

AGRA FOCUS

The monthly report for European agribusiness executives

November 2019 – No. 284

EU Deforestation debate

EU Agriculture Ministers backed the idea of a new EU Forestry Strategy, accepting that current EU policies had been insufficient to combat deforestation at a global level. The new strategy should be carefully coordinated with other Community policies & the EU's aims on climate change and the environment. EU Farm Commissioner Phil Hogan said the new Commission's priorities & the European Green Deal offered "a timely & most relevant opportunity to reflect how a new strategic approach to forests & the forest-based sector can effectively maximize forests' contribution."

[See p.6]

US sets 25% duties on EU agri-food p.59

The US introduced additional punitive duties of 25% on certain EU agri-food products in mid-October, after the WTO authorised total penalties of \$7.5 billion in the 15-year Airbus/Boeing subsidy battle.

COMAGRI approves Wojciechowski p.20

Polish Agriculture Commissioner-designate Janusz Wojciechowski finally received the unanimous backing of group coordinators in the EP's COMAGRI, having had to attend a second hearing and answer a series of written questions.

UK election set for December 12 p.47

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson called a general election for December 12. On the same day the EU agreed to extend the Article 50 process to January 31, 2020.

EP forwards CAP files to Plenary p.19

EP Presidents agreed to forward the three CAP reform dossiers to plenary (Spring 2020). The new EP will still have the chance to table amendments, without the whole legislative process having to be restarted.

Phil Hogan impresses EP Trade Cttee p.26

MEPs on the INTA Committee agreed to the appointment of Ireland's Phil Hogan to the post of Trade Commissioner in the new College, after a polished performance at his confirmation hearing.

€200m to promote EU agri-food p.17

Some €200m will be spent on 81 EU agri-food promotion campaigns at home & abroad over the next three years. There will be a special focus on GIs & organic products. Under the banner 'Enjoy it's from Europe', the budget allocation will co-finance programmes on the internal & external markets.



MEMBER STATE REPRESENTATION AT THE EU FARM COUNCIL

Country	Minister	Political Party	EP political affiliation
Belgium	Mr Denis Ducarme	MR	Renew Europe
Bulgaria	Ms Desislava Taneva	GERB	EPP
Czech Republic	Mr Miroslav Toman	Communist	GUE/NGL
Denmark	Mr Mogens Jensen	Social Democrats	S&D
Germany	Ms Julia Klöckner	CDU	EPP
Estonia	Mr Mart Järvik	People's Party	I&D
Ireland	Mr Michael Creed	Fine Gael	EPP
Greece	Mr Makis Voridis	New Democracy	EPP
Spain	Mr Luis Planas Puchades	Socialist Workers' Party	S&D
France	Mr Didier Guillaume	Socialist Party	S&D
Croatia	Marija Vučković	Democratic Union	EPP
Italy	Teresa Bellanova	Democratic Party	S&D
Cyprus	Mr Costas Kadis	Independent	-
Latvia	Mr Kaspars Gerhards	For Fatherland & Freedom/LNNK	ECR
Lithuania	Mr Andrius Palionis	Social Democratic Party	S&D
Luxembourg	Mr Romain Schneider	Socialist Workers' Party	S&D
Hungary	Dr István Nagy	Fidesz	EPP
Malta	Mr Clint Camilleri	Labour	S&D
Netherlands	Ms Carola Schouten	Christian Union	EPP
Austria	Ms Maria Patek	-	-
Poland	Mr Jan Krzysztof Ardanowski	Law and Justice	ECR
Portugal	Ms Maria do Céu Albuquerque	Socialist	S&D
Romania	Adrian Nechita Oros	National Liberal Party	EPP
Slovenia	Dr. Aleksandra Pivec	DeSus	-
Slovakia	Ms Gabriela Matečná	SNS	-
Finland	Mr Jari Leppä	Centre	Renew Europe
Sweden	Ms Jennie Nilsson	Social Democrats	S&D
UK	Mr George Eustice	Conservative	ECR



INDEX

EU NEWS		EU NEWS	
FARM COUNCIL: Airbus dispute	2	World Food Day – healthy diets	40
US duties on EU agri-food	2	New Austrian government	41
Malmström reaction to tariffs	4	Costa wins Portuguese election	41
Private Storage Aid of olive oil	4	Poland's PiS wins election	42
Brown stink bug, Italy	5	Romanian government collapses	42
CAP progress report	5	EU GIs, more international recognition	42
Coalition seeks stable farm budget	6	New Romanian, Bulgarian GIs	43
Deforestation discussions	6-9	ECJ finding against Halloumi group	43
Slovenian knowledge transfer ideas	10	Support for Polish biotech	43
French declaration on wolf management	10	Wine retailer takeover authorised	44
Farmers & bio-economy benefits	10	PERSONNEL NEWS:	
ASF & wild boar control	11	New PT & RO AG ministers	44
V4 plus 4 on ASF battle	12	New faces in AGRI & TRADE	45
Andriukaitis' 5-year legacy	12	Maeve Whyte leaves NFU Brussels	45
Faster food safety communication	13	Organic leaders chair Civil Dialogues	45
FUTURE CAP: College continues to Dec	13	O'Flaherty swaps agri-trade for high tech	46
FR & HU nominations to new College	14		
Oettinger rails against MFF misinformation	14	NATIONAL NEWS	
MS want MFF negotiating box by Dec	15	UK election on December 12	47
Time to decide on EU budget	16	EU OK to Art. 50 extension	48
Malmström regrets decision on US duties	16	UK seeks extension amid deadlock	48
PL, DE & FR call for strong CAP	17	EU OK for new Withdrawal Agreement	50
€200m for agri-food promotion	17	Reactions to new Withdrawal Agreement	51
ECA sees 2.4% error rate for CAP spend	18	Hint of UK flexibility on Irish border	53
EP NEWS: CAP files set for plenary	19	Talks stalled, UK plays blame game	54
Sustainability focus, COMAGRI report	19	NFU anger at UK tariff plans	54
COMAGRI hearings - Wojciechowski	20-26	Johnson's 'protocol' for Irish border	55
New AGRI cabinet	22	UK Environment Bill	56
COMINTA endorses Hogan for Trade	26	NFU seeks national food strategy	56
Kyriakides impresses COMENVI	28	Soil Association Brexit helpline	56
Timmermans pushes green message	29	AG protests block German, Dutch cities	56
Copa-Cogeca on Timmermans	30	BEYOND THE EU	
Sinkevičius makes climate pledge	31	WTO DSB on fertiliser, Airbus cases	58
Hahn wants MFF done by year-end	32	EU-Norway interim appeal arbitration	58
Risk of budget delays	32	US punitive tariffs on EU exports	59
EP rejects glyphosate-resistant GMOs	33	US-China preliminary trade deal	59
EP agrees 2020 budget resolution	33	US farmers let down on biofuels	60
EP tough on bee protection	34	Argentine & Uruguay elections	60
2020 EU funding for UK in no deal	35	MARKETS	
SANTE UPDATE: No to Thiacloprid	36	EU agri-food exports update/FTAs	61
Priority pest list published	36	China ASF boosts EU pigmeat trade	62
Coreper seeks NBT study by end-2020	37	IGC cuts world grain crop forecast	62
Kyriakides' Cabinet takes shape	37	Fruit & veg market observatory	63
Split vote on GM maize stack	38	Benefits of Producer Organisations	63
EFSA food safety research platform	38	Comm fertiliser position, Copa-Cogeca	64
IN BRIEF: ECJ hunting protected species	39	Food commodity prices steady	64
ECA on exceptional dairy measures	39	AVEC on Mercosur, Ukraine challenges	65
Strengthen fruit & veg CMO, GIs	39	Fines for canned veg cartel	65
2 nd poultry welfare reference centre	40		

REVIEW

NEW COMMISSION COLLEGE TAKES SHAPE

Ireland's Phil Hogan told MEPs that the Commission had prepared "exhaustively" in the event of a no deal Brexit during a confirmation hearing for the post of Trade Commissioner at the European Parliament on September 30. During the three-hour grilling session, he faced a series of questions on trade relations with the United States & China, the recent pact with the Latin American Mercosur bloc & the impact of climate change. Hogan insisted that trade tensions with Washington needed to be remedied, while he stands ready to engage with the US administration in the months ahead. The *Fine Gael* politician pledged to use existing & future trade agreements to advance the EU's climate & sustainable development goals. In response to around 25 questions from MEPs on the International Trade Committee, he said signing trade deals with countries across the globe offered the EU leverage in making sure countries respected environmental protection. Furthermore, the newly-appointed Chief Trade Enforcement Officer - yet to be confirmed - would ensure all international accords met the EU's goals and commitments when it came to the fight against climate change. The Greens, Socialist & Democrats and the leftist GUE-NGL political groups were very critical of Hogan's responses, while the European People's Party (the largest group in the EP) said the trade portfolio would be in a "safe pair of hands."

Meanwhile, the Commissioner-designate for Agriculture Janusz Wojciechowski, who looks set to take over the reins from Hogan, vowed to promote an "even more balanced distribution of direct support, as reflected in the recent CAP reform proposals," & intends to "make a strong case that the impact of a significantly smaller budget would be keenly felt across Europe and impair the Union's capacity to deliver efficiently." The Polish nominee went before the EP's Committee on Agriculture & Rural Development on two occasions, as the first outing on October 1 was deemed too vague & lacklustre. His second attempt on October 8 - before the general election in Poland on October 13 - was a more confident effort. The proposed CAP regulations "provide this common framework", while the longstanding MEP (2004-2016) stands ready "to work with the EP to ensure the appropriate safeguards are in place to preserve a level playing field." The Law & Justice (PiS) politician - national-conservative and right-wing populist party - agreed that the one-size-fits-all approach was "not suitable for a Union of 27", adding that "we need to give more flexibility to Member States to design their interventions according to their needs and specificities." Referring to the European Green Deal - the flagship project of the new Commission College (2019-2024) - the former President of the Polish Supreme Audit Office says it will "set the vision and the strategy for European farming for decades to come", promising to "make sure that the contribution of agriculture is ambitious, fair and based on evidence."

EU leaders have agreed to postpone Brexit for up to three months until January 31, 2020, with a pre-Christmas UK election set for December 12. The remaining Member States would allow an earlier date if the UK ratifies a Withdrawal Agreement before then. Commenting this month, President of the European Council Donald Tusk said the EU-27 "has agreed that it will accept the UK's request for a Brexit flexextension until January 31, 2020." In a letter to Tusk, UK Premier Boris Johnson said that it was an "unwanted prolongation" that is damaging to British democracy & to the EU-UK relationship. As the month drew to a close, Johnson was in full election mode. In other news, the US is poised to introduce new tariffs on a range of goods from the EU including butter, cheese, liqueurs & pork products, in the latest chapter in the long-running dispute over aircraft subsidies (Boeing/Airbus dispute). Washington got clearance from the World Trade Organisation on October 2 to impose annual retaliatory tariffs up to a value of almost \$7.5 billion on a range of European imports including wine, whiskey, olives, dairy products, cashmere sweaters, luxury goods & aircraft parts after it decided that the EU failed to end subsidies for Airbus.

EU NEWS

FARM COUNCIL

US PUNITIVE TARIFFS (AIRBUS DISPUTE) ECLIPSE CAP REFORM TALKS

EU Agriculture & Fisheries Ministers returned to the CAP reform package (in public deliberation) at the October 14 Council in Luxembourg, while the impact of US punitive tariffs on European agri-food products, particularly on countries such as the UK, ES, DE, FR, IT & IE dominated discussions. Under the chairmanship of Finnish Agriculture Minister Jari Leppä, the jam-packed meeting kicked off just after 10am, with discussions on a regulation fixing fishing opportunities in the Baltic Sea for 2020. Just before 11am, Ministers held a lively debate on the Communication on ‘*Stepping up EU action to protect & restore the world’s forests*’ (public session) [***11449/1/19 REV1**], followed by an exchange of views on the EU Forestry Strategy post-2020 [***12491/19**]. On behalf of the Visegrád Group (CZ, HU, PL & SK), BG, HR & SI, the Czech delegation presented a declaration on ‘*Forests, sustainable forest management & adaptation to climate change*’ [***12883/19**]. After lunch, Ministers turned their attention to future farm policy (in public session) [***12693/19 & 12693/19 COR1**], with delegations voicing what they see, as the main outstanding points in the draft regulations. During the debate, the vast majority of delegates (now 20) backed a joint statement on the CAP budget, led by France [***12894/19 & below**]. In his last appearance as the EU’s Farm Chief, Phil Hogan updated Council on the market situation, with Italy providing information on damage caused by the Asian stink bug to its fruit & vegetable sector [***12882/19**]. Leppä debriefed his Ministerial colleagues on a conference on the ‘*European Bio-economy Scene 2019*’ held in Helsinki on July 8-10 (public session) [***12539/19**], while Slovenia provided feedback on the Ministerial conference ‘*Strengthening the Generation & Transfer of Knowledge for the Progress of Agriculture & Rural Areas*’ held in the city of Ptuj (August 23) [***12886/19**].

Delegations from Italy, Spain & France led the charge on the main consequences of additional US duties on certain EU agri-food exports [***12884/19 & *12885/19 & *12976/19**], with the majority of delegations calling for a “negotiated settlement” rather an escalation of trade tensions on both sides of the Atlantic. Outgoing Health Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis provided information on the state of play on African Swine Fever (ASF) [***12570/19**], while the Czechs presented a joint declaration from the Visegrád Group, plus BG, HR, RO, & SI on combatting the viral disease [***12881/19**]. As he prepares to hand over the baton to his successor Stella Kyriakides (CY), Andriukaitis also took the opportunity to recap on his legacy over the past five years - state of play on major food safety issues [***12861/19**]. Council proceedings were wrapped up at around 9.20pm. **For further information on the agenda points listed above enter the number provided under ‘Public Register’ at the website goo.gl/ybwNtq; *Debates at <https://video.consilium.europa.eu/en/webcast>;*

DELEGATIONS SLAM US DUTIES ON EU AGRI-FOOD; CALL FOR MARKET SUPPORT TOOLS

Spain, Italy & France slammed the introduction of US punitive duties on a range of EU agri-food exports in the long-running dispute over aircraft subsidies & urged the Commission to take a strong stance on the issue at the Council meeting in Luxembourg (October 14). Washington got clearance from the WTO on October 2 to impose annual retaliatory tariffs up to a value of almost \$7.5 billion on a range of European imports *inc.* wine, whiskey, olives,

dairy products, cashmere sweaters, luxury goods & aircraft parts [see below, *Beyond the EU section*]. The move was formally endorsed by the Dispute Settlement Board in Geneva on October 14. During the debate on the Any Other Business (AOB) point, Spain's Luis Planas said Madrid wanted the Commission to maintain a firm position in the negotiations [*12885/19]. He warned that trade tariffs were "not good for anyone," as they are "negative for Spain & negative for other Member States." The decision on a similar case over US aircraft manufacturer Boeing was due in eight to ten months, he told Ministers. In terms of products affected by the decision, he mentioned bottled olive oil & table olives "which for the second time have been subjected to tariffs by the US." "This is not a problem that should fall on the shoulders of our sector," he said. The Italian delegation called for Private Storage Aid (PSA) for its high-quality cheese [*12884/19]. The country's Secretary of State Giuseppe L'Abbate said the announcement would have major repercussions for the Italian agri-food sector particularly for pigmeat products, beverages & producers of quality cheeses, which "have invested a lot in the American market." The impact will be felt in the processing industries & job creation, he added. He urged the Commission to "intervene," & provide a "firm response to protect Italian excellence," floating the activation of PSA for cheese & greater investment in promotion programmes for "those sectors hard hit by the effect of the tariffs."

Didier Guillaume (FR) echoed this sentiment, saying it was "indispensable to present a united & firm ... clear & unambiguous response" [*12976/19]. French wine exports are going to take a hit, with some producers expected to go out of business. Guillaume stressed the need to "mobilise all the CAP instruments." The French wine sector was being particularly badly affected *inc.* consignments already in transit to the US. He suggested promotion programmes "with easier to implement measures on third countries" & exceptional measures under the Common Market Organisation. Delegations from CZ, UK, NL, EL, PT, HU, LT & DE also took to the floor, with most pushing for a "negotiated settlement" & "finding a solution" to "de-escalate trade tensions on the market." The UK, home to production of parts for Airbus, although likely not for much longer, supported "taking a united approach," while Germany's outgoing State Secretary Hermann Onko Aeikens regretted that agriculture "was being dragged into a 15-year-old dispute involving large aircraft."

