EU protein system action plan

Published by AGRINFO on 19 Aug 2026

European Commission publishes action plan to strengthen protein supply and reduce import dependence

Action Plan for resilience, strategic autonomy and sustainability of the EU protein system

Update

The European Commission has published an action plan to make the protein system of the European Union (EU) more resilient, sustainable, and competitive. It aims to reduce dependence on imported high-protein feed by increasing sustainable EU protein production, improving livestock feeding and local feed use, diversifying imports, strengthening value chains, and supporting research and innovation. Key measures include greater financial support to farmers for the production of protein crops, investment in storage and processing, improved risk-management tools, stronger use of local feed and grasslands, support for alternative proteins and circular bioeconomy solutions, and measures to stimulate demand for diversified diets. The plan sets a 2035 benchmark to increase the share of protein from EU-produced oilseeds and protein crops used as feed in the EU from 25.8% in 2025 to 35%.

Impacted products

Protein crops, oilseeds, soyabeans, soya meal, dry pulses, cereals, grass and forage, animal feed, plant-based protein products, legumes

What is changing?

The European Commission has published a plan of coordinated action across the protein supply chain to increase EU production and strategic autonomy, improve the resilience and competitiveness of the feed and livestock system, and strengthen protein value chains.

The plan seeks greater diversification of protein imports, which nowadays come mostly from the USA and Brazil. Ukraine could potentially become a more significant supplier of plant-based protein. Specifically, the Action Plan proposes the following.

Common Agricultural Policy support for protein crops

Copyright © **COLEAD 2026,** *AGRINFO is funded by the European Union and implemented by COLEAD.*

- Use available income support mechanisms to encourage production of protein-rich crops.
- Use other available agri-environmental and climate policy instruments (cultivation of legumes, use of manure, and establishment of cover crops) to support protein crops.
- Encourage EU Member States to put forward measures that incentivise production of legumes, as well as rapeseed and sunflower.
- Provide transition payments to help farmers cover the costs and risks of introducing protein crops.
- Include protein diversification among the measures supporting young farmers and generational renewal.
- Improve access to investment, machinery, advice, and knowledge needed to expand protein crop production.

Investment in storage and processing

- Increase investment in storage, drying, processing, and logistics infrastructure for protein crops.
- Strengthen regional processing capacity so that locally produced protein can be used more efficiently in feed and food value chains.
- Support producer and interbranch organisations and contractual arrangements to improve cooperation and market access.
- Use EU and national financing instruments to address infrastructure and investment gaps in protein value chains.

Risk-management tools

- Use new financing risk-management instruments to help farmers manage production and market risks associated with protein crops.
- Manage risk by considering the types of crop, their suitability to agro-climatic conditions in a country, their protein content, ‘dual’-purpose use (food and feed), and ability to be integrated into crop rotation.

Greater use of local feed and grasslands

- Actively promote the use of regional and local feed.
- Extend ruminant systems, relying on grasslands and locally produced feed and forage.
- Encourage feeding strategies that are better adapted to livestock species and locally available feed resources.
- Expand regional processing and storage capacity upstream of animal producers.

Copyright © **COLEAD 2026,** *AGRINFO is funded by the European Union and implemented by COLEAD.*

- Explore the development of voluntary labels that highlight the origin of feed used in producing products.

Support for alternative proteins

- Support research and innovation in alternative protein sources including plant-based, fermentation-based, algae, and insects.
- Support development of technologies that can make alternative proteins more competitive and affordable.
- Assess the sustainability and environmental performance of alternative protein production.

Circular bioeconomy solutions

- Increase the use of agricultural residues, food-processing co-products, and biomass fermentation as sources of protein feed.
- Strengthen links between protein production, feed, biofuels, and other bioeconomy value chains.
- Reduce waste by recovering useful nutrients and protein from agricultural and food-processing streams.
- Develop biomass balance sheets to improve data gaps on the availability of co-products.
- Consider new sources of nutrients for use in animal nutrition, such as protein derived from insects.
- Create additional economic opportunities by turning residues and co-products into valuable inputs rather than waste.

Why?

The EU currently produces around 67.2 million tonnes of plant protein, but most of this comes from roughage and cereals. Protein-rich crops such as oilseeds and pulses account for a much smaller share of EU protein production. At the same time, the EU remains highly dependent on imports of high-protein feed, particularly soyabeans. In 2024–2025, about 13.4 million tonnes of protein were imported mainly as soyabean and soya meal, while 74% of high-protein oilseed and protein-crop feed used in the EU was imported, and 94% of soya protein was imported.

The EU identifies this dependence as a vulnerability affecting food security, competitiveness, and resilience, together with underdeveloped EU protein value chains, limited profitability of protein crops, infrastructure and investment gaps, imported feed additives, and barriers to consumer uptake of alternative proteins.

Copyright © **COLEAD 2026,** *AGRINFO is funded by the European Union and implemented by COLEAD.*

Timeline

The Action Plan will start to be implemented immediately, with the aim of increasing the share of protein from EU-produced oilseeds and protein feed crops in the EU from 25.8% in 2025 to 35% by 2035.

Background

The EU protein system is heavily reliant on imported high-protein feed. This is due to interconnected challenges including underdeveloped protein crop value chains, imported vitamins and amino acids, insufficient competitiveness, limited land availability, environmental pressures, the dependence of certain livestock systems on imported feed, consumption patterns, and barriers to the uptake of alternative proteins. The EU's Action Plan follows the European Commission's Vision for Agriculture and Food, and responds to the Versailles Declaration and the European Parliament's 2023 resolution on a European protein strategy.

Resources

Online resources from the European Commission

- Agriculture and rural areas in the next CAP
- Bioeconomy Strategy
- EU Livestock Strategy
- European Parliament resolution of 19 October 2023: European protein strategy
- Versailles Declaration, 10 and 11 March 2022
- Vision for Agriculture and Food

Sources

Action Plan for resilience, strategic autonomy and sustainability of the EU protein system

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

Copyright © **COLEAD 2026,** *AGRINFO is funded by the European Union and implemented by COLEAD.*

Disclaimer: *Under no circumstances shall COLEAD be liable for any loss, damage, liability or expense incurred or suffered that is claimed to have resulted from the use of information available on this website or any link to external sites. The use of the website is at the user's sole risk and responsibility. This information platform was created and maintained with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents do not, however, reflect the views of the European Union.*

Copyright © **COLEAD 2026,** *AGRINFO is funded by the European Union and implemented by COLEAD.*