcoming Revision of Food Labeling Requirements](#).

5. Animal welfare labeling

The F2F Strategy includes the objective for the EU to improve animal welfare, improve animal health and reduce the need for medication. In that regard, the Strategy notes that the Commission will consider "options for animal welfare labeling to better transmit value through the food chain." On December 15, 2020, European Ministers of Agriculture adopted [Council Conclusions on an EU-wide animal welfare label](#). Member States stated that an EU-wide animal welfare label for food produced under animal welfare standards higher than those provided by EU legislation could respond to the consumer demand to easily recognize such food. Therefore, Member States invited the Commission to consider developing criteria that would have to be fulfilled in order to be able to use the EU animal welfare label and to consider the creation of a standardized EU logo for this label.

What's new?

In January 2021, as part of the Farm to Fork Strategy, the European Commission asked EFSA for scientific advice reflecting the most up-to-date data on animal welfare. The work of EFSA falls broadly into three areas: welfare of animals during transport; welfare of animals kept for farming purposes: poultry (laying hens and chickens reared for meat), pigs and calves; and welfare of animals at slaughter.

In February 2021, during an exchange of views with the European Parliament's Committee of Inquiry on the Protection of Animals during Transport, Maria do Céu Antunes, Portuguese Minister of Agriculture, who is currently chairing the Agriculture Council, noted the importance of animal welfare labeling. She explained that there are already many voluntary schemes in EU Member States. She hoped it would lead to an increasing demand by consumers for products complying with higher welfare standards.

6. Reduction of the use of antimicrobials

As part of the Farm to Fork Strategy, the European Commission announced its objective to reduce the use of antimicrobials in agriculture in the EU and announced that it would take actions to reduce overall EU sales of antimicrobials for farmed animals and in aquaculture by 50 percent by 2030. To do this, the Commission will build on [Regulation 2019/6 on veterinary medicinal products](#) adopted in 2019. This

regulation lays down rules for the placing on the market, manufacturing, import, export, supply, distribution, control and use of veterinary medicinal products in the European Union. It also will apply certain aspects of the regulation to third countries exporting animals or products of animal origin to the EU.

What's new?

One of the key elements of Regulation 2019/6 is the creation of a list of antimicrobials reserved for human use. On March 26, 2021, the European Commission published a [draft delegated regulation](#) that sets up the criteria to be used to identify these antimicrobials. The draft delegated act establishing the criteria states that the designation of antimicrobials to be reserved for human use must meet all three of the criteria set out in parts A, B, and C of the draft's annex in order to be designated as reserved for treatment of certain infections in humans. The Annex outlining the full draft criteria can be downloaded from [here](#).

7. Revision of EU legislation on food contact materials

In the Farm to Fork Strategy, the European Commission announced that it would review the current EU legislation on food contact materials (FCMs) to improve food safety and public health through the reduction of the use of hazardous chemicals. The Commission also wants to support the use of innovative and sustainable packaging solutions and to contribute to food waste reduction by extending the shelf-life of food products.

On December 18, 2020, the European Commission published [a roadmap](#) that identified the shortcomings of the current EU food contact material legislation such as possible safety issues for non-plastics FCMs, a lack of prioritization of the most hazardous substances and up-to-date assessments, poor enforcement of rules, and a need to review the scope of legislation. With this roadmap, the Commission announces that it will prepare a legislative proposal by the end of 2022, which will be accompanied by an impact assessment.

8. Reduction of the overall use and risk of chemical pesticides by 50 percent and the use of more hazardous pesticides by 50 percent by 2030

The Commission announced that it would take action to reduce the overall use and risk of chemical pesticides by 50 percent and the use of high-risk pesticides⁴ by 50 percent by 2030. These suggested actions include putting forward proposals to revise the [Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive \(SUD\)](#), enhancing provisions on integrated pest management (IPM), and promoting the use of alternative ways to protect harvests from pests and diseases. As part of Green Deal efforts, the European Commission also proposed incorporating environmental factors into the Maximum Residue Level (MRL) setting process. The Commission began its roadmap to revise the SUD with a public feedback period, which lasted from May 29, 2020 to August 7, 2020.