In response, Farm Commissioner Phil Hogan said the EU's executive remains "convinced that both US & EU trade interests are best served by a negotiated solution to the long-standing Boeing/Airbus dispute which is at the origin of these tariffs." The incoming Trade chief recalled the "serious & credible opening in July for a negotiated settlement," while he regrets the US "did not seize the opportunity to take up our invitation." Both sides should be focused on "de-escalating tensions rather than adding further uncertainty to an already delicate world trade & economic situation." Imposing tariffs (at 25% on agricultural products) is not a positive move, as it is "only a matter of time before we have the opportunity to impose tariffs on imports from the US in retaliation for the damage arising from their subsidies to Boeing," he added. The Irishman pointed out that "the four EU Member States where Airbus manufacturing is concentrated, UK, France, Germany & Spain, together with Italy & Ireland account for almost 97% of the total food exports of €4.3 billion exposed to the tariffs."

Some commentators suggest the inclusion of some of Ireland's iconic products such as Kerrygold butter & Bailey's Irish Cream Liqueur is a "shot across the bow" by US President Donald Trump to the incoming Trade chief. The products targeted were "in most cases representative of the best of our food production systems" *inc.* Parmigiano cheese, extra virgin Spanish olive oils, PDO & PGI wines, Irish butter & Scotch Whisky." The "apparent targeting of high value cheeses, which are among the flagship products covered by GIs has caused understandable concern," he noted, assuring delegates that the protection of high-quality products "is & will remain an absolute priority." Referring to market management instruments such as private storage, Hogan pledged to "assess & analyse the situation carefully in the near

future, when we will have more information on the impact on farmers.” The Commission will “review the opportunity to apply market measures if necessary,” he added, calling on national capitals to exploit promotion programmes (worth €200 million in 2020) particularly for third country markets in Asia “to mitigate the impact of the US punitive tariffs.” A number of developments over the coming weeks would provide more clarity on the next steps, he stated, *inc.* any changes in the provisional tariff list, the wider developments on the WTO front in relation to the US measures *inc.* likely timetable for tariffs in the Boeing case, more feedback from exporters on the impact, further information on the extent of front-loading of exports, in anticipation of the tariffs, which would offset their impact, as well as more clarity on Brexit negotiations & the likely outcome. Hogan pledged to “travel to the US at the earliest opportunity to engage with the US administration ... with a positive & constructive approach.”

Additional US tariffs “not the solution,” Malmström: The EU stands ready to “negotiate a settlement for both the Airbus & the Boeing case addressing remaining compliance obligations on both sides, putting these cases behind us ... as imposing additional duties in the two aircraft cases is not the solution,” EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström outlined in a letter to US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer on October 11. The single-page correspondence, with incoming Trade Commissioner Phil Hogan in copy, was an attempt to encourage Washington to enter into talks with Brussels in order to solve the aircraft dispute. The Swedish Commissioner expresses her regret that the US “appears to have taken the decision to impose its countermeasures on EU exports following the WTO arbitration panel decision in the Airbus case.” “This will make finding a negotiated settlement more difficult, & it will push the EU into putting countermeasures in place when the time comes on the parallel Boeing case (2020),” she outlines. Both sides “have been found at fault by the WTO dispute settlement system for continuing to provide certain unlawful subsidies to Airbus & Boeing, respectively.” Malmström recalls concrete proposals shared in July “for a new regime on aircraft subsidies”, which “remain unanswered & unaddressed by the US side.” In conclusion, she urges her US counterpart to “engage in negotiations to frame future subsidy disciplines for the aircraft sector, not least to address the challenge of an entry into the market of new heavily subsidised competitors.”

MARKET REPORT: EU’s EXEC READIES PRIVATE STORAGE AID (PSA) FOR OLIVE OIL

The EU’s executive is readying a proposal to trigger Private Storage Aid (PSA) for olive oil, Farm Commissioner Phil Hogan confirmed on October 14, as it is the “best instrument to provide meaningful support to the sector.” During an update on the agricultural market situation, the incoming Trade chief said the situation in “both the olive oil & table olive sectors tops the Commission’s list of current concerns.” He described the market as “very difficult ... largely due to exceptionally high harvests triggering weak prices, especially in Spain the main producer.” EU production in the next marketing year is expected to reach 2.1 million tonnes (close to average level), he outlined, noting this is “insufficient to reduce the high levels of stocks accumulated in recent years.” He referred to the recent decision of the US administration to impose tariffs on Spanish exports of bottled olive oil & green olives, but it is “worth acknowledging the difficulties in this sector independently of the application of any US tariffs.”

Beef is “another sector under pressure,” he underlined, “performing below 2018 levels.” The Commission “is well aware of the risk that Brexit & other international considerations present,” he stated, seeking to reassure delegations that his services are “ready to respond, using the instruments available under the CAP measures to address any destabilisation of the markets.” “Despite the reduction in demand in some of our important trade partners, our trade balance remains largely positive & exports remain dynamic,” he noted. The outgoing Farm

chief presented a positive picture on pigmeat, with increasing prices since the beginning of 2019, largely driven by good export demand in January-July especially from certain Asian countries (in particular China, which is fighting African Swine Fever). EU average pig prices are currently at their highest since September 2013 - €184/100kg - 28% up on last year. Some of the key producers are reducing their production (DE, PL & DK), while ES, NL & FR have reported hikes in output. Uncertainty surrounding Brexit & the threat posed by ASF both in the EU & third countries are key concerns for the sector. Meanwhile, Hogan described the milk market as “positively balanced”, with deliveries increasing by only 0.2% so far this year (until July), while the current EU season for citrus fruit, apples & pears “has started with better prospects.” He recalled the establishment of an EU market observatory for fruits & vegetables to “improve market transparency & step up efforts in market intelligence.” On sugar, the latest EU average price (August 2019) is low at €320 per tonne. “It is not really possible to foresee any immediate changes due to the difficult contractual negotiation dynamics among sugar sellers & users.” But EU spot prices “continue to be substantially higher than the EU average price” as these are based on contracts that were signed months in advance. World prices are also low, while sugar stocks are high, not helped as India announces new subsidies for 6 million tonnes of exports of the sweetener, he indicates. The oversupply situation since the end of the sugar quota regime has been rebalanced, while the EU “sugar sector continues its transition to a market-orientated environment, where stakeholders adjust their business decisions to market signals.”

Italy raises damage caused by Brown Stink Bug: The Brown Stink Bug “accidentally introduced into the EU through the multiple routes of international trade”, is wreaking havoc with Italy’s fruit & vegetables sector, according to the Italian delegation at the October Farm Council in Luxembourg [***12882/19**]. Widespread throughout the country, but particularly in the North, the bug has caused serious damage to apples, pears, kiwis, peaches, cherries, apricots, but also maize, soya & sunflower. The bug is resistant to insecticides & proliferates quickly, with the authorities considering bringing in the ‘Samurai Wasp’ - native to East Asia but now found in Europe & North America - chiefly known as parasitizing the *Halyomorpha halys*. The brown marmorated bug damages the fruit, making them unusable for both consumption & processing, while farmers have been putting in place “expensive measures” e.g. installation of anti-insect nets, traps etc. in order to avoid infestations. During his intervention, Secretary of State Giuseppe L’Abbate reported economic losses of around €500 million “in lost revenue for Italian farmers,” which is having a knock-on effect on the wider rural economy, labour force & processing industries. He urged the Commission to trigger the options provided by Article 221 of Regulation 1308/2013 “in order to safeguard the key role that the fruit & vegetable Producer Organisations can play in this context.”

CAP PROGRESS REPORT “GOOD BASIS FOR DISCUSSION” MORE WORK TO BE DONE

Delegations agreed that the Presidency progress report on the CAP reform was a good basis for discussion [***12693/19**], but that more work needed to be done on *inter alia* the green architecture (flexibility of payments), new delivery model (indicators, assessment & reporting), eco-schemes, definition of a ‘genuine farmer’, move towards green transition & sectoral interventions. During the 2-hour debate, some 20 delegations voiced the need for a robust farm budget in the next programming period (2021-2027) [*see below*]. Portugal’s Luís Capoulas Santos rejected any budgetary cuts to POSEI, wine programmes, rural development programmes & would like to see a “particular emphasis on small-holders.” Poland’s Ryszard Zarudski (Under Secretary of State) insisted that “if we want to be more ambitious in terms of the environment, we need to have money to deliver on more ambitions.” Hungary’s Zsolt Feldman said the budget must be maintained at EU-27 level, going as far as suggesting the

transfer of funds within the MFF “to traditional policies such as the CAP, if EU leaders do not increase the ceilings.” Spanish Minister Luis Planas called for a “specific debate on the CMO Regulation” given ongoing trade conflicts & price volatility on the market – a sentiment shared by the Belgian & Dutch delegations (POs & IBOs). Others such as DK, NL & DE used the debate to voice their opposition to voluntary coupled support, while DK, HR, BE & SI voiced reservations on the move towards greater external convergence. A number of speakers such as Ireland’s Michael Creed & his Danish colleague Mogens Jensen called on the Commission to table the transitional arrangements to grant legal certainty to farmers, as did ES, IT, SK, BG, & LT, with the latter underlining that “no CAP document, such as the CMO regulation, should be considered closed.”

Speaking to reporters, Finland’s Agriculture Minister Jari Leppä said the Presidency aimed to “get as far as possible in Council,” when it came to the updated texts on all three regulations. A number of key issues require further work, he conceded, citing in particular the green architecture, eco-schemes & flexibility requirements. Without going into any detail, he also referred to the “new transition period.” In what was likely to be his last appearance as Farm Commissioner – unless the appointment of the College is delayed until December 1 – Hogan said it was “now a matter for my successor (Janusz Wojciechowski) to drive things forward in completing the work.” In his parting words, he reiterated the need to “simplify the policy in terms of the farmer” as the farmer is at the centre in relation to the provision of public goods.

Coalition calls for stable farm budget: The CAP budget must be maintained at the current EU-27 level (in current prices) for the next programming period (2021-2027), according to a joint statement from a coalition of 17 delegations [***12894/19**]. In a move led by France, supported by AT, BG, CY, CZ, EE, HU, EL, IE, LV, LT, LU, PL, PT, RO, SK & ES*, the group of like-minded countries insist on a stable farm budget to “meet the new challenges faced by European agriculture & forestry” & “meet the expectations of EU citizens.” They also refer to the “urgent need to take action to meet the climate challenge.” During his address in the Council chamber, French Minister Didier Guillaume insisted that “no compromise can be found without clarity on the budget,” underlining the role of farm expenditure “to face up to future challenges.” Given the uncertainty on the long-term financial perspectives, the former Vice-President of the Senate (2011-2014) said “none of the three draft regulations can be set down in stone.” A robust budget is key for an agriculture that is “innovative, sustainable & paves the way for the environmental transition.” The call came ahead of the crucial EU Summit on October 17-18, where EU leaders were expected to advance discussions on the Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF). Speaking to reporters, Commissioner Phil Hogan said that delegations wanted to “see the money before they sign off on the policy”, something the outgoing Farm chief can understand. **SI, HR & BE backed the declaration;*

EU FARM MINISTERS SUPPORT COMMISSION CALL FOR ACTION ON DEFORESTATION

Delegations backed Commission plans on how to address the fight against deforestation at the October 14 Farm Council in Luxembourg. During a debate on the ‘*Commission Communication on stepping up EU action to protect & restore the world’s forests*’ published on July 23 [***11449/19**], Agriculture Ministers accepted that current EU policies had not been sufficient to combat deforestation at a global level and backed the idea of a new EU Forestry Strategy, with many stressing the need to make sure it was coordinated with all other Community policies (ES, DE, RO, FR, LV, LU, CY, BE, AT, SK, SE & PL) & the EU’s aims on issues like climate change & the environment. A few still wanted major decisions to be left in Member States’ hands, but there was no doubt they wanted the Commission to move forward with the new plan.

Finland's Minister Jari Leppä opened the discussion by describing the world's forests as "under serious threat," welcoming the "long-awaited initiative" by the Commission. He invited Ministers to give feedback with the intention of adopting Council Conclusions before the end of the Presidency. Outgoing Environment Commissioner Karmenu Vella described forests as "indispensable," while forests had to be protected to allow the EU to achieve its climate change obligations. Agriculture was responsible for around 80% of global deforestation, while emissions from land use were responsible for nearly 12% of all greenhouse gases. The Maltese politician also pointed out that the EU consumes a third of globally traded agricultural products associated with deforestation. "We are therefore part of the problem," he said. He wanted the EU to be part of the solution, playing its part in fighting deforestation. The EU executive's plans involve encouraging consumption of products from deforestation-free supply chains, deforestation proofing international aid, international cooperation, redirecting finance to support more sustainable land use & supporting access to information on forests. The objective was to halt global forest loss by 2030.

In a discussion based around a four-page background paper from the Presidency [***12491/19**], Hungary's Zsolt Feldman said the forestry sector was central to the development of the EU. There was "no doubt Europe needs a forestry strategy post-2020," he said, emphasising that it should not contradict the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. However, because forestry coverage varied throughout the EU, it should be possible for forestry management to be different in each Member State.

Danish Minister Mogens Jensen echoed his Hungarian colleague, saying that the sustainable management of forests was fundamental for meeting the UN's development goals. He said it was "urgent that we step up EU action." He wanted the measures put forward by the Commission to be given high priority. Spanish Minister Luis Planas wanted a strategy that "should allow us to be consistent in all of our European policies that deal with forests." He also raised the issue of forest fires & the need to mitigate climate change. The strategy would have to be aligned with the European Green Deal, particularly on biodiversity, the Socialist politician added. Planas also wanted to create a dialogue platform for all the stakeholders & stressed the need to reduce the impact of deforestation on the supply chain. There should be broader certification systems, while trade agreements should recognise the need to halt deforestation.

Julia Klöckner from Germany was another Minister who called for a certification process, citing that for cocoa as an example of what could be achieved. The EU needed to work on re-afforestation on its own territory for the sake of credibility on the issue. It would be "good for our image to show that we can replant." Klöckner stressed the need for healthy forests & a more effective EU blueprint. It should have a "closer interface" with other policy areas, the CDU politician stated. Italy stressed the "clear responsibility for the farming sector." Secretary of State Giuseppe L'Abbate bemoaned a lack of instruments, legislation & funding. "Let's define an action plan in concrete terms," he said.

Slovenian Minister Aleksandra Pivec called for a new comprehensive forestry strategy, with sustainable management at its core. She supported all the priorities outlined in the Communication & underlined the need to involve the private sector. She would like to see sustainable forest management be part of international trade deals. The Romanian delegation described the threat to forests as "one of the major challenges when it comes to sustainability." Secretary of State Daniel-Eugeniu Crunțeanu raised the issue of imports & stressed the need to "work hand in hand" with producing countries. Romania wanted to see efficient coordination to deal with the growing challenges facing the sector. Crunțeanu also said there was a need to promote native species, which would be better suited to local

conditions. The Latvian delegation accepted the need for an EU-level strategy, which should improve synergies & coordination.

Czech Minister Miroslav Toman said it was “not admissible for the EU market to allow access to agricultural products linked to deforestation,” while Luxembourg’s Romain Schneider said that the forest fires in the Amazon had shown “how urgent this is.” Schneider said there was a need to focus on the major challenges, climate change & biodiversity, rather than having a strategy that attempted to be too broad. French Minister Didier Guillaume said the fight against deforestation needed to be led at a European level, while products had to be traceable. He stressed that forests affect all EU citizens. A number of the difficulties facing the sector were cross-border in nature, giving the bark beetle & repeated droughts as examples. “We want a strengthened forestry strategy ... we want a harmonised policy for the forestry strategy,” he added.

