EU livestock strategy

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EU publishes its long-term livestock strategy

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – EU strategy on livestock

Update

The European Commission has published its European Union (EU) livestock strategy. The strategy reaffirms the EU's "One Health" approach, which recognises that humans, animals, plants, and the wider environment are interdependent. It reinforces strict requirements on food safety, animal welfare, and prevention of animal diseases, and encourages environmentally friendly production.

The following initiatives included in the strategy are expected to be most significant for products imported from non-EU countries:

- reinforce official controls on imports, in particular for antimicrobials and hormones
- strengthen disease prevention and response through robust disease monitoring systems, biosecurity measures, disease management, preventive vaccination, and a review of current disease categorisation
- reinforce animal welfare requirements, including in relation to imported products
- review labelling rules to improve communication on environmentally friendly, locally sourced, and high-welfare livestock production systems
- reduce EU dependency on imported feed.

Impacted products

Animals and animal products

What is changing?

The European Commission has published its strategy to advance more sustainable production environmentally, economically, and socially in the EU livestock sector.

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The most significant initiatives for operators in non-EU countries are in the following areas.

- Public health: reinforced official controls, in particular for antimicrobials and hormones.
- Animal health: strengthened disease prevention and response, with more robust disease monitoring systems, biosecurity measures, and disease management, including broader and science-based use of preventive vaccination, and a review of current disease categorisation.
- Animal welfare: stricter requirements that will also apply to imported products, in particular:
  - phasing-out of cages for laying hens and broilers (proposal by the end of 2026); and transition from crates to pen systems for pigs (proposal by the second quarter of 2027)
  - ending the systematic killing of male chicks
  - evaluating egg marketing rules with the aim of better informing consumers about improvements made by farmers.
- Labelling: review of labelling rules to improve communication on environmentally friendly, locally sourced, and high-welfare livestock production systems.
- Feed: reduced EU dependency on imported feed by sourcing locally, exploring alternative feed sources, and improving feeding strategies.

The new strategy also includes actions to address the following issues.

- Innovations for climate change adaptation:
  - support innovations that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, enhance nutrient management, and improve the use of biomass and animal by-products (integrated in the work of the EU agri-food chain Observatory)
  - harmonise methodologies for measuring livestock greenhouse gas emissions at farm level, and exchange with global partners on measurement and mitigation practices in accordance with the Global Methane Pledge (European Commission 2021)
  - consider extending the EU's RENURE rules to include some types of manure-based liquid digestates (RENURE rules are amendments to the EU Nitrates Directive 91/676/EEC to allow the use of processed livestock manure products as substitutes for chemical fertilisers; European Commission 2026a).
  - establish an online livestock platform by 2027 hosting proven solutions for climate, environment, and animal welfare, complementing existing expert groups, implementation dialogues, and food dialogues.
- Promotion of regionalisation:
  - continue to encourage non-EU countries to recognise regionalisation – identifying specific disease risk zones within countries to prevent trade disruption between entire countries
  - develop guidance on the application of vaccination in support of regionalisation.

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Why?

The EU livestock strategy is based on feedback collected via a call for evidence and other consultations, for example through expert groups. It responds to recognised challenges for the sector to ensure it can remain sustainable while both managing the impacts of climate change and competing on the world market. The strategy highlights the need to maintain high standards in the EU and build on them to make the EU livestock sector more profitable.

The strategy also seeks to align practices in non-EU countries with EU requirements to advance sustainability and maintain fair competition for EU producers.

Timeline

The strategy sets out the long-term direction for the EU livestock sector. The specific initiatives included will be implemented over time.

What are the major implications for exporting countries?

This strategy reinforces objectives already communicated by the EU through the Vision for Agriculture and Food and the "EU Food and Feed Safety Omnibus" proposing the simplification of EU food and feed safety rules – more stringent controls of imported products, and closer alignment of the requirements on imported food with those applicable to EU production (in particular in relation to animal welfare).

Recommended Actions

Exporting countries should monitor the new initiatives as they are announced, and take part in public consultations which will contribute to the development of new measures. All these initiatives will be tracked by AGRINFO.

Background

The livestock strategy complements the EU's Vision for Agriculture and Food and other EU initiatives including the generational renewal strategy, bioeconomy strategy, water resilience strategy, digital strategy for agriculture, rural action plan, and the animal health law evaluation. It has been delivered together with a new protein action plan (see EU protein system action plan).

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The European Commission has collected feedback through different channels including the EU Livestock Workstream, expert groups, and a call for evidence (closed on 10 April 2026). For further background on the information collected and the reasoning behind the 'see European Commission (2026b).

Resources

Online resources from the European Commission:

- A Vision for Agriculture and Food: Shaping together an attractive farming and agri-food sector for future generations
- Animal Health Law
- Bioeconomy strategy
- Commission Work Program 2026: Europe's Independence Moment
- Digitalising the EU agricultural sector
- EU Livestock Workstream
- EU strategy for livestock: Call for evidence (consultation closed 10 April 2026)
- Generational renewal in agriculture
- Protein Action Plan
- Rural Vision: Action Plan
- Water resilience strategy

European Commission (2021) Joint EU-US Press Release on the Global Methane Pledge. Press release, 18 September.

European Commission (2026a) EU reduces farmers' dependency on imported fertilisers with new rules enabling the use of RENURE

European Commission (2026b) Commission Staff Working Document – The EU livestock sector

Sources

Communication from the Commission – EU strategy on livestock

Visit the AGRINFO website to view the latest AGRINFO Update newsletters and search the database.

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