⁴ According to the EU, high risk pesticides are plant protection products containing active substances that meet the cut-off criteria set out in points 3.6.2 to 3.6.5 and 3.8.2 of Annex II to Regulation (EC) No. 1107/2009 or are identified as candidates for substitution in accordance with the criteria in point 4 of that annex.

What's new?

On January 18, 2021, following the public feedback period, the European Commission launched a [public consultation](#) for the revision of the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive (SUD) as part of a broader consultation strategy, including stakeholder surveys designed to collect the views of stakeholder organizations and Member State Authorities. The SUD sets objectives at the EU level to achieve the sustainable use of pesticides but lets the Member States design and define the actions and methods to achieve the objectives, while taking into consideration the specific needs of each Member State. The revised SUD legislative proposal is scheduled to be ready by the first quarter of 2022.

On January 20, 2021, the European Commission organized a virtual ["Informative session on Pesticides"](#) for the Embassies and Missions of third countries regarding environmental concerns in MRL setting. More than 35 countries participated in the event. The session was organized by DG SANTE. Director General, Sandra Gallina, gave opening remarks and Deputy Director General, Claire Bury. DG SANTE experts presented on the MRL setting process in the EU and the EU's intention to take environmental aspects into account when assessing requests for import tolerances for active substances no longer approved in the EU.

On January 6, 2021, the European Crop Protection Association (ECPA) announced that it will operate as CropLife Europe with an expanded mandate to include digital and precision farming, agricultural biotechnology, pesticides, and biopesticides. See press release [here](#). From March 9 to 11, 2021, CropLife Europe hosted its first virtual conference, "Sustainable solutions to protect crops." Claire Bury, Deputy Director General of DG SANTE kicked off the event with a keynote speech followed by presentations on a range of topics from updates on the Transparency Regulation to pesticide regulatory updates and trade and MRL setting. See conference materials [here](#).

9. New innovative techniques, including biotechnology and the development of bio-based products

On page 10 of the F2F Strategy, the Commission states, "New innovative techniques, including biotechnology and the development of bio-based products, may play a role in increasing sustainability." It is unclear exactly how biotechnology will play a role in the F2F Strategy. However, much of the current debate on biotechnology in the EU rests on the release of the Commission's study on new breeding techniques (NBTs) (or new genomic techniques, NGTs as they are called in the EU), which is due to the Council on April 30, 2021. More information about the study is [available here](#).

What's new?

On March 19, 2021 the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies (EGE), an independent advisory body to the European Commission, published an [Opinion on the ethics of genome editing](#). The Opinion analyzes ethical questions concerning genome editing in humans, animals, and plants spanning the health, research, agriculture, and environment sectors. This publication aims to address how the EU can shape governance and policies for genome editing and encourages a wide-ranging and inclusive societal debate. This study is one component of the Commission's wider publication on NBTs due to the Council in late April. There is much anticipation in the EU on how genome editing will be regulated, and this study demonstrates one step in this critical debate. Euroseeds,

an organization representing the European seed sector, also issued a statement on the report, [available here](#).

In addition, organizations on both sides have initiated dialogues with the Commission in anticipation of its study on NBTs. On January 30, 2021, the European Sustainable Agriculture through Genome Editing network (EU-SAGE) [wrote a letter](#) to Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen asking the Commission to include a legislative proposal with the study in favor of using genome editing techniques in European agriculture. On March 30, 2021, a coalition of 162 civil society organizations, farmers, and businesses [wrote a letter](#) to European Commission Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans urging him to oppose “any weakening of EU GMO regulations and to ensure the full application of the CJEU ruling of 25 July 2018, in line with the precautionary principle.” The letter expressed concern about NBTs and in particular, gene drives.