Portugal’s Minister Luís Capoulas Santos stressed the need for the EU’s actions to follow the demands of international agreements. He emphasised the need to encourage re-afforestation, but felt that a strategy could work using the existing legal measures & wanted subsidiarity to be observed. Poland described deforestation as “one of the biggest problems we’re facing in the world today,” whereby policy should be “consistent & coherent.” There was also a “need to tweak our development policy,” as well as for more research. Cypriot Costas Kadis said that there was a need for more cooperation to strengthen the legislative framework on forest management. He was pleased with “efforts to have a deepened, sustainable forest strategy.” It was important to have more cooperation & coordinate with other policy areas.

The Lithuanian delegation agreed with the need for a strategy, calling for closer cooperation & exchanging good practice, as well as the importance of educating young people about the role of forests. Vice-Minister Evaldas Gustas wanted action “as soon as possible,” with work done to achieve public awareness. The UK delegation echoed this sentiment, with Deputy Permanent Representative Katrina Williams calling on her counterparts to “rapidly reverse the current alarming trends” in deforestation & “for swift action.” Belgium’s Denis Ducarme wanted work on forests to be on a broad scope, while there was a need to come up with a way of working which had a balanced approach (Commission vs. Council positions). Ducarme emphasised the need for an “innovative & coordinated approach,” which should be “linked in to other relevant EU strategies.” Bulgarian Desislava Taneva called the issue “most urgent.” She wanted more to be done about products which resulted in deforestation, with the system of certification. Taneva was pushing a “stronger & more independent forest strategy,” emphasising the need for research & development & stressing the protection of biodiversity. Combating deforestation should be included in trade agreements, she added. Slovakia’s Gabriel Csicsai was pleased to say that the Commission’s Communication supported a partnership approach, including the private sector & civil society. “The EU will have to adopt more ambitious measures,” he said. Sweden’s Jennie Nilsson called for an impact assessment. The bureaucratic burden of any changes must be limited, while better regulation & Member States’ competencies must be respected, Nilsson added. Estonia’s Mart Järvik reacted positively but was also concerned about increasing costs while the representative from Latvia raised the regulatory burden.

Greek Minister Makis Voridis welcomed the Commission’s priorities, but said there was also a need to work internationally. Croatia’s Secretary of State Tugomir Majdak supported the initiative tabled before the summer holidays & called for legislation to ensure the financial sector acts diligently on the issue. Deforestation free production & supply chains should be made easier to identify. The Dutch hoped that the new Commission would be able to take the proposals on board. They wanted to see “clear time-lined targets.” Austrian Minister Maria Patek said the EU’s aim must be to “reduce our own nefarious footprint.” She also suggested

taking advantage of the expertise of the FAO in combating deforestation. Patek wanted the policy to be “coherent & consistent,” & “anchored in the green deal.” Estonia’s Environment Minister Rene Kokk wanted action to raise awareness on forest issues. He would also like to have the principle of subsidiarity maintained. Ireland’s Michael Creed said that forestry was becoming more and more of a key issue, with economic, environmental & socio-cultural impacts. The new strategy should “recognise the need to increase forest cover,” the Macroom man said.

EU Farm Commissioner Phil Hogan stressed the importance of forests & the issues facing the sector. “Protecting forests effectively, & maximizing their potential to support our policy priorities, demands a coherent policy framework that seeks the right balance of actions,” he said. The EU Farm chief explained that the Commission’s own review of the 2013-2020 Forest Strategy had concluded that it was “a valid policy tool that allows the EU & Member States to address the many challenges & roles of forests.” The new Commission’s priorities & the European Green Deal offered “a timely & most relevant opportunity to reflect how a new strategic approach to forests & the forest-based sector can effectively maximize forests’ contribution.” The Commission’s vision was a new EU Forest Strategy which could “secure consistency of EU policies” as well as being “a tool to work jointly in maximizing the contribution of forests to the delivery of all the services they can provide to address the sustainability challenges of the future.” Vella assured Ministers that his successor would be looking forward to working with the Farm Council on the issue.

Sector groups seek international approach to deforestation: The bodies representing the European grain & oilseed trade, crushers & feed processors wrote to Finnish Farm Minister Jari Leppä (October 11) calling for international cooperation to tackle deforestation. The grain trade body COCERAL, the oilseed crushers’ group FEDIOL & the feed industry association FEFAC sent the 1½ page letter ahead of the Farm Council in Luxembourg, which discussed the ‘*Communication on stepping up EU action to protect & restore the world’s forests*’. The three organisations told the current Council chair that a “permanent & effective multilateral institutional dialogue with exporting countries” would be “the most effective way to address sustainable forest management & assist value chain partners in building responsible supply chains.” The trade, crushing & feed sectors had been “extensively engaged over the last years in initiatives aimed at removing products at risk of causing deforestation from their supply chains.” They had engaged in partnerships with producer countries & stressed that “efficiently addressing deforestation starts with the implementation of environmental legislation in the country of production.” Certification “has not proven to be effective in all sectors & commodities,” & they suggest exploring “the need for financial incentives to avoid legal conversion of forests into agricultural land.” They express strong agreement with the “notion that long-term solutions cannot be unilateral & cooperation with international partners is essential.” The letter is co-signed by COCERAL President Philippe Mitko, FEDIOL President John Grossmann & FEFAC President Nick Major.

Call for more effective solutions to forestry challenges: A coalition of Central & Eastern Member States voiced the need to strengthen policy to help the forestry sector face challenges such as climate change & pests & diseases at the October Farm Council in Luxembourg. The discussion was based on a 5-page joint declaration [***12883/19**] from the Visegrád Four (CZ, HU, PL & SK) & BG, HR, SI on ‘*Forests, Sustainable Forest Management & Adaptation to Climate Change*.’ Introducing the paper, Czech Minister Miroslav Toman told Council that his country supported a more important role for forestry in the CAP. “We have to speed up the process of state aid approvals,” he said. He would like to

strengthen the role of the Standing Committee on Forestry & also wanted to see the forestry sector modernised, with greater investment into science & research.

During a meeting in Prague on October 4, the V4 stressed the need for “climate smart approaches” to be incorporated into sustainable forest management & called for effective legislative & financial instruments at national & EU level to find solutions for the challenges, like climate change, drought, natural disasters, pests & diseases, that the sector faces. They emphasise the need for a new EU Forest Strategy & welcomed the ‘*Commission Communication on stepping up EU action to protect & restore the world’s forests*’ [***11449/19**]. The coalition - joined by colleagues from BG, HR & SI - is pushing for the development of new innovative approaches to adapt the forestry sector to climate change. They want to see better international exchange of information on the spread of pests & diseases, with best practice being shared. There’s a call for innovative financial measures from the EU & the reduction of the administrative burden in Community forestry measures. The Ministers want to see the sector modernised, something they say is needed to fulfil the aims of the EU Bio-economy Strategy & the Circular Economy Action Plan. There's also a reference to the Regulation on Land use, land-use change, & forestry (LULUCF), with a call for the current damage to forest to be reflected in the National Action Plans it requires, taking into account the reduced capacity of forests to contribute to CO₂ sinks in coming years. The group of Ministers would also like to see support of macro regional networks such as the BIOEAST Forestry Working Group.

Slovenia reports on knowledge transfer ideas [***12886/19**]: Slovenia’s Agriculture Minister Aleksandra Pivec told her colleagues about a commitment from a wide range of European countries, including some outside the EU, to improve the availability of know-how in agriculture. During her intervention at the Council meeting in Luxembourg on October 14, she referred to a conference entitled ‘*Strengthening the generation & transfer of knowledge for the progress of agriculture & rural areas*’ organised by Slovenia’s Farm Ministry in Ptuj, in the north east of the country (August 23). *Ptuj is home to the Bistra Scientific Research Centre, which was managed by Dr. Pivec (PhD in Chemical Engineering) for nearly 8 years before her Ministerial appointment in September 2018.* The meeting, in the margins of the 57th International Fair of Agriculture & Food AGRA, was attended by Ministers or officials from AT, BG, CZ, CY, FR, HU, LV, NL, PL & SI as well as Bosnia & Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia & Turkey. There were also representatives of scientific & research institutions present. Delegates looked at examples of good practice from Slovenia in transferring knowledge & innovation & the Agricultural Knowledge & Innovation System (AKIS). The day produced a joint statement reaffirming their commitment to strengthen AKIS in Europe post-2021, noting the key role to be played by the reformed 2021-2027 CAP. Delegates undertook to increase investment on research & development as well as demonstration & cooperation, particularly for small & medium holdings. There was also a commitment to establishing an environment conducive to the faster development of innovation & better evaluation of existing knowledge, stressing the importance of cooperation between European countries, as well as research institutions, advisory services & farmers.

French leads declaration on wolf management [***12888/19**]: The French, with support from DK, EE, IT & LV, are looking for greater flexibility in the Guidance document on the strict protection of species of Community interest under the Habitats Directive to “ensure the best possible management of wolf populations.” In an Any Other Business (AOB) point raised by French Minister Didier Guillaume on October 14, he said that sustainable wolf population control should be “based on best local practices” & allow for the “entire flexibility provided by the Directive.” In a 1½-page joint declaration circulated at the meeting, the five countries say that wolf populations are expanding in Europe “because of local improvements in habitat quality, increased populations of some prey species, public support & favourable

international, European & national legislation.” Based on research conducted by the EP (2018), the population is estimated at 17 000. The rapid population growth “raises multiple questions of coexistence with natural & human activities, notably on pastoralism & other agricultural activities, & remains a huge challenge for Member States.” The coalition expressed “deep concern” about the draft revised Guidance document, tabled in October 2018 “which shows a stricter interpretation of the Habitat Directive.” The changes “threaten the possibilities for Member States to adequately manage wolf populations,” while calling for “additional flexibility ... so that they adapt their practices to local realities & fully address social, cultural & economic issues” in any future proposal. In response, EU Farm Commissioner Phil Hogan urged all sides to “find a balance,” in the hopes of ensuring a “sustainable co-existence.” He reminded delegates of measures under Rural Development *inc.* technical assistance to defend against large carnivores. The services are currently analysing the recent ECJ court ruling [see below, *In Brief* section].

Ministers want farmers to tap into bio-economy benefits: Agriculture Ministers are keen to see Europe make the most of the potential benefits of the bio-economy, but they insist that primary producers must get a fair share of the added value it can create. The October Council’s discussion was on the basis of a 3-page paper outlining the results of a conference entitled ‘*European Bio-economy Scene 2019*’ held in Helsinki (July 8-10) [*12539/19]. During his address in the chamber, Finland’s Jari Leppä said the “bio-economy was a central priority for his country,” explaining that the meeting had attracted around 350 delegates from all over Europe. There was “huge potential,” including in agriculture, for the bio-economy to create new jobs & viable growth, but “a lot of study” was still required. There was a need for clear political commitment & a strategic approach, while a lack of consumer awareness remained to be tackled. The Presidency was working on Council Conclusions on the updated bio-economy strategy - expected to be adopted at the November Council (18-19). Farm Commissioner Phil Hogan backed the conference’s conclusions on the importance of the bio-economy for decarbonising the economy & keeping rural areas alive, which had been adopted as one of the strategic objectives of the post-2020 CAP. The Kilkenny politician emphasised that the bio-economy was a key part of the European Green Deal proposed by President-elect Ursula von der Leyen. The Romanian delegation reminded Council that the first conference on the bio-economy was held under its Presidency. The bio-economy is a “key part of the switch from a non-sustainable to a sustainable economic model,” Bucharest believes. The French were keen to make sure that the value added created by the bio-economy was evenly distributed & that “farmers gain from it.” Austria stressed the need for the exchange of information on best practice. The bio-economy would be “an important factor in overcoming the challenges of climate change.” Germany was “delighted” that the Presidency had emphasised the important role of agriculture in the bio-economy. It could also make possible the “transformation of industrial production,” making the economy more sustainable & creating jobs.

SANTE NEWS:

WILD BOAR CONTROL & BIOSECURITY IN FIGHT AGAINST ASF

Agriculture Ministers stressed the importance of managing the wild boar population, improving biosecurity, maintaining regionalisation & fostering public awareness in the fight against African Swine Fever (ASF). In a debate held on the basis of a 2-page information note from the Commission [*12570/19] & a 3-page paper [*12881/19] presented by the Czech delegation on behalf of the Visegrád Group (CZ, HU, PL & SK) plus BG, HR, RO & SI, there was much praise for the speed & effectiveness of help from the Commission, despite some complaints about how compensation is calculated & calls for it to be paid more speedily. EU Health Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis outlined developments in the disease since July. “There have been worrying developments, for example, in Romania, Hungary & Bulgaria with

possible consequences for the Balkan countries,” he told delegations. “Our efforts should further increase proportionately to the level of the threat we are facing.” The Commission had set up regionalisation measures in affected Member States, dispatched veterinary teams at short notice & had many meetings on the problem. The outgoing Health chief reminded Ministers that capitals had endorsed the EU’s common strategic approach to management of the disease & now it was up to them to translate it into national strategies. By properly applying regionalisation the EU had ensured safe trade & limited the spread of the disease since it was first found in the bloc in 2014. “Our job isn’t yet done & the hard work must continue,” the Lithuanian Commissioner said. As he hands over the baton to his successor Stella Kyriakides, he insists on the “structural changes needed in some areas to cope with the disease”, but he was “confident that achieving an ASF-free EU is a real possibility & our real objective in the years to come.”

During the debate that ensued, Belgium’s Minister Denis Ducarme explained the situation in his country, where there had been cases in wild boar, but the domestic pig population had been kept ASF free. He stressed that any reduction in the level of EU aid would be “very unwelcome.” Deputy Director-General Guido Landheer (NL) called for more research on how the disease spreads, while the Polish delegation would like to see the reduction of the wild boar population being dealt with at EU level. Slovakia was faced with a deteriorating situation having first detected the disease at the end of July. There had now been 11 cases in backyard herds & 17 in wild boar. Luxembourg’s Romain Schneider stressed the importance of controlling wild boar & effective biosecurity, while Greek Minister Makis Voridis said his country was taking a number of measures to make sure the disease did not get in. Lithuanian Vice-Minister Evaldas Gustas stressed the need for vigilance, while the French said it was possible to control the disease *inc.* controlling wild boar & biosecurity. Bulgaria’s Desislava Taneva praised the amount of expertise available from the Commission to tackle the disease. She wanted more controls, with 100% sampling, & more to be done to increase the scientific knowledge of the disease. Taneva also called for payments to be made to farmers more quickly. Slovenia’s Aleksandra Pivec emphasised the need for harmonised rules for controlling the disease. She highlighted the importance of raising public awareness, improving biosecurity & controlling wild boar populations. “We would like to see a new vaccine for ASF developed,” she said. Hungarian Secretary of State Zsolt Feldman called for a review of the calculation of payments, which currently only covered a fraction of the actual costs. Germany supported the joint declaration presented by the Czech Minister, also stressing the need to remain in dialogue with trading partners.

V4 plus 4 on fighting ASF: A coalition of Member States - the Visegrád Group (CZ, HU, PL & SK), plus BG, HR, RO & SI - has called on the Commission for an increase in EU co-financing to help them deal with the cost of tackling ASF. In a joint declaration on ‘*Combating ASF in the EU*’ [***12881/19**], they say they would also like to see the method of calculation of co-financing changed. At present, it is based on figures for the income in each Member State & results, they say, in payments which only reflect a fraction of the actual cost. Czech Minister Miroslav Toman explained that the group of like-minded Ministers had come up with the declaration following a meeting in Prague (October 4). There is also a call in the declaration for more cooperation in research on the epidemiology of the disease, with a focus on the behaviour of wild boar.

Andriukaitis looks back on 5-year legacy: EU Health Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis took the opportunity to present a state of play on the major food safety issues [***12861/19**] at the Farm Council, looking back over his 5-year tenure. As part of his legacy, the outgoing Commissioner left in place a strong legal framework & harmonised official controls “helping to protect the EU against unsafe food & food fraud and improve cooperation in times of crisis.” Multiple rules had been combined in the new Animal Health Law. Concrete

steps had been taken to secure higher animal welfare for the future *inc.* the establishment of the new Animal Welfare Platform and the creation of two EU reference centres (pig welfare and poultry & other small farmed animals). He reminded Ministers that the EU had adopted the ‘*European One Health Action Plan against Antimicrobial Resistance*’ in 2017 & pointed out that not all the Member States had developed comprehensive national action plans on the issue. He recalled a new harmonised methodology for food waste measurement which “will help Member States design effective food waste prevention strategies,” while the EU Platform on Food Losses & Food Waste “has also proved a valuable tool.” Better communication & more accountability have been important topics in this mandate, he outlined, pointing to the adoption of the General Food Law earlier this year, which introduced “targeted changes to improve transparency in the risk assessment process.” “All these actions in the area of plant & animal health, on animal welfare, on food waste, on transparency are the essence of a new approach to sustainability,” he said. They have paved the way “to the European Green Deal that the future Commission will launch.” “In a dynamic policy area like this (which celebrated its 30th anniversary on October 10), we will never be able to say ‘job done,’ he stated, “but what we can say is “we made it better”, expressing his pride “to have played a part in this.” Just before the Council meeting wrapped up, the French called for more action on food fraud, proposing the setting up of a taskforce to combat it. They also raised the issue of origin labelling, including for ingredients, something which Paris had experimented with in milk & meat & which now, in the French view, should be put into harmonised EU legislation. Italy agreed with France on the labelling issue, while Danish Minister Mogens Jensen wanted to see a new animal welfare law, with the use of antibiotics reduced & people protected “from unwanted chemicals.”

Call for faster food safety communication, labelling: Following recent outbreaks of *Listeria* in Member States, Belgian Minister Denis Ducarme told his Ministerial colleagues on October 14 that communication needed to be speeded up. France told the same meeting that country of origin labelling for ingredients was needed to boost food safety. Presenting a single-page paper [***13003/19**], the Belgian politician explained that there had been several cases in the EU & three people had died in the Netherlands. He said that the problem “should encourage us to reflect on the best way to manage possible trans-border consequences.” He thanked the Netherlands for its cooperation. Acknowledging that the Rapid Alert System for Food & Feed (RASFF) works well, he still felt that the bloc should seek ways to speed up information sharing between Member States.

For further information on the **agenda points listed above enter the number provided under ‘Public Register’ at the website goo.gl/ybWNtq;*

FUTURE CAP NEWS

“BUSINESS AS USUAL” FOR CURRENT COLLEGE UNTIL NEW TEAM TAKES OFFICE IN DECEMBER

Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker invited the current College to continue to participate in the weekly meetings & ensure the Commission’s external & inter-institutional representation *inc.* in trilogues, until the new ‘team’ takes office (no earlier than December 1). In a 2-page correspondence dated October 25, the outgoing Commission chief refers to the “delay in the process leading to the appointment of the new Commission as from 1 November 2019.” As in “previous occasions, the powers of the Commission in this situation are limited to dealing with ‘current business’ (‘affaires courantes’) based on the need to ensure continuity as a caretaker Commission.” During this period, “we will continue the day-to-day administration of public affairs in accordance with the rules of the Union & the management of ongoing files or procedures, without pre-empting the political choices of the incoming

Commission,” the Luxembourg politician outlines. The current Commission “may nevertheless & subject to a margin of discretion, take decisions involving political choices if they are required by urgency,” he notes, where “mandatory deadlines apply, &/or by the need to comply with its role as guardian of the Treaties or the need to safeguard the interest of the Union.” Juncker also underlines that the current College should be able to “accept or reject amendments proposed by the European Parliament or Council on ongoing legislative procedures.”

New French & Hungarian nominations for Commission: French President Emmanuel Macron nominated **Thierry Breton**, CEO of technology & consulting firm Atos, to be the Commissioner for the Internal Market, it emerged on October 24. The 64-year-old politician was the country’s Finance Minister under President Jacques Chirac, from February 25, 2005 until May 18, 2007 as a member of the then UMP Party (Union pour un Mouvement Populaire), later renamed Les Républicains (part of the EPP group). Born in Paris, Breton became Chairman & CEO of Atos in 2009 and is also Honorary Chairman of both Thomson & France Télécom, among a wide range of business roles, *inc.* leading France Télécom (2002-2005). Breton has a Master’s degree in Electrical Engineering & Computer Science from the Paris École Supérieure d’Électricité (Supélec) & has followed an academic career, which involved being a professor at Harvard Business School (2007-2008) & Chairman of the University of Technology at Troyes (1997-2005). The new Commissioner-designate is “devoting himself now to the preparation of hearings before the relevant Committees of the European Parliament,” according to a statement sent to Agence France-Presse & quoted by Le Monde. He was “honoured by the trust placed in me by the President of the Republic Emmanuel Macron & the President-elect of the European Commission, Mrs. Ursula von der Leyen,” & emphasised that he was “aware of the importance of the issues associated with this portfolio for the future of our continent.” The nomination follows the rejection by the EP of the original candidate, Deputy Governor of the Bank of France Sylvie Goulard amid investigations by the French authorities & the European Anti-fraud Office (OLAF).

Earlier in the month, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said that he would nominate Ambassador **Olivér Várhelyi**, Hungary’s Permanent Representative in Brussels, as the country’s candidate for European Commissioner. Dr. Várhelyi has been leading the office since October 1, 2015. At the end of September, the EP’s Legal Affairs Committee rejected Hungary’s initial Commissioner-designate László Trócsányi on the grounds that there were conflicts of interest between the post & the activities of legal firm Nagy és Trócsányi. Following the collapse of the Romanian government of Prime Minister Viorica Dăncilă on October 10 [*see In Brief section*] & the EP’s earlier rejection of Social Democrat Rovana Plumb, Bucharest had not yet nominated its candidate at the time of going to press. MEP & vice-chair of the EPP group Siegfried Mureșan was previously floated as a possible contender to take over the Transport portfolio.

EU BUDGET CHIEF OETTINGER RAILS AGAINST MISINFORMATION ON FUTURE MFF

EU Budget Commissioner Günther Oettinger used a press conference in Brussels on October 30 to attack the circulation of misleading figures on the next long-term budget, notably concerning Germany. In the last few days “some media have been publishing some rather misleading figures,” he complained. “They say there is going to be a doubling of the German contribution to Brussels ... they are saying that this is going to be a huge blow.” The outgoing Budget chief insisted that “the question of ‘net payer’ should not be dealt with in rather irresponsible language.” In the 1970s, with 70% of the budget going into the CAP, it was easy to tell what was being paid back to a country’s farmers. Now the EU had programmes which were in the interests of many Member States, “for example refugees in Turkey, to try to build

their human dignity ... if we build hospitals, if we make sure the children of these refugees can get a basic education & try to provide good sanitary conditions, we are not then gaining anything,” he insisted, except that those refugees “don’t come into Europe.” The EU’s satellites were enormously useful for providing data, but there was no flow of money back to any Member State.

Frontex was a further example. “This is not going to be visible in the middle of Germany or even on the border between Germany & one of its neighbouring countries,” the 66-year-old German Commissioner explained. “However this will help us to ensure that we have some order,” Oettinger continued. “We do not have the threat of disordered migration.” If the EU wants to try to minimise the number of refugees coming from Africa by investing in countries there, “Mali, Egypt & other countries will not be contributing to the EU’s coffers,” he said. The CDU politician explained that the planned Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) was built on three pillars - “the Common Agricultural Policy, Cohesion Policy & a third pillar, which I would say is modernisation defence, research defence, focusing on areas such as migration.” The EU now had established programmes, which were not necessarily going to pay money back to Member States. “There is no longer any relevance of this whole argument, I am a net payer, I am a net contributor,” the Stuttgart native emphasised. His proposal is that each national capital pays 1.114% of Gross National Income (GNI) into the EU budget, which “fully corresponds to the demands of some Member States, which wish to ensure that we have a smaller budget for a smaller European Union.” On Germany, he stressed that some Member States pay more than it does on a per capita basis. “Since there are more Germans than Luxembourgers then looking at the whole context Germany pays more in,” he explained. He called on journalists to go back and check their figures with Berlin, putting the net contribution for 2018 in Germany at €13.5 billion, rising in 2020 to €14.4bn. “At the end of the next MFF the figure will be €23.5bn,” he said. “I have read figures that are €30bn or even €33bn.” Such numbers were “lies.”

EU HEADS OF STATE & GOV. WANT MFF ‘NEGOTIATING BOX’ WITH FIGURES BY DECEMBER

EU leaders requested that the Finnish Presidency submits a negotiating box with Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) figures ahead of the next Summit on December 12-13. The negotiating box should focus on the overall level of funding, volumes of the main policy areas & financing (revenue). In a 3-page (limited) document circulated ahead of the October 18 EU Council meeting in Brussels, Presidency officials consider the “appropriate overall level range would be 1.03%-1.08% (EU-27 GNI)” resulting in €1.050-1.10 trillion range for the next programming period (2019-2024), compared to the €1.135 trillion proposed by the Commission (total commitments, excluding special instruments.) Member States have embraced the “modernised approach” tabled by the EU’s exec, “geared towards the political priorities & new challenges,” authors note, while the importance of continued support for Cohesion & CAP “have been highlighted by many.” The Presidency suggests keeping the division between the main policy areas (approx. 1/3 to Cohesion, 1/3 to CAP & 1/3 to “other programmes”), balancing the volumes of Cohesion & CAP and increasing funding for “other programmes” compared to the current MFF, but less than proposed by the Commission. The approach “would result in a reallocation of funding from Pillar I to Pillar II”, with the adjustment leading to a “nominal freeze in Pillar I compared to the current MFF.” Some additional reallocations from other headings would be made to Pillar II, which would result in a level slightly under a nominal freeze in the 2nd Pillar.

Based on the Presidency’s consultations, the gradual alignment of direct support levels between Member States “would need to continue,” while a detailed solution “needs to be developed.” Expenditure needs to be “in line with EU policies & values,” where both conditionalities & positive incentives are needed on the Rule of Law mechanism as well as

climate & migration policies. Elsewhere, in a set of conclusions adopted on October 18, heads of state & government “remain determined to ensure that the EU will continue to lead the way to a socially fair & just green transition.” The European Council will finalise its guidance on the EU’s long-term strategy on climate change at the end-of-year meeting, while EU enlargement & Turkey’s military action in north-east Syria were also on the October agenda.

“Time to decide” on EU Budget (2021-2027): The Commission called on EU leaders to provide political guidance & new impetus to negotiations in order to reach an agreement on a “fair, balanced & modern long-term EU budget for the period 2021-2027” by the year’s end. In a 6-page Communication entitled *‘Time to decide on the Union’s Financial Framework for 2021-2027’* published on October 9, the EU’s executive presented a number of key elements that heads of state & government must take on board at the October 17-18 Summit. [see above]. These include - the overall level of funding must match the Union’s shared priorities, a modern budget with the right balance between policies & a strong focus on EU added value, a more transparent approach to financing the EU Budget, introduction of new sources of revenue to support priorities & reduce the burden on national contributions & greater policy coherence, through a closer link between funding & policy priorities and stronger tools for protecting the Budget from rule of law deficiencies. Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker urged MEPs & Member States to “reach a swift agreement” so new programmes can be launched on January 1, 2021, saying the Community’s long-term budget was about “acting where the EU adds the most value ... it is investment in Europe-wide, world leading research, it is funding for cross-border infrastructure, support for small businesses & a safety net for our farmers.” The proposal (equal to 1.114% of EU-27 Gross National Income) is a “forward looking, responsible & pragmatic plan on how to do more with less,” the outgoing Commission chief added. *See https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commission-contribution-october-euco-mff-post-2020_en

TRADE CHIEF “REGRETS” WASHINGTON DECISION ON DUTIES

The EU’s Trade Chief Cecilia Malmström regrets Washington’s decision to move ahead with punitive duties on imports from the EU *inc.* agri-food products from October 18, following the decision by the WTO’s arbitration panel in the 15-year Airbus/Boeing legal dispute on October 2 [see below, *Beyond the EU*]. *The panel authorised the US administration to introduce annual retaliatory tariffs - 10% rate on large civil aircraft & 25% on agricultural & other products - up to a value of almost \$7.5 billion on a range of European imports inc. cashmere sweaters, luxury goods, aircraft parts wine, olives, dairy products & whisky (with distilleries reportedly air freighting bottles of the beverage across the Atlantic before the tariffs take effect).* In a statement issued on October 18, the Trade chief said the announcement “leaves us no alternative but to follow through in due course with our own tariffs in the Boeing case, where the US has been found in breach of WTO rules,” on products such as frozen fish, fresh & dried nuts (such as brazil nuts, cashew, almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts), chocolate, tomato ketchup, sparkling & white wines, rum & vodka and industrial goods such as tractors & heavy machinery. “Imposing tariffs on each other serves nobody’s long-term interest,” as it “will inflict very significant damage to the highly integrated supply chain of the aircraft sectors in the US & the EU and will result in collateral damage to many other sectors already suffering under the current trade tensions.” As both sides have been found in breach of WTO rules, the EU & US “have a joint responsibility to sit down [as the world’s largest aircraft manufacturers] & negotiate a settlement that is balanced & compliant with the WTO.” The Swedish liberal politician recalled the concrete proposals on “clearly identified existing aircraft subsidies & on future support to our respective aircraft sectors,” which, Malmström says, remain on the table. The EU’s executive will “monitor the impact of the announced US countermeasures on the European products concerned, notably in the agricultural sector,” she said, while it was committed to “defending European companies, farmers & consumers.”

PL, DE & FR FARM MINISTERS CALL FOR STRONG CAP

Agriculture Ministers from Poland, Germany & France have agreed that the CAP must remain a key EU policy & be properly funded to fulfil its role in tackling climate change. Gathering in Warsaw (October 7), Ministers in the so-called 'Weimar Triangle' - a loose grouping of the three countries - stressed that the CAP "is & shall remain an important EU policy." In a 3-page joint declaration signed by Ministers Jan Krzysztof Ardanowski (PL), Didier Guillaume (FR) & Julia Klöckner (DE), they described the framework as "an important instrument for implementing the goals of a Europe undergoing unification, guaranteeing food sovereignty & contributing to the economic viability of farms & rural areas." It must remain a market-oriented policy & meet the expectations of European society, they agreed. The three politicians also note that European agriculture is increasingly open to international markets because of trade liberalisation & insist that "it is necessary that imports respect the level of standards required by European consumers." There's praise for the role of the CAP in maintaining the attractiveness of rural areas, generating economic development & the modernisation of the agri-food sector. It also plays a key role in fostering innovation, supporting less favoured areas & encouraging young farmers into the industry. The trio also agreed that the CAP contributes to tackling climate change, by "accompanying the transition towards more sustainable production systems in a harmonized framework at the European level." They say that increasing ambitions on environment, climate & animal welfare, "should go hand in hand with providing appropriate funds for their implementation." There's a call to develop cooperation on research & innovation & a commitment to encourage cooperation on science & research under Horizon 2020 & the next Horizon Europe programme. Ardanowski & his two counterparts stress the importance of small-holders & insist the CAP should provide effective instruments to protect & develop them. The three advocate "multi-functional development of small farms or family farms as a key element of rural vitality." The last time the Weimar Triangle's 'agri component' met was in Le Mans - around two hours from Paris - in October 2016, where they called for financial support to combat the spread of African Swine Fever.

EU EXEC ALLOCATES €200m TO PROMOTE AGRI-FOOD PRODUCTS AT HOME & ABROAD

The EU budget dedicated to promoting EU agri-food products at home & abroad will be €200 million for 2020, comprising 81 campaigns* (56 for simple programmes & 25 for multi-programmes) to be rolled out over the next three years, the Commission confirmed on October 23. Under the banner '*Enjoy it's from Europe*', the budget allocation will co-finance programmes (at rates of 70-85%) on the internal & external markets, with an increased focus on campaigns that promote EU quality schemes. Of the campaigns approved (covering 19 Member States), 55 target non-EU countries such as Brazil, Canada, China, Mexico & India covering a wide range of products including fruit & vegetables, organic food, dairy, meat, olive & olive oil. Farm Commissioner Phil Hogan said that European agri-food products are "renowned across the globe for their quality & authenticity." He recalled the many trade missions during his 5-year mandate - accompanied by senior executives in the agri-food industry - to China, Japan, Indonesia, Mexico & Colombia where he experienced first-hand the positive reaction to European produce. The Commission supports producers' "hard work by spreading the word & maintaining a good reputation at a global level," the Irishman added.