10. Revision of the Feed Additives Regulation to reduce the environmental impact of livestock farming

The Commission announced that it would facilitate the placing on the market of sustainable and innovative feed additives through a revision of the feed additives legislation. The Commission aims to adapt the rules to address the goals of sustainable farming as well as reduce the non-CO2 GHG emissions (methane and nitrous oxide) linked to livestock production.

On December 14, 2020, the European Commission launched a roadmap for a Have Your Say published initiative on possible revisions to the EU’s feed additives legislation. The Commission will conduct an impact assessment to evaluate if any adjustments are needed in order to better align the feed additives regulation with the EU Green Deal and Farm to Fork Strategy. A legislative proposal is expected to be published by the end of 2021. For more information, please see [the published initiative, “Animal nutrition – modernization of EU rules on feed additives.”](#)

What’s new?

The roadmap’s initial feedback period closed on January 25, 2021, and the Commission launched the second component of the process, a [public consultation](#), on March 25, 2021. Stakeholders can provide input on the inception impact assessment by responding to a questionnaire and attaching additional comments. The deadline for input is midnight on June 17, 2021.

The Biodiversity Strategy

The Commission published the Biodiversity Strategy on May 20, 2020. The Strategy lists 39 actions aimed to improve biodiversity in the European Union. The full Strategy can be found [here](#).

On October 23, 2020, the 27 EU Ministers of Environment adopted [Council Conclusions](#) on the Biodiversity Strategy. This document is the official position of the Member States on the Strategy. With these Conclusions, the Council endorsed the objectives of the Commission’s Strategy. However, they also called on the Commission to provide thorough impact assessments for any legislative proposals that it may put forward, including an assessment of the subsidiarity and proportionality of the proposed

measures and, if need be, an assessment of compensation and its financeability. For more information see: [EU Member States Adopt Their Position on the Biodiversity Strategy](#).

1. Action plan for organic farming for 2021-2026

In the Biodiversity Strategy, the Commission set a goal of 25 percent of agricultural land area for organic farming in the EU by 2030, up from 8 percent currently. To that end, the Commission intended to adopt an Action Plan for Organic Farming for 2021-2026 by the end of 2020. However, adoption has been delayed.

On September 4, 2020, the European Commission launched a public consultation on the EU's future action plan for the development of EU organic production. For more information, please see GAIN Report [EU Launches Consultation on Future Organics Action Plan](#). EU Member State industries meanwhile are also proposing their own plans. See: [Organic Industry Aims to Increase Consumption in the Netherlands](#).

What's new?

On March 25, 2021, the Commission published the [EU Action Plan for the Development of Organic Production](#). The aim of the Action Plan is to boost the production and consumption of organic products to reach a target of 25 percent of organic agricultural land in the EU by 2030. The Commission encourages Member States to develop national organic action plans to increase their national share of organic farming but does not require national targets. The Action Plan lays down [23 actions](#) structured around 3 axes:

- boosting consumption
- increasing production
- further improving the sustainability of the sector

The Action Plan notes that the availability of data is essential for evaluating EU policy on organic production. To provide a comprehensive overview on the sector, the Commission announced that it will, beginning in 2021, publish regular reports on organic production in the EU and publish a yearly report on imports of organic products from third countries. The Commission will also offer additional guidance on strengthened imports control at the borders to address organic food fraud. The Action Plan was positively received by European stakeholders. Copa-Cogeca, the principal lobbying organization representing EU farmers, welcomed the market-driven approach suggesting that EU consumers have been increasingly interested organic foods. However, Copa-Cogeca noted that the 25 percent target is too ambitious and it is important that the EU gets as close as possible to this objective while avoiding market disturbances. Some European parliamentarians in the Green Party expressed doubts about the Action Plan. Martin Häusling, a Green Party parliamentarian from Germany and lead coordinator for Green Party positions in the Agriculture Committee complained about the lack of financial incentives for farmers to convert operations to organic. He demanded that significantly more funds be made available for research and the sale of organic products. For more information, please see [GAIN Report EU Commission Unveils EU Organic Action Plan](#).