This year €100m has been earmarked for 'simple promotion programmes' on the EU & 3rd country markets (submitted by one or more proposing organisations from the same Member State), with 23% of the budget allocated to the fruit & vegetable sector, followed by a 'basket of products' (21%), meat (20%), cheese/dairy (14%) and wine, cider & vinegar (6%). Key "winners" include IT (17 accepted proposals), EL (8), FR (6), BE (6), ES (6) & PL (3), which were granted the bulk of the overall 'simple promotion schemes' budget, with emphasis on EU

quality schemes & organic production. Other Member States such as FI, DK, IE, DE, NL & LV each had one proposal accepted, while LT & SI had two. Under the ‘simple promotion programmes’, Germany (coordinated by Naturland) looks set to secure around €1m for the promotion of a ‘basket for products’ *inc.* bovine meat (fresh, chilled & frozen), bread, pastry, cakes, confectionary, biscuits, cereals, cheese, chocolate & derived products, coffee & tea, dairy products (excl. cheese), eggs, pasta, olive oil & fruit or nuts (*inc.* table olives) targeted at the Vietnamese market. Similarly, Ireland has one entry (Bord Bia) for the promotion of pork & poultry in China & Mexico (worth just over €3m). An additional €90.5m will fund so-called ‘multi programmes’, submitted by at least two proposing organisations from at least two Member States or one or more European organisations. The US, China & Japan are the key external target markets, followed by South Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam & Singapore, while meat (bovine, poultry & meat preparations), wine, cider & vinegar, fruit & vegetables, olive oil & cereals make up the bulk of the product base. Multi-programmes are directly managed by the EU’s consumers, health, agriculture & food executive agency (CHAFEA), while the so-called ‘simple’ ones are managed by national administrations. A further €9.5m will fund the Commission’s “own initiatives” *inc.* communication campaigns in 3rd countries *inc.* pavilions in major agri-food trade fairs, organisation of business delegations visits, seminars, technical support as well as campaigns in the event of market disturbance & loss of consumer confidence. [*https://ec.europa.eu/chafea/agri/funding-opportunities/evaluation-and-selection](https://ec.europa.eu/chafea/agri/funding-opportunities/evaluation-and-selection)

EU AUDITORS RECORD (STABLE) ERROR RATE OF 2.4% FOR CAP SPENDING IN 2018

EU spending on the CAP, Common Fisheries Policy & part of EU spending on environment/climate action in 2018 - just over €58 billion - had an overall error rate of 2.4% (same as 2017), according to the European Court of Auditors (ECA). In its 2018 annual report* published on October 8, auditors underline that direct payments - which account for 72% of spending under the MFF heading ‘Natural Resources - “as a whole were free from material error”. Authors of the 304-page report note that the Integrated Administration & Control System (IACS), which incorporates the Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS) “has helped to bring down the level of errors in direct payments, with the LPIS making a particularly significant contribution.” The introduction in IACS of the geo-spatial aid application, which enables farmers to submit payment claims online, has “also helped to bring down the level of error in direct payments.” The EU watchdog checked 95 direct payments & found that 77 were unaffected by error. There was a higher rate of error for the budget covering rural development, market measures, fisheries, environment & climate action as a result of “complex rules & eligibility criteria.” Auditors say the main reason for errors in these chapters was the ineligibility of the beneficiary, activity, project or expenditure, provision of inaccurate information on areas or animal numbers, non-compliance with public procurement rules & administrative errors. In a series of recommendations for expenditure related to RD, the ECA calls on the Commission to “take measures to improve the work done by certification bodies in Member States & ensure that the data provided by countries & used for the calculation of financial corrections is properly verified”. For the post-2020 period, the Commission must also take into account weaknesses identified in the current framework “in order to ensure that result indicators properly measure the effects of actions & they have a clear link to the related interventions & policy objectives.” From an agricultural perspective, DG AGRI officials underline that the error rate has been coming down over the past number of years, while the action plans implemented by national capitals to remedy the shortcomings are now working. The Commission “keeps on supporting Member States in improving their management & control systems to avoid errors in the future”, they add, keen to stress the fall in the error rate for direct payments – the largest part of the CAP budget – from 3.6% in 2012. The Commission is confident the situation is under control, but “where necessary it imposes

financial corrections - the 'clearance of accounts' procedure - on the Member State in order to protect the EU budget & safeguard taxpayers' interests".

Auditors conclude that the "overall level of irregularities in EU spending has remained stable within the range observed during the two previous years." They estimate an error rate of 2.6% in 2018 expenditure (2.4% in 2017 & 3.1% in 2016). At the same stage, they underline that challenges remain in "high-risk spending areas such as rural development & cohesion." ECA President Klaus-Heiner Lehne said "the start of a new legislative term & of a new financial programming period create a window of opportunity ... policymakers should grasp it to focus EU policies & spending on delivering results & added value."

*For more www.eca.europa.eu/;

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT NEWS

GREEN LIGHT TO ADVANCE CAP FILES TO PLENARY

The Conference of Presidents (EP President & leaders of political groups) gave the green light on October 16 to forward the three CAP reform files to plenary (possibly Spring 2020). When the CAP dossiers (from the previous mandate) are sent before the full House, one or more political groups or at least 38 MEPs may ask for a motion to refer the dossiers back to the Committee, allowing the newly-appointed MEPs to table amendments & adapt the text accordingly. Otherwise, MEPs - particularly those on the ENVI Committee - would still have a chance to table amendments (previously not approved) at plenary level as per the normal legislative procedure. The EP's AGRI Committee agreed on September 4 to take forward the three reports on CAP reform agreed by the Committee pre-election. The consensus at the time was "to continue rather than start from scratch." AGRI MEPs agreed the reports on the Common Market Organisation (CMO) & the CAP Strategic Plans on April 1 & on Financing, Management & Monitoring (Horizontal Regulation) on April 8 [see *AGRA FOCUS*, May 2019, p.15]. The move means that the Committee has avoided restarting the legislative procedure from the beginning, although Committee Chair Norbert Lins (EPP, DE) (& most coordinators) previously stressed that "we must ensure that new MEPs are given a chance to contribute to the draft laws." AGRI Coordinators were expected to clarify the next steps in early November (4-5). *Agriculture Ministers will discuss the new green architecture when they meet in Brussels on November 18. Outgoing EU Farm Commissioner Phil Hogan is expected to attend.*

FOCUS ON SUSTAINABILITY, COMAGRI REPORT

Agri-food policy should focus on sustainability as it faces up to the challenge of feeding an expanding world population in the coming decades, according to a report prepared for the European Parliament's Agriculture Committee. The 81-page report '*Megatrends in the agri-food sector: global overview & possible policy response from an EU perspective*,'* requested by COMAGRI & prepared by the EP's Policy Department for Structural & Cohesion Policies looks at how & whether agriculture can achieve the necessary doubling in production to feed an expected world population of nearly 10 billion in 2050. *Two of the experts brought in by the Policy Department to prepare the report, Monica Pesce (VVA Brussels) & Daniel Traon (Arcadia) were due to present their findings to AGRI MEPs on November 5.*

Authors of the report ask the question whether agricultural output can be increased by the necessary amount without causing irreparable damage to the planet. They conclude that "sustainable & efficient use of land & water via technological support can increase crop yields without the need to expand agricultural land," noting that "increasing the efficiency of water use is also becoming crucial." They call for a "great food transformation" to achieve that, with increased awareness about environmentally sustainable diets & regulation on food waste. "Especially in high-income countries, it will enhance the adoption of more balanced

diets comprising fewer animal products & more fruits and vegetables,” they stress. The experts also want to see higher food prices, highlighting that “under-priced food can encourage the overuse of natural resources & excessive consumption that leads to health problems & food waste.” Their concern is to make sure agriculture can contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, while still being able to feed growing demand. “Substantial investments are needed in order to decrease GHG emissions & minimise the impact of agri-food systems on climate change,” they say. Of a range of possible scenarios the experts recommend ‘sustainability for all.’ “Policy-makers should focus on the agricultural productivity & foresee incentives under (the) CAP proposal for increasing &/or maximising agricultural production in the EU as well as to foster uptake & knowledge-sharing of technology & digitalisation in agricultural production as driver(s) for food security,” in their view. Sustainability should be targeted at all levels of the food chain. The EU should continue to support global initiatives to reduce emissions, such as the Paris Agreement, as well as those focussed on cutting biodiversity loss. The Union, the authors say, should make sure all trade agreements consider environmental protection as well as ensuring its own commitments on cutting GHG emission are effectively implemented, in a timely fashion, including in agriculture. **For more <http://bit.ly/MGT629Ag>*

COMAGRI FINALLY GIVES NOD TO POLISH COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE WOJCIECHOWSKI

Polish Commissioner-designate Janusz Wojciechowski received the unanimous backing of group coordinators in the AGRI Committee on October 8, following a second hearing with MEPs ahead of his country’s general election on October 13. Speaking entirely in Polish, the Law & Justice (PiS) politician made a much more forceful & committed impression on MEPs, with several commenting on how different his performance was compared to the first outing on October 1 [*see below*]. COMAGRI Chair Norbert Lins (EPP, DE) explained that following the previous audition coordinators had failed to reach a two-thirds majority & asked for detailed responses to a series of written questions [*see below*]. Still not satisfied, they had decided to hold a ‘resumed’ hearing. AGRI & ENVI MEPs were present, with ENVI Coordinators rejecting his appointment (these votes did not count).

“European agriculture must be competitive,” the Commissioner-designate told MEPs. “Farmers are entrepreneurs” & needed support to preserve their competitive edge. The 64-year-old ECR politician insisted that he would stand up & defend a “stronger & adequate budget for agriculture & rural development.” The Rawa Mazowiecka native (central Poland) promised to cut bureaucracy & stressed the need to enhance the position of European agriculture in global markets, something he would promote when negotiating with international trading partners. He would make sure that imported food products complied with EU standards. On climate & environmental protection, he said that “farmers will help to achieve European goals,” noting that “very often they are the first victims of climatic change.” He would implement “not prohibitions & bounds but rather incentives,” to achieve environmental goals. Wojciechowski stressed his support for organic farming, promising to come up with an action plan on the issue. The former AGRI MEP (2004-2016) & COMAGRI Vice-Chair insisted on fairness in the CAP, recognising local differences, but he insisted that it “must be common as a policy.” There had to be room for flexibility but “we need to strike the right balance.” He addressed concerns over land concentration or appropriation of land in some countries. “We should stand up for the farmers who are faced with land grabbing,” he said.

During the question & answer session that ensued, Italian MEP Herbert Dorfmann (EPP) wanted to know if he would continue working with the EP on the current reform proposals or whether there would be new plans in the next mandate. Wojciechowski admitted that he was a bit jealous of Dacian Cioloş, a former Commissioner, & now COMAGRI member (& leader of

Renew Europe), who carried through reform from scratch. “I am in a position where this reform is already on the table,” he said, pointing out that his mandate from future President Ursula von der Leyen was to carry on with the current reform process. He knew the position of the ‘old’ Parliament & Commissioner, but “I do not have the final position of Parliament from this term.” The former member of the Governing Board of EUROSAI, the European Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions (1995 to 1999) was ready for compromises & remains “open to good proposals that may improve the CAP.” However, he reminded MEPs that new ideas would have to get through Council.

When asked about the transitional period & how long it would last, the former Deputy Speaker of the Polish Parliament (2001-2004) pointed out that it had to be one year continuation of the old system. “We will have a proposal of one year of transition on the table,” without confirming when the regulation would be tabled. Italian Socialist Paolo De Castro raised the issue of US measures in the Airbus dispute, describing the tariffs imposed by President Donald Trump as putting farming & food in Europe “under attack”. “Strategic products are going to be hit,” he said. In response, Wojciechowski said he was aware of the situation. “Farmers are innocent victims of conflict,” he said. He hoped a political resolution would be found but if not, the EU would have to “trigger some aid system.” Europe had the experience of the Russian ban & had been “very effective in providing help for farmers.” If confirmed, the Pole promised he would “fight for as many resources as possible.” De Castro wanted to know if he would activate the reserve fund, complaining that the €400 million in the fund was not enough & should be at least €1.5 billion. The former Polish MP (1993-1995 & 2001-2004) said he was in favour of increasing “a possibility to react & help farmers in a crisis.” For Renew Europe, German liberal MEP Ulrike Müller insisted that there should be a focus on young farmers. Wojciechowski concurred, saying the issue was “of key importance.” There was a system of aid but the results were “not satisfactory yet.” The most important problem was access to land. Green MEP Martin Häusling told Wojciechowski there had been “a lot more substance to your answers this time round.” He raised the subject of capping. “Commissioners tend to give in,” he said. “Our suspicion is that Member States won’t stand as firm on this as you hope.” Wojciechowski said he was very much in favour of protecting small farms. It was possible to see how they were being lost as you drove across Europe. “This is Europe & not Canada,” he said. The German politician also raised the question of protein subsidies & Wojciechowski noted the “vast” level of imports of soybeans from the US. “Much of this can be replaced” by EU protein crops, he reckoned. To a question on the budget, he responded that “I would very much like to have a budget for agriculture as big as possible”, conceding that he must remain “realistic.”

Czech Ivan David, from the Identity & Democracy Group, was concerned about the opening of the European market for imports of agricultural products. “Do we accept this competition, which in some cases is unfair?” he asked. The former member of the European Court of Auditors (ECA), Chamber I, Sustainable use of natural resources, said that there was a need to stand up for the interests of European farmers but on the other hand “we need international trade.” He noted that the EU was a massive exporter of agri-food products, but farmers “cannot be sacrificed” for trade. He promised that he would “do my best to make sure farmers are not on the losing end.” David went on to ask if he would fight for a fairer distribution of agricultural subsidies. The former President of Poland’s Supreme Audit Office (1995 to 2001) said he would pursue internal & external convergence. “We will need to equalise the payments available to farmers,” he said. There were proposals on the table. His fellow Law & Justice Party colleague Zbigniew Kuźmiuk (ECR) raised the issue of the concentration of land. “It has gone too far,” the Commissioner-designate responded. But he stressed that the EU could not interfere in Member State property laws. Kuźmiuk wondered if he could help by looking at the definition of an active farmer. The Member of the Court of Auditors agreed. “This would be one of the remedies,” he said. Ireland’s GUE/NGL MEP Luke Ming Flanagan reminded

Wojciechowski that he came “from the same political stable as the British Prime Minister,” recalling Johnson’s description of climate protestors as “crusties”. Wojciechowski insisted that he was “very much attached to the idea that European agriculture should be in line with environmental requirements.” Following the hearing, the Castlereagh (Co. Roscommon) man later tweeted that “anyone who is ‘too green’ for the @EPP has to be a positive.”

Austrian MEP Simone Schmiedtbauer (EPP) stressed the need to avoid an exodus from rural areas because of the effect of budget cuts on smaller farms. The Pole pointed out that the Member States had already increased financing. “Maintaining the liability over all areas should be the main task for the rural development fund,” she said. The Austrian wondered how more could be done on implementing climate goals at a time when there is less money. “I am ready to fight,” the would-be Commissioner asserted. “I am ready to stand against all other members of the Commission. You can count on me.” Juozas Olekas, a Lithuanian Socialist, said “today we have heard more concrete answers to our questions.” He was “very happy about that.” His question was about specific action to enhance rural infrastructure & what the new Commissioner would do about convergence. “I’ll do all I’ll be able to do about convergence,” Wojciechowski assured him. “I want convergence to happen as soon as possible.” Inequality between Member States should be stopped. Former Agriculture Commissioner Dacian Cioloş, now leader of Renew Europe, told the Polish politician that “this time you are much more engaging & much more concrete in your answers.” “This is what we need.”

All eyes on new AGRI Cabinet: Now that Wojciechowski is “home & dry”, all eyes now turn to the formation of his Cabinet. Maciej Golubiewski, a Polish diplomat at the European External Action Service (Brussels, Beirut), currently heading Poland’s Consulate General in New York (since January 2017), is emerging as the key candidate for the role of Chef de Cabinet. The former Deputy Chief of Mission at the EU delegation to Lebanon (September 2014-October 2016) & International Relations Officer on Syria (based in Brussels) is understood to be fluent in Polish, English, French, German & Russian. A French female official (from DG AGRI services) is being mooted as Deputy Chef de Cabinet. Magdalena Majerczyk, agri advisor for the ECR group, is understood to be a “dead cert” for a senior Cabinet position (possibly working on relations with the EU institutions). The EP official, with nearly two decades of experience in the House, has been a key figure in the run-up to the hearings. The ‘previous’ Head of Private Office in the Luxembourg-based European Court of Auditors (ECA) is Kinga Wiśniewska-Danek (daughter of ECR MEP Jadwiga Wiśniewska), while his personal assistant for the last 15 years is Anna Chuchla. Both are hotly tipped to join him in Brussels - though it’s unsure which jobs they will get. But as the new College is now expected to take office on December 2, there is no rush in finalising the line-up.

WOJCIECHOWSKI PROVIDES WRITTEN RESPONSES TO EP’S COMAGRI

Poland’s candidate for the new Commission, Janusz Wojciechowski, provided an extensive list of written responses to the EP’s Committee on Agriculture & Rural Development, ahead of a special meeting of the Agri Coordinators on October 7. The move followed his lacklustre 3-hour confirmation hearing on October 1, where he came across as ill-prepared, vague & lacking on technical knowledge. In a 16-page document (in English) forwarded to COMAGRI members late on October 4, the former Vice-President of the Agri Committee (2004-2016) sought to clarify a number of issues related to the European Green Deal, CAP reform (capping, redistributive payment, internal convergence, Strategic Plans & small-holders), innovation, sustainable farming systems, pesticide use & the Multi-annual Financial Framework (2021-2027). In specific terms, Wojciechowski underlined that the European Green Deal & “in particular the Farm to Fork Strategy will provide the framework for a long-term vision for rural areas, of which agriculture will play an important part.” It will “address key issues related to farming methods & how we can produce food safely & sustainably,” he

added. The former member of the European Court of Auditors (since 2016) & ex-MEP (2004-2016) stated that organic farming could play an important role in the context of the European Green Deal “in order to address climate change & reach the objective of zero pollution”, with the right-wing Law & Justice (PiS) politician pledging to submit to MEPs a “European Action Plan to promote organic farming.” On New Breeding Techniques, he was non-committal, saying the dossier fell under the remit of his (future) colleague Stella Kyriakides. In response to a question on the target of 50% reduction of pesticide use by 2025, he said the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive - under Commissioner-designate Kyriakides’ remit - “provides a strong framework for Member States & farmers to reduce their dependency on pesticides.” Integrated Pest Management is a “valuable tool” to achieve this, he added.

When asked about his position on capping & the redistributive payment, he was sanguine that “compulsory capping clearly benefits family farms” - an issue, he said, that was close to his heart. Direct support must be targeted at genuine farmers “or in other words those who mainly depend on farming to earn their living,” he outlined, in order to “improve the public perception of the CAP & its performance.” Wojciechowski supported the move towards “full internal convergence ... in due time,” saying he was aware that “differences in the level of basic payment per hectare between farmers in the same Member State persist.” Commenting more broadly on CAP reform, the former High Court Judge (1991-1993) expressed his conviction that the Commission’s proposals “provide a good basis for discussions on the future of Europe’s agricultural policy.” He stood ready “to consider adapting the proposal where there is consensus between the co-legislators,” while underlining that the blueprint was “not a ‘carte blanche’ for Member States” as there were “carefully designed safeguards within a strong framework of common rules at EU level.” He was clear that there would be “much stronger links between the CAP & delivering on the objectives & targets of EU legislation on the environment & climate” – on climate change, energy, water, air quality, biodiversity & pesticides.

On innovation, the 64-year-old politician stated that “farmers need to take ownership of new technologies, new business models & new forms of cooperation.” He highlighted the role of the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity & Sustainability (EIP-AGRI) as an “effective instrument” in fostering innovation in areas related to water & soil management, pest/disease control, food quality, competitiveness of value chains & energy efficiency. The digitalisation of agriculture (internet of things, precision farming) was also key, as it had the “potential to foster the sustainability of the sector & of the whole value chain, from production to consumption.” If confirmed, the former President of the Polish Supreme Audit Office (1995-2001) made a promise to include an event related to research & agricultural innovation every time he visits a Member State. On animal welfare, he expressed concerns about “critical areas of implementation of current animal welfare rules in the EU,” citing in particular the “widespread use of the derogation to mutilation in pigs & tail-docking ... which needs to be addressed.” He saw a direct correlation between the level of animal welfare & the need for the systematic use of antibiotics in farm animals & looked ahead to the entry into force of new rules on the use of veterinary medicines at the beginning of 2022. Wojciechowski also vowed to work closely with his fellow Commissioners-designate for Health & Trade to “ensure a level playing field for EU farmers in the multilateral context.” In his last response, he pledged to “defend a strong budget for agriculture,” & described the draft on the future financial perspectives (2021-2027) as a “good basis for discussion.” The proposal, which included a “moderate cut for the CAP,” he said, “strikes a fair & reasonable balance between the need for ensuring adequate funding for new priorities & for the more traditional policies such as CAP & Cohesion.”

Further quizzing of Wojciechowski by MEPs: Poland’s candidate for the new Commission, Janusz Wojciechowski, faced more quizzing after failing to convince COMAGRI

MEPs at his confirmation audition on October 1. His own ECR political group was the only one to back the Law & Justice (PiS) politician, while the biggest political group (EPP) complained that he failed to grasp the tough policy issues & too many of his responses were vague. Following the 3-hour grilling session with AGRI MEPs on October 1, Chairman Norbert Lins (EPP), after meeting Coordinators (in camera), wrote to Parliament President David Sassoli (dated October 2), requesting that the Commissioner-designate answer a series of additional written questions. The single-page letter, which was copied to Antonio Tajani (EPP, IT), Chair of the Conference of Committee Chairs & ENVI Committee Chair Pascal Canfin (Renew Europe, FR), was accompanied by three pages with seven detailed questions.

In specific terms, MEPs wanted to know how the Polish politician would integrate the “long-term vision” for agriculture - to which he referred at the hearing - into the ongoing CAP reform process. They wanted him to explain how he saw the role of organic farming & new breeding techniques in the ‘European Green Deal’ – the flagship project of the incoming Commission College (2019-2024). Committee members also wanted concrete examples of where he saw potential for innovation & what he was going to do about land grabbing. The former member of the European Court of Auditors (since 2016) & ex-MEP (2004-2016) was asked how he proposed to ensure more equitable direct aid under the CAP framework & whether he could support “full convergence of payments per hectare within Member States in the next programming period.” Wojciechowski was asked to comment on which initiatives he would take to ensure farmers take action to tackle antimicrobial resistance & animal welfare concerns “related to intensive livestock farming.” The Committee wanted to know how the Polish politician would improve the current CAP reform proposal & what the timeframe would be, with reference to his stance on the re-nationalisation of the policy. There were detailed questions on how he would incentivise farming to perform on biodiversity, climate & environment & how he would direct funding to small-holders. COMAGRI members also wanted to know if he would push a target of 50% pesticide reduction by 2025. There was also a call for the former Vice-Chair of the EP’s Committee on Agriculture & Rural Development (2004-2016) to explain how future farm policy & the so-called ‘Farm to Fork Strategy’ would be inter-linked. The final question was on whether he agreed with the reduction in CAP expenditure planned for the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2021-27, with MEPs keen to get his view on the forthcoming transitional regulation.

WOJCIECHOWSKI STRESSES CONSENSUS & LONG-TERM VISION AT LACKLUSTRE FIRST HEARING

Poland’s Commissioner-designate Janusz Wojciechowski struggled in his hearing with COMAGRI on October 1, in the face of MEPs who complained that his answers were non-committal & lacked clarity, with one, German Green MEP Martin Häusling accusing him of a “business as usual” approach, with answers that sounded like they were scripted by outgoing Farm Commissioner Phil Hogan. During his introduction before the EP’s Committee on Agriculture & Rural Development, the Pole reminded the hearing that he had been an MEP for 12 years, as well as Vice-President of the Agri Committee (2004-2016). He had spent the last three years at the European Court of Auditors (ECA), with responsibility for agriculture. Answering in English to a barrage of questions from MEPs calling for change to reform plans & critical of the effect of trade deals on Europe’s food & farming sector, Wojciechowski came across as ill-prepared, failing to deliver clear & precise answers, with sources pointing to his lack of engagement with DG AGRI officials over the past number of weeks. MEPs challenged his apparent view that CAP reform must be on the basis of the (current) Commission proposals, even if he conceded that it could be changed, in light of the reservations voiced by the Luxembourg-based ECA [*see AGRA FOCUS, December 2018, p.12*].

The right-wing Law & Justice (PiS) politician started by highlighting the rate at which European farms were going out of business. The 64-year-old explained that between 2005 & 2015, the EU lost more than four million holdings. They were going at the rate of over a thousand a day. One reason he had decided to be a candidate was that “this is a chance to create a long-term vision for European agriculture.” The CAP had been a success story in the EU. “We have food security,” he said, but there were many weaknesses in the policy. The problems of the CAP affected not just farmers but also society, with relevance to food safety & food security. “Agriculture is also very important for the planet,” he underlined, citing climate change, biodiversity & animal welfare as some of the key issues involved. It was very important to have a true picture of the current situation & his first action, if confirmed, would be to present a report on the position of European agriculture. Referring to the flagship ‘European Green Deal’, the Commission-hopeful said he was convinced that green agriculture was the best solution for the industry’s future. Environmental farming was a big opportunity, especially for small & family farms. He promised to “strongly support all actions which will be helpful for small & medium sized farming,” while he would be open for dialogue with the EP, farmers, farm organisations & NGOs.

Italian MEP Herbert Dorfmann (EPP) noted that the ECA had been “very critical of the reform proposals.” He also raised the issue of “huge land purchases going on by external actors.” Wojciechowski said he would implement a CAP reform based on Hogan’s proposals, but “this is a chance to change the proposal.” “I’m open for further discussion,” he said. What the Commission had produced was “only the initial proposals”, while the plan was “not the Bible.” Dorfmann (from South Tyrol) asked whether he thought that the system of historic payments should be given up. The Commissioner-designate said he agreed that this was “a question which we should discuss.” Italian Socialist Paolo De Castro said the world faced a global emergency on climate & the EU needed a shared approach, yet the reform plans actually “delegate to the Member States.” In response, the former High Court Judge (1991-1993) said there needed to be a discussion on how much decision-making would be at European level, with common objectives & indicators. De Castro underscored it was vital to have amendments to the current texts. German liberal Ulrike Müller (Renew Europe) raised the question of the transitional arrangements (valid for one year & due to be tabled in the coming weeks). Wojciechowski explained that the idea was to continue the current CAP with a new budget. “We will be ready to start the new CAP from January 1, 2022,” he said. The transition regulation was necessary & the CAP should not be interrupted. Speaking on behalf of the Green/EFA group, Germany’s Martin Häusling accused him of giving “answers I thought Hogan had written down for you,” & complained of a lack of responses on biodiversity loss or greenhouse gases. Complaining that it was “very difficult to present everything in a two minute answer,” the former President of the Polish Supreme Audit Office (1995-2001) said “of course Mr. Häusling I will present my approach ... my proposals to support farming, which are environmentally-friendly & protect biodiversity.” Czech ID euro-deputy Ivan David wanted to know whether the Polish candidate would support “trade negotiations which allow huge amounts of imports of agricultural products.” The Commissioner-designate said he understood that the farming community was concerned. “Farmers should not be the victim of international trade agreements,” he said. The EU should require the same standards of countries that sold it farm products as it insists on from its own farmers. A fellow Pole, Zbigniew Kuźmiuk (ECR) complained that although the EU was the top exporter of processed food it had a deficit in unprocessed food products. Wojciechowski said that was an argument that European agriculture needed more support to ensure food security for its citizens.

Ireland’s Luke Ming Flanagan (GUE/NGL) raised the issue of beef imports & trade deals. “We have about 300 000 tonnes of beef being brought into Europe every year,” he said, while Brexit would mean the loss of a market for over 250 000t. Would there be any extra support?

“Surely we should take care of our own market first, & look after others later?,” the Co. Roscommon politician said. In response, Wojciechowski confirmed that he planned to visit Ireland & ask farmers there what they needed. Another Irish leftist MEP, Matt Carthy (*Sinn Féin*), referred the Commissioner-designate back to his suggestion that he’d start with an analysis of the state of farming & why so many farms were being lost. “It’s because farms aren’t viable,” Carthy said. “Farmers aren’t making a profit &, therefore, they’re being forced off their farms.” He wanted to know what the Pole would do to “ensure the redistribution of farm payments & to tackle the dominance of a small number of corporate interests in the agricultural sector?” Wojciechowski’s answer was a commitment to be open to listening to farmers, while “capping might be one solution.” The Carrickmacross man wasn’t satisfied. “I don’t know what that was, Commissioner-designate, but it wasn’t an answer to my question,” he said. “I have a feeling that you’re going to be back with us again before this is finally over.” This audition came after the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) said on September 27 that it had concluded an investigation into possible abuse of expenses by Wojciechowski by deciding no action should be taken against the former MEP. OLAF did recommend that the EP should recover just over €11 240 from the Commissioner-designate & look into its rules on travel expenses & subsistence allowances.

EP’s INTA COMMITTEE ENDORSES IRELAND’S HOGAN AS NEW EU TRADE CHIEF

MEPs agreed to the appointment of Ireland’s Phil Hogan to the post of Trade Commissioner in the new College, after a polished performance at his confirmation hearing on September 30, despite the opposition of the far-right Identity & Democracy (ID) & Green/EFA political groups. The International Trade Committee hearing, to which members of the Foreign Affairs & Development Committees were invited, focussed on the need for fair & sustainable trade, with MEPs pressing to make sure that sustainability was enshrined in all future agreements & that European farmers must not lose out. During the three-hour grilling session, he faced a series of questions on trade relations with the US & China, the recent pact with the Latin American Mercosur bloc & the impact of climate change.

GUE/NGL Trade Coordinator Helmut Scholz argued initially, at a meeting directly after the hearing, that more questions should be put to the Irish politician along, possibly, with another hearing, but did not get the support of any other group. With the choice narrowed to approval of the appointment, or outright rejection, a further meeting to write the Committee’s letter in response to the hearing took place on October 1. The GUE/NGL group insisted on the inclusion of references to issues in trade accords, inc. clauses on Trade & Sustainable Development, Human Rights & Democracy as well as action to adapt trade policy to the requirements of the Paris Agreement on climate change. In the end a two-thirds majority was achieved in the Trade Committee with the thumbs up from the S&D, ECR, Renew Europe & GUE/NGL groups, while ID & the Greens voted against. The largest group in the EP - the European People’s Party (EPP) of which Fine Gael is a member – said the trade portfolio would be in a “safe pair of hands.”

Kicking off the audition on September 30, the German Socialist MEP Bernd Lange, as INTA Chair, said that “we’re living in challenging times,” citing the ‘crisis’ in the multi-lateral trading system, Brexit, differences with the US over Boeing & ongoing WTO reform. Even so, the EU had managed to establish “good bilateral trade agreements.” The meeting was largely held in English, despite the availability of 23 languages of translation, making it possible, as the Chair pointed out, to pose questions to the Irish Commissioner ‘as Gaeilge’.