2. Study on the sustainability of the use of forest biomass for energy production / Operational guidance on the new sustainability criteria for forest biomass for energy

As part of the Biodiversity Strategy, the European Commission announced that it would publish a study on the use of woody biomass for energy production in the EU. This study was carried out by the European Commission's Joint Research Center and will contribute to the review of the biomass sustainability criteria (see: Revision of the Renewable Energy Directive below).

What's new?

[The study](#) was published in January 2021 and states that wood-based bioenergy, when produced sustainably and used efficiently, can be an integral part of the solution to the climate change and biodiversity loss crisis. The report also states that the sustainability criteria for forestry biomass included in the Renewable Energy Directive and a robust implementation of these criteria can minimize tradeoffs between climate mitigation and biodiversity conservation. The report was welcomed by the [U.S. Industrial Pellet Association \(USIPA\)](#) and bioenergy stakeholders in Europe.

At the same time, as part of the EU's Renewable Energy Directive 2021-2030 (known as REDII), the European Commission has published the [draft delegated act](#) on guidance on the new sustainability criteria for forest biomass for energy. This initiative lays down operational guidance for Member States and economic operators on how to demonstrate compliance with the new sustainability criteria for forest biomass that was introduced by the REDII. Stakeholders can comment on the draft text until April 28, 2021. For more information on the REDII, please see [Biofuels Annual](#) and the 'Climate Target Plan 2030' section below.

3. Measures to avoid or minimize the placing of products associated with deforestation or forest degradation on the EU market

In the European Green Deal, the Commission indicated that it would “take measures, both regulatory and otherwise, to promote imported products and value chains that do not involve deforestation and forest degradation.” With the Biodiversity Strategy, the Commission announced that it will propose “measures to avoid or minimize the placing of products associated with deforestation or forest degradation on the EU market” in 2021.

On September 3, 2020, the European Commission launched [a public consultation](#) on the EU's future possible actions to reduce the impact of products placed on the EU market with regards to deforestation and forest degradation. For more information, please see GAIN Report [EU Launches Public Consultation on Deforestation-Free Supply Chains](#).

The EU Climate Target Plan for 2030

On September 17, 2020, the European Commission presented its [2030 Climate Target Plan](#). The objective is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to at least 55 percent below 1990 levels by 2030. The Plan includes proposed actions to achieve this objective, including a revision of the Renewable Energy

Directive and the launch of an EU Carbon Farming Initiative. For more information, please see: [EU Commission Unveils EU Climate Target Plan 2030](#).

1. EU carbon farming initiative

On September 17, 2020, the Commission announced that it will begin work shortly on the carbon farming initiative as part of its Climate Target Plan 2030. A proposal is expected by the end of 2021, which would be followed by stakeholder consultations. The Commission wants to integrate agricultural non-CO2 greenhouse gas emissions (mostly methane) into the land use, land use change, and forestry (LULUCF) sector and to create a new regulated sector covering agriculture, forestry, and land use. In practice, this could mean payments for farmers who actively sequester carbon on their farms.

2. Revision of the Renewable Energy Directive

The Renewable Energy Directive for 2021-2030 (REDII) was adopted in 2018 and will enter into force on January 1, 2021. The REDII introduces sustainability criteria for forestry biomass (wood pellets). For more information, please see '[EU Reaches a Political Agreement on Renewable Energy](#)'.

What's new?

On November 17, 2020, the European Commission launched a public consultation on the EU's review of the Renewable Energy Directive (REDII). As part of the review process, the European Commission will look at the sustainability criteria introduced by the REDII for forest biomass to "mitigate climate and environmental risks created by the increasing use of certain sources for bioenergy." This consultation will feed into the review process of REDII and contribute to an impact assessment that the Commission will carry out to determine whether a revision is needed and what revision would be the most appropriate. More information, see [EU Launches Public Consultation on the Review of the Renewable Energy Directive](#).

3. Review of the EU's emission reduction legislation

As part of the 2030 Climate Target Plan, the Commission announced that it will review and propose to revise relevant legislation by June 2021. This includes changes to existing emission reduction legislation such as the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS) Directive, the Effort Sharing Regulation (ESR) and the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry Regulation (LULUCF).

On November 13, 2020, the European Commission launched three public consultations on proposed revisions to climate-related EU legislations:

- [The Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry Regulation](#) (LULUCF Regulation)
- [The Effort Sharing Regulation](#) (ESR Regulation)
- [The EU Emission Trading System Directive](#) (ETS Directive)

The LULUCF Regulation covers the accounting of GHG emissions and CO2 removals caused by the manner in which the EU manages its land and forests. The Regulation sets out rules to ensure that only human-induced emissions and removals are taken into account in the achievement of current EU climate

targets. The EU ETS Directive is a cap-and-trade system. Under the 'cap and trade' principle, a cap is set on the total amount of greenhouse gases that can be emitted by all participating installations. The Effort Sharing Regulation lays down binding annual greenhouse gas emission targets with an overall aim to reduce EU emissions in the sectors covered by 30 percent compared to 2005 by 2030. The ESR applies to the sectors of the economy that fall outside the scope of the ETS Directive. These sectors include agriculture, transport and waste.

For more information, see [EU Commission Launches Consultations to Assist in the Review of its Emission Reduction Legislation](#).

The EU Methane Strategy

On October 14, 2020, the European Commission presented its [EU Methane Strategy](#), in which the main objective is to reduce methane emissions by 35 to 37 percent by 2030 compared to 1990 levels. In the agriculture sector, the Commission wants to improve the reporting of emissions. It also wants to boost the production of biogas from non-recyclable agricultural waste. The Commission also announced that it will propose a revision of the Feed Additives Regulation to reduce the environmental impact of livestock farming by the end of 2021.

For more information, see: [EU Adopts Its Methane Strategy](#)

The Circular Economy Action Plan

On March 11, 2020, the European Commission published its [Circular Economy Action Plan](#). The Action Plan lists 35 actions that focus on the design and production for a circular economy, with the aim to ensure that the resources used are kept in the EU economy for as long as possible. Some of these actions may impact U.S. agricultural product market access, EU competitiveness, and/or create technical barriers to trade.

1. Reducing Packaging Waste / Mandatory requirements on recycled plastic content and plastic waste reduction measures

The European Commission wants to ensure that all packaging on the EU market is reusable or recyclable in an economically viable way by 2030. To do so, the Commission has announced that it would review the 1994 [Directive on packaging and packaging waste](#) to reinforce the mandatory essential requirements for packaging to be allowed on the EU market. The Commission will also propose mandatory requirements for recycled plastic content and waste reduction measures for key products such as packaging.

2. Policy framework for bio-based plastics and biodegradable or compostable plastics

There is currently no EU law in place that applies to bio-based, biodegradable and compostable plastics in a comprehensive manner. As part of the EU Circular Economy Action Plan, the Commission

announced the adoption of a policy framework on the sourcing, labeling and use of bio-based plastics, and the use of biodegradable and compostable plastics.

What's new?

In December 2020, the European Commission's independent Group of Chief Scientific Advisors delivered a [Scientific Opinion](#) on the Biodegradability of Plastics in the Open Environment. The scientists recommended limiting the use of biodegradable plastics to specific applications for which reduction, reuse, and recycling are not feasible, rather than as a solution for inappropriate waste management or littering.

PART II: FORTHCOMING EVENTS

April 2021: Release of the European Commission's study on "new genomic techniques"

2021: Proposal for a revision of EU marketing standards for agricultural, fishery and aquaculture products to ensure the uptake and supply of sustainable products

2021: Review and possible revision of the EU Pollinators initiative

Q2 2021: Operational guidance on the new sustainability criteria on forest biomass for energy

Q2 2021: Review of the data on biofuels with high indirect land-use change risk and setting up of a trajectory for their gradual phase out by 2030

2021: Draft measures to avoid or minimize the placing of products associated with deforestation or forest degradation on the EU market

Attachments:

No Attachments.