The outgoing Agriculture Commissioner reminded the Committee that he was no stranger to international trade having worked closely with his colleague Cecilia Malmström. The Fine Gael politician stressed that the “EU can & must provide real opportunities for substantial growth,” while at the same time “offering European businesses a level playing field &

protection from unfair trading practices.” He undertook to build “on the transparent way” trade policy had been done during the previous Parliament. The Tullaroan man identified a series of priorities including strengthening the WTO as the rules-based system, continuing to build partnerships, opening markets & making trade “a reality for EU businesses of all sizes.” There was also a need to ensure that the right tools were available to keep trade fair. On the rules-based system, the former Minister for the Environment, Community & Local Government (2011-2014) insisted that the world trade bloc was at the core of multilateralism although it was facing its biggest challenge yet. If confirmed he would do his “utmost to prevent the collapse of the WTO dispute settlement system,” & “reinvigorate the negotiating function” of the international body. The rulebook on trade needs to be updated particularly to deal with what he called the “rampant use of subsidies by China & others,” & “forced technology transfers.” The 59-year-old stressed the importance of the international role of the US which had supported the global system. Some of Washington’s concerns about the system were “ones that we share, though we firmly believe that changes are best achieved within rules.” The relationship with Beijing was “also important & vital,” he said. “Our companies need to be able to compete in a level playing field,” something which was “not the case today.” There was a need for “effective reciprocity.” Referring briefly to Brexit, Hogan told the Committee that the EU’s executive had “prepared exhaustively for a no deal scenario.” Africa was also a priority, with the Africa-Europe Alliance pointing the way forward, while he promised to continue ongoing trade negotiations with Australia & New Zealand. The veteran public representative ended his opening gambit by telling Committee members that “trade must not only be fair & open, but also sustainable,” while he stands “ready to make full use of the instruments available.”

During the question & answer session that followed, Luxembourg’s Christophe Hansen (EPP) focused initially on trade relations between the EU & US which he described as “the most deeply integrated economic regions in the world.” “The policy of the current US administration is jeopardising stability,” he said & asked Hogan how he was going to “reset the transatlantic relationship?” The Kilkenny man said that “during moments of heightened tension we must not lose sight of the bigger picture.” He was ready to engage politically with Washington to resolve differences & the way to do that was to focus on the “mutual positives.” Hansen came back with a question on the 15-year EU/US Airbus battle - with the US targeting those EU countries that are home to suppliers of Airbus (the UK, FR, DE & ES), in an attempt to break the unity of the bloc. *In a ruling issued on October 2, WTO gave Washington the green light to impose tariffs on \$7.5 billion (€6.8bn) of EU imports ranging from aircraft to cheese/butter and sweaters to Irish & Scotch Whiskies from October 18. The tariffs would be set at a 10% rate on aircraft & 25% on agricultural & other items.* Hogan said that Malmström had put forward a possible solution to ensure that Airbus comes into full compliance with WTO rules. It didn’t make sense for the US to retaliate, particularly as they might have a problem with an upcoming judgment on the US aircraft manufacturer Boeing. “Europe has to stand up for itself as well,” he said.

For the S&D group, Belgium’s Kathleen Van Brempt asked about chapters on Trade & Sustainable Development (TSD) in trade accords & insisted that current rules were not working, citing a row with South Korea over workers’ rights. Hogan explained that the case was the first time which the EU had used dispute settlement measures to bring a trading partner into line. “We should build on this,” he said. Van Brempt wanted to see “pre-ratification conditions” to give the Parliament leverage in the Mercosur & other trade pacts & asked for the Commissioner-designate’s support. Hogan responded by noting that Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro had changed his position after getting elected & decided to sign up to the Paris agreement. “All of us are appalled at what we see in the Amazon,” he outlined. “The final ratification stage is where you have leverage,” he told MEPs, sounding unconvinced by the idea of pre-ratification. Furthermore, Hogan pledged to use existing & future trade

agreements to advance the EU's climate & sustainable development goals. Signing trade deals with countries across the globe offered the EU leverage in making sure other jurisdictions respected environmental protection. Renew Europe's Karin Karlsbro (SE) wanted to know if & when a deal on digital trade could be completed. In response, Hogan expressed concern over the effect of subsidies on the market in the digital area, notably by state-owned Chinese businesses. The EU had an open market & "sometimes it's abused," he said. He referred to the use of trade defence measures. "We need these instruments & we need to be able to enforce them as well." The Swedish liberal euro-deputy also wanted to know how he planned to "further improve the involvement of civil society." The would-be Trade Commissioner said he was "very happy to engage with civil society & stakeholders." "We are open to whatever discussions are necessary to communicate the benefits of trade," he said.

For the Green/EFA group, Finnish MEP Heidi Hautala called for "zero tolerance to child labour" & also raised the issue of deforestation. She suggested mandatory due diligence for supply chains. Hogan pointed out that the Committee could put forward proposals & gave the regulation on conflict minerals, which enters into force in 2021 as an example. "We made a lot of progress," he said. "Trade can play a part." German ID member Markus Buchheit raised the impact of trade deals on farmers. "When we look at Mercosur there are concerns," he said. "How are you going to deal with that?" The outgoing EU Farm chief said he understood the industry's concerns, while international trade accords had produced "a positive outcome for agriculture overall." In the bilateral deal with the Latin American trade bloc, he believed the limited volume of Tariff Rate Quotas (TRQs) meant the outcome was balanced. Belgium's Geert Bourgeois (ECR) said he believed in free & fair trade but "we need to protect ourselves against unfair dumping." Would Hogan take timely measures "to protect whole sectors & the jobs therein? The Commissioner-designate said that responses needed to be faster. "What we're looking at very intensively ... is how we can get earlier resolution," he said. He focused on a row over Colombian measures on Belgian frozen fries. Bourgeois suggested it was a job for the new Chief Trade Enforcement Officer. Germany's (Die Linke) Helmut Scholz (GUE/NGL) also raised the question of due diligence in the supply chain." If this Committee decides to prioritise this initiative on due diligence ... I'd be very happy to engage with you on what the scope of that particular proposal should be," Hogan said.

STELLAR PERFORMANCE BY HEALTH COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE KYRIAKIDES

Cypriot Health Commissioner-designate Stella Kyriakides focussed on an all-encompassing approach to health at her confirmation hearing with MEPs on October 1. Challenged by members of the Environment, Public Health & Food Safety Committee, the Cypriot lawmaker promised action on endocrine disruptors & pledged that more would be done to protect bees from damage by pesticides. The vocal advocate for cancer awareness back in her native Cyprus repeatedly told the meeting she would do more to tackle cancer. The Democratic Rally (EPP) politician & former clinical psychologist began the hearing by stressing her commitment to make a mark in patient care in Europe & as a breast cancer survivor herself expressed her dedication to contribute to the fight against the disease. Speaking almost entirely in English in a meeting at which most MEPs spoke in their native languages, Kyriakides opened by saying that health issues were of the utmost importance for European citizens & that the EU had some of the world's highest standards in animal & plant health. Collective health in society depended on individual health & also on having a healthy planet. "Health is an area where the EU should strive for more," she said. The 63-year-old would be "thrilled to lead our work on the new Farm to Fork Strategy on sustainable food," telling MEPs that they would be key partners. It would involve addressing risks like endocrine disruptors & "reducing our dependence on pesticides." "We also need to come down on issues such as food fraud," she added.

During the question & answer session, Swedish Socialist MEP Jytte Guteland stressed that exposure to even low doses of endocrine disrupters could lead to a range of diseases. “It’s not possible for humans to avoid these substances,” she said calling for “proper horizontal measures,” “instead of hiding behind the Commission’s very weak strategy.” Kyriakides pointed out that endocrine disrupters were expressly mentioned in her mission letter. “It shows we’re going to do more,” she said. The materials were going to be “an important part of the work of the Commission.” French MEP Pascal Canfin, who briefly relinquished the Chair of the meeting to speak on behalf of Renew Europe, called on Kyriakides to support reductions in pesticide use. The Commission-hopeful pointed out that there was already strong legislation on pesticides but it “was not properly implemented.” She hoped that changes in the general food law would be helpful in that direction. “I can commit to decreasing the dependence we have on pesticides,” the former President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (October 2017-January 2018) said. If appointed as the next EU Health chief, the Cypriot politician would also invest in funding for low-risk alternatives. “Citizens are very concerned,” she said. “We need to respect them.”

Canfin raised the impact on bees & called for a commitment from Kyriakides to follow the EFSA proposal. She responded by saying that “there will be no lowering of the bar on bee protection, or other pollinators.” The EU’s exec had banned three neonicotinoids in 2013, but there had been differences in the application of EFSA’s guidance on bees. “We need to find a consensus,” Kyriakides added. Michèle Rivasi of the Green/EFA group said that the Committee had “a lot of arguments with your predecessor on pesticides, particularly endocrine disrupters & glyphosate.” “Pesticides should not be used if they have a chronic effect on bees,” the French MEP said. In response, Kyriakides said she could hear the frustration. “I can commit to trying to build a consensus so we can become more effective (&) apply the legislation,” she promised. Rivasi complained that the would-be Commissioner was not being bold enough. “Make it a political issue, not a technical one,” she said. Fellow Green MEP from Luxembourg Tilly Metz raised the issue of GMOs. She wanted to know if the Commissioner-designate would “commit to respecting democracy & to listening, as you said, carefully to Parliament & the Member States on this issue,” & “stop saying ‘yes’ to GMOs when there’s no qualified majority in favour.” “Decisions need to be based on science,” Kyriakides insisted. “EFSA authorises only safe GMOs.” Commenting after the 3-hour grilling, Peter Liese MEP, EPP Group Spokesperson for COMENVI said he had “no doubt that Stella Kyriakides will be an excellent Health Commissioner.” “Aside from working in the domain of health, she also has practical experience as a clinical psychologist. Her professional aptitude is undisputed, as she impressively demonstrated today,” the German euro-deputy from Olsberg concluded. All the main EP political groups – with the exception of Identity & Democracy (ID) - backed the Cypriot candidate, while the (Associated) COMAGRI also gave her the green light.

TIMMERMANS PUSHES GREEN MESSAGE IN CONFIDENT DISPLAY AT EP HEARING

Commission Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans came out fighting for a greener EU at his hearing before MEPs on October 8. In his confident pitch for the job of piloting the ‘European Green Deal, the Dutch Socialist politician clashed with right-wing MEPs, who questioned the Commission’s new climate & environment focussed direction, in a polished performance that delivered a strong message, largely well-received by euro-deputies. During the course of the 3-hour audition, the graduate in French language & literature spoke largely in English, but also in French, Italian & his native Dutch. *[Though not required at this meeting, the notable linguist is also fluent in Russian]*. Referring to what needs to be done on environment & climate, he told COMENVI (with associated ITRE & TRAN Committees) that “this is not going to be easy.” “We are faced with a challenge that is truly existential.” ECON,

AGRI & REGI MEPs were also invited to attend the confirmation hearing. “The Green Deal can help solve problems & improve life,” the Labour Party (Partij van de Arbeid) politician said, promising a new climate law within 100 days to enshrine in legislation the EU’s 2050 climate neutrality objective. The action already taken by the EU to tackle climate change had not harmed the European economy. As soon as possible, he would “put forward legislative proposals that will help us to reduce emissions by at least 50%, or even better, by 55%,” by 2030. “We will present a robust & ambitious biodiversity strategy for 2030,” the former Dutch Foreign Minister (2012-2014) elaborated. “As with climate, we should lead on this worldwide.” One way to do that was in the food sector, something which would be set out in the forthcoming sustainable ‘Farm to Fork Strategy’.

Dutch MEP Esther de Lange (EPP) raised the question of the effect on communities of closing coalmines. “We have got to look after our own sectors,” she said. Timmermans pointed out that his forebears had been miners. “Sometimes it’s very difficult for that transition to be a smooth process,” he said. “We have got our duty to help those regions to a new economy.” Swedish Socialist Jytte Guteland called for “specific immediate action” to eliminate the rise in temperatures to 1.5°. The would-be Executive Vice-President said that argument would be more convincing “if we can back it up with science & research.” Studies were currently being undertaken. “I will be extremely surprised if the outcome will be anything other than 55% by 2030.” For Renew Europe, Finland’s Nils Torvalds asked if there was sufficient flexibility in legislation to make it happen. “Many Directives will have to be renewed,” Timmermans responded, adding that “industry has woken up to this.” Italian Lega euro-deputy Silvia Sardone (ID group) accused the Commission of “hanging from the lips of Greta Thunberg.” “Consider there are people around who don’t have a roof over their heads,” she said. “This is a huge marketing exercise.” The new European Green Deal was “completely unobtainable & ideological.” Timmermans’s answer, in Italian, was direct. “How weak do your arguments have to be if you resort to attacking a 16-year-old girl?” he said, to applause from MEPs. The eloquent orator reminded the 36-year-old politician from Milan that renewal energy had become cheaper than conventional. She responded with “how weak does the Commission have to be when you have to hide behind the skirt of a 16-year-old girl?” “Do you really think that the bottles on Italian beaches float in from the Far East?” the Dutchman asked, responding to Sardone’s insistence that other parts of the world were responsible for pollution. He would take that message to Italy, “to your constituents.” The ECR’s Alexandr Vondra said, with a hint of sarcasm, “welcome to the revolution.” “I’m concerned that the European Green Deal will cost us more than our societies are able to sustain,” the Czech politician & former Defence Minister (2010-2012) went on. “On this we disagree,” said Timmermans. “We should make a convincing argument ... that they should green their tax system,” he stated.

TIMMERMANS MUST DELIVER FARM-FRIENDLY CLIMATE MEASURES IN ‘GREEN DEAL’ - COPA-COGECA

Farm organisation Copa-Cogeca wrote to Executive Vice-President designate Frans Timmermans ahead of his EP hearing on October 8 with a list of proposals on climate mitigation in the sector. They want to see the costs borne by all parts of the food chain in a system which takes into account industry’s contribution through carbon sequestration, helps to change energy use & recognises the need to be open to new technology. In a four-page letter (dated October 7), Secretary-General Pekka Pesonen reminds the Dutch politician that “farmers are the first to feel the impact of climate change & must cope with the increasing cost of adaptation & mitigation.” In moving to a carbon neutral economy, it is “fundamental to design sustainable policies & programmes that accompany our farmers & their cooperatives towards this transition & recognize the importance of existing tools.” The lobby organisation wants to see carbon sequestration “taken into account when implementing the legislative instruments on climate,” with a carbon market or crediting schemes. There’s a call for a farm

energy programme to reduce on-farm consumption of fossil fuels & increase substitution by renewables.

The umbrella group also stresses that the European Green Deal should include a new forestry strategy. Pesonen calls on farmers' behalf for the use of "cutting-edge technologies such as new plant breeding techniques, artificial intelligence (AI) & digital technologies." A chapter on climate change should be included in all trade agreements, while Copa-Cogeca advises considering carbon border taxes "with care" because they may increase input costs. Farmers need "environmental legislation that recognises their efforts & gives them enough flexibility to use natural resources more efficiently, while ensuring food security," the Vice-President designate is told. Producers also want the EU to make sure that "plant & animal genes & genetic natural traits which can be found in nature or obtained through mutagenesis are not patentable."

On plans for a circular economy & the 'Farm to Fork' Strategy for sustainable food, Pesonen notes the success of the EU in finding alternatives to fossil-based materials & calls for the updated Bio-economy Strategy to be "a key component of the European Green Deal." Hailing from a family farm in Juva in Savo County (Eastern Finland), the former State Secretary (January 2005-April 2007) also reminds the Dutch politician that the cost of implementing a new policy much be "borne by all, from farmers and processors to retailers & consumers," with the most vulnerable protected from unintended consequences.

SINKEVIČIUS MAKES CLIMATE PLEDGE AT EP HEARING

Lithuania's Commissioner-designate Virginijus Sinkevičius (Environment & Oceans) pledged to address biodiversity loss, deliver on the zero pollution ambition & work on a new circular economy action plan during his 5-year mandate. At his confirmation hearing before the Environment, Public Health & Food Safety and Fisheries Committees (October 3), the former Minister of Economy & Innovation (2017-present) said his key priority, if confirmed, would be "to make the Green Deal a reality on the ground." Under the leadership of Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans, the 28-year-old politician from the Lithuanian Farmers & Greens Union, pledged to represent Europe at the Convention for Biological Diversity in China next year. *Having completed a Bachelor of Economic & Social Studies in Aberystwyth University (2009-2012), with a Master of Arts in European Studies from Maastricht University, Sinkevičius has been Deputy Leader of the agrarian political party since 2016.*

Switching between Lithuanian & English, he vowed to deliver "new standards for biodiversity" in trade, industry, agriculture & the economy and called on MEPs to "help in mainstreaming biodiversity across EU & national policies." He also plans to extend circular economy policies to new sectors such as textiles, food & the information & communications technology sector. Sinkevičius said the 'Farm to Fork' initiative "has to be a very good tool to halt deforestation." "Forests have to be protected & maintained," he continued, while "we have to know what the supply chain is ... it must be a deforestation-free supply chain." "We need to listen" to climate protests, he stated, adding that the recent marches across the globe showed his generation was ready to take action. On fisheries, the former member of the Lithuanian Parliament (Seimas) pledged to fully implement the Common Fisheries Policy & its upcoming evaluation, insisting that the EU must remain a global leader for sustainable fisheries & ocean governance. The hearing was co-chaired by Chair of the Environment Committee Pascal Canfin (Renew Europe, FR) & his colleague Chris Davies (Renew Europe, UK) in charge of Fisheries. COMAGRI was an associated Committee.

FUTURE EU BUDGET CHIEF HAHN WANTS MFF TALKS WRAPPED UP BY CHRISTMAS

Commissioner-designate for Budget & Administration, Johannes Hahn, is pushing for an agreement on the Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) by the end of this year. During his audition on October 3 before the EP's Budgets & Budgetary Control Committees (Legal Affairs Committee was associated), the 61-year-old Austrian politician said he "would spare no effort to facilitate a timely agreement & avoid any damaging delays in the launch of the new 2021-2027 MFF programmes." Returning to the chamber for a third time as Commissioner-designate, the Austrian People's Party politician (EPP) said the EU budget was a "policy cast in numbers," describing it as a "key enabler & one of the most visible tools to illustrate the Community principles of subsidiarity & solidarity to its citizens." It was "vital to deploy financial resources ... to help turn political guidelines into results," he added, underlining the negative impact of a long-term budget any smaller than the one proposed by the EU's executive. The MFF proposal from the outgoing Commission was a "solid basis to work on," he added, underlining the need to identify some "targeted adjustments to ensure that funds reach communities that are most in need." Switching deftly between English & German, the outgoing Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy & Enlargement (since 2014) insisted that "under no circumstances ... should the MFF plans end up lower than the Commission," which he describes as "unimaginable." Following some "movement among the more hard-line countries," he vowed to "find allies," pledging to go to the "different capitals that want a low budget," if confirmed.

The move to earmark 25% of the budget for climate change was "already ambitious, but not the end of the road," Hahn stated, adding that Community funding was vital for digitalisation, innovation, research & education and the move towards the "green transition." The long-term financial perspectives "should not be seen in isolation," he added, but rather as a "crucial catalyst for public & private investments" to address climate change, foster innovation & encourage projects with a common European interest. The former Austrian Minister for Science & Research (2007-2010) said he was committed to the extension of 'own resources' *inc.* the plastic bag levy, expansion of the ETS trading scheme to aviation & maritime transport and a cross-border carbon tax as floated by President-elect Ursula von der Leyen. Holding responsibility for Administration, Hahn committed to greater equality in the institutions. The ex-Commissioner for Regional Policy (2010-2014) pledged to deliver a "digital focused" agenda, with the Commission "leading by example." When asked about contingency measures in the event of no agreement on the financial perspectives, he promised to do his "utmost to have an agreement in good time ... to have a result by the end of the winter." It was "not appropriate to talk about deadlines right now as it would vent pressure on the negotiators," he outlined. Any contingency plans "would distract people from the central aim to get the MFF signed, sealed & delivered" & should only be used as a "last resort." The Commission-hopeful also underlined the importance of the 'Just Transition Fund,' aimed at supporting regions to move away from CO₂ intensive industries & energy sources to more climate-friendly alternatives. Investment in technological upgrades towards a low-carbon economy & retraining is key to "accelerate the whole process & act as a catalyst to drive investment forward," Hahn added.

"Clear risk" of budget delays, EP: The EP has warned of a "clear risk" that the 2021-2027 EU investment plan "will not be successfully agreed in time with Council", calling for a contingency plan to mitigate consequences for citizens & businesses, as delays will cause funding disruption from 2021. In a resolution adopted by 426 votes to 163, with 67 abstentions (October 10), MEPs confirmed the position of the previous Parliament on the next Multi-annual Financial Framework (November 2018) - 1.3% of GNI & new EU own resources. The EP wants to step up climate protection, stressing the "urgent need for another quantum leap in

political & financial efforts” to achieve the objectives of the Paris Climate accord. The House is also seeking clarity on how political promises made by Commission President-elect Ursula von der Leyen in July will impact the long-term financial perspectives.

MEPs OPPOSE GLYPHOSATE-RESISTANT GMOs

MEPs voted to reject Commission plans to allow imports of three glyphosate & glufosinate ammonium-resistant GMOs at the mini-plenary session in Brussels on October 10. The non-binding resolutions covered products consisting of or containing the Genetically Modified (GM) products maize *MZHG0JG*, maize *MON 89034* & soybean *A2704-12 (renewal)*. For the biotech maize *MZHG0JG*, there were 436 votes in favour to 208 against & 16 abstentions, 435 votes in favour, 207 against & 18 abstentions (maize *MON 89034*) & 426 votes in favour to 208 against & with 20 abstentions (soybean *A2704-12*). The maize & soybean varieties involved are tolerant to glyphosate-based & glufosinate ammonium-based herbicides. MEPs pointed out that there are a number of studies showing that herbicide tolerant GM crops result in higher use of weed killers. They may be exposed to repeated doses leading to higher residues.

MEPs (led by the Greens) held a debate with the Commission on the authorisation process for biotech crops on October 9, something which has regularly been criticised by the assembly before. Concerns were raised about the role of the EU as the world’s second largest soy importer, with the majority of that crop entering the union being used as animal feed. Soy production is a key driver of deforestation in South America & the Commission’s own analysis shows that those imports are the EU’s number one contributor to global deforestation. A survey carried out across the EU had found that almost 90% of respondents think that new laws are needed to make sure that products sold in the EU do not contribute to deforestation. MEPs also reminded the Commission that every authorisation of a GM product it has made since the introduction of the current system has been without the support of a qualified majority of Member States, turning something that should be an exception into the norm. During his address in the chamber, Health Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis said the EU’s GMO authorisation procedure was “established by EU law.” It is “science-based & relies on a scientific assessment performed by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), independently of the Commission,” he outlined. Member States hiding behind the Commission was “very disappointing & unsatisfactory,” he added, pointing to previous proposals “to modify EU legislation on comitology so as to ensure more transparency,” where “little progress has been made.”

MEPs AGREE 2020 BUDGET RESOLUTION

MEPs agreed a resolution setting the 2020 EU budget at almost €171 billion in commitment appropriations (+€2.7bn compared to the Commission’s draft budget) & €159.1bn in payments at the plenary session in Strasbourg on October 23 *inc.* an additional €30 million in EU support for pigmeat, poultry, bee-keeping & other animal products & €88m for halting & reversing biodiversity loss [*see table*]. The House boosted the Commission’s draft budget by adding more than €2bn to climate protection & increased the Youth Employment Initiative & Erasmus+ programmes, with euro-deputies viewing next year’s Budget as the “last chance for the EU to come closer to meeting the political commitments set for that period, including towards reaching the bloc’s climate target.” It should also pave the way for the next financial perspectives (2021-2027).

The Parliament budgetary resolution*, voted through by 529 votes to 130, with 43 abstentions, reinstates all Council cuts to the CAP budget & sets as priorities “sustainable growth, innovation, competitiveness, security, tackling root causes of refugees & migration flows, managing refugee & migration flows, the fight against climate change & the transition to sustainable energy”. General Rapporteur for the 2020 EU Budget, Germany’s Monika Hohlmeier (EPP) said the vote “shows Parliament’s united front & a common understanding among the political groups: ambitious climate targets & environmental protection can go hand in hand with programmes that create new jobs, support European research & development facilities & boost competitiveness.” MEPs also “confirmed our commitment to further increase the Youth Employment Initiative, Erasmus+ & DiscoverEU ... to provide 18-year-olds with Interrail tickets to give them the opportunity to discover a Europe without borders,” the CSU euro-deputy from München added. In response, Council informed the EP that it could not accept all of the amendments for the 2020 EU Budget adopted in plenary, thus triggering a 3-week conciliation process, which was due to kick off on October 29 (until November 18). Commenting, Finland’s State Secretary in the Ministry of Finance & chief Council negotiator for the 2020 Budget, Kimmo Tiilikainen expressed his satisfaction that the Council & EP “share many priorities for next year’s budget,” with “job creation, fighting climate change ... security & migration, & focusing in particular on young people” at the core. It “provides a good basis for our efforts to agree on a budget with appropriate funding levels for the different programmes & areas, based on a prudent & realistic approach & the best interest of European taxpayers.”

<i>Nomenclature</i>	<i>Above Draft Budget (Commitments)</i>
05 02 15 99 - Other measures for pigmeat, poultry, eggs, bee-keeping, other animal products	+30 000 000
05 02 18 - School schemes	+2 000 000
07 02 01 - Contributing to a greener & more resource-efficient economy & to the development & implementation of Union environmental policy & legislation	+62 000 000
07 02 02 - Halting & reversing biodiversity loss	+88 000 000
07 02 03 - Supporting better environmental governance & information at all levels	+20 000 000
07 02 06 - European Environment Agency	+1 300 000
11 06 62 01 - Scientific advice & knowledge	+1 000 000
34 02 01 - Reducing Union greenhouse gas emissions	+35 000 000
34 02 02 - Increasing the resilience of the Union to climate change	+20 000 000
34 02 03 - Better climate governance & information at all levels	+8 000 000

The first meeting of the Conciliation Committee is scheduled for November 4, with another slated for November 15 which normally goes on until the wee hours. The ECOFIN/Budget Council on the same day (November 15) is expected to give the Presidency guidance in its talks with the EP. If no agreement is reached by midnight on November 18, the Commission must table a new draft budget for 2020, which would fall under a “fast-tracked” procedure, so it could be wrapped up for the December 16-19 plenary session in Strasbourg. The final EU Budget for 2019 is expected to be adopted at an EP plenary session by the end of the year, with EP officials hopeful of an accord at the November II plenary session (25-28).

*See <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/texts-adopted.html> (under October 23);

EP TOUGH ON BEE PROTECTION

The EP blocked a Commission proposal on October 23 after Member States watered down draft legislation that seeks to eliminate pesticides that pose the greatest danger to pollinators. Following the adoption of a resolution with an absolute majority - 533 votes to 67 & 100 abstentions - MEPs effectively sent the Commission “back to the drawing board”, requesting policy-makers to table a new proposal based on the latest scientific & technical knowledge.

The original draft was intended to incorporate into EU law the European Food Safety Authority's (EFSA) 2013 guidance to cut the use of pesticides that harm bees. The guidance indicated how pesticides should be tested, in order to protect bees from both acute & chronic exposure, with chemicals remaining on the market only if they pass these new tests.

During discussions at Committee level, over a dozen Member States opposed the full implementation of the 2013 bee guidance, forcing the Commission into a tricky compromise. MEPs said the draft text “only introduces modifications ... with regard to acute toxicity to honeybees, but remains silent on chronic toxicity to honeybees, as well as on toxicity to bumble bees & solitary bees”. The text “would not change the level of protection” already in place, they add. Commenting after the vote, Environment Committee Chair Pascal Canfin said “by opposing evaluation criteria which are far too weak given the danger that pesticides pose to bees, we wanted to ask a simple question: are we serious about protecting the environment? Are we serious about protecting living organisms? Are we serious about the Green Deal?” The prominent French MEP (Renew Europe) said the result was “very clear ... a very large majority of the EP did not want watered down legislation on the protection of bees.” Recent Commission studies indicate a dramatic decline in the occurrence & diversity of European wild insect pollinators *inc.* wild bees, hoverflies, butterflies & moths, while numerous pollinator species are extinct or threatened with extinction. In the EU alone, around 84% of crop species & nearly 80% of wildflower species depend, at least in part, on animal pollination. Up to almost €15 billion of the EU's annual agricultural output is directly attributed to insect pollinators, according to figures cited by MEPs.

2020 EU funding for UK in no deal Brexit: The EP approved a measure on October 22 to make sure that EU funds for 2020 are fully available if the UK leaves the EU in a no deal Brexit scenario. The draft regulation extends to 2020 the contingency plan approved by MEPs on April 17, previously limited to 2019. The House backed the draft recommendation, tabled by the Chair of the Budgets Committee, Johan Van Overtveldt (ECR, BE), by 543 votes in favour, 30 against, with 46 abstentions. Under the provisions, UK researchers, students & farmers would continue to get Community support next year if the country leaves the bloc without a deal, provided London continues to pay its contributions & accepts the necessary controls & audits. The aim is to “minimise any negative impact that the UK's withdrawal may have on beneficiaries of EU funding ... such as Horizon 2020, Erasmus+ and agriculture & regional policies,” EP officials outline.

SANTE UPDATES

MS VOTE AGAINST RENEWAL OF NEONIC PESTICIDE *THIACLOPRID*

Member States voted against the renewal of the EU license for the neonicotinoid pesticide *Thiacloprid* at the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food & Feed (PAFF) on October 22, with all delegations voting in favour of the draft regulation on the “non-renewal of approval” & only the UK abstaining (due to Brexit). The decision will be formally adopted by the Commission in the coming weeks, while the ban will come into effect on April 30, 2020, when the current license expires.

Some 383 000 people signed a petition by the international consumer group SumOfUS* demanding a ban on the pesticide developed by Bayer “because of its links to cancer & reproductive issues in farm workers & evidence that it harms bees & other pollinators.” Commenting, Rebecca Falcon, Campaign Manager at SumOfUs said “today Europeans persuaded our decision-makers to unite behind the science & ban toxic *Thiacloprid*, despite every attempt by its producer Bayer & the agro-industry.” “As a result of this ban, farm workers won’t be exposed to the cancer-linked chemical and bees & other pollinators won’t suffer its harmful effects,” the former Senior Campaigns Adviser at Save the Children UK & graduate from King’s College London (English Language & Literature) added. Bayer said it “respects” the decision, adding that the company “continues to believe that *Thiacloprid*-based crop protection products can be used safely when appropriate risk mitigation measures are applied.”

Draft Commission Implementing Decision on the non-repetition of emergency authorisations for neonics by Romania		
For	Against	Abstain
BE, CY, DK, DE, FR, HR, LU, MT, NL & SE	BG, EL & RO	AT, CZ, EE, IE, ES, IT, LV, LT, HU, PL, PT, SI, SK, FI & UK

Draft Commission Implementing Decision on the non-repetition of emergency authorisations for neonics by Lithuania		
For	Against	Abstain
BE, DK, DE, FR, HR, CY, LU, MT, NL & SE	BG, EL, LT & FI	AT, CZ, EE, IE, ES, IT, LV, HU, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK & UK

At the same meeting, there was no qualified majority (QM) in favour of two draft implementing decisions on the non-repetition of “emergency authorisations” for neonicotinoids in Romania & Lithuania [see tables], as the reasons presented by both countries could not be justified. An Appeal Committee will consider both dossiers in the coming weeks (possibly in early December tbc). *SumOfUS is a global movement of consumers, investors & workers, united to hold corporations to account - for more see www.sumofus.org;

Commission publishes pest list: The Commission published a list of 20 priority plant pests on the EU territory. The list*, unveiled on October 11, includes those regulated quarantine pests which have the most severe economic, environmental & social impact, among them *Xylella Fastidiosa*, the Japanese beetle, Asian long-horned beetle, citrus greening & Citrus Black Spot. Member States will be under an obligation to launch public information campaigns, carry out annual surveys, prepare contingency plans, simulation exercises & action plans aimed at eradicating the pests on the list. EU Health & Food Safety Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis said “plant health has been high on the agenda of my mandate over the past five years,” while he was “glad to count in my legacy this prioritisation that will help the

EU & Member States to increase preparedness & early actions against very dangerous plant pests.” The move would “contribute to the European green deal, protecting our biodiversity, the natural ecosystems & the EU agriculture,” the outgoing Lithuanian Commissioner said. The selection of pests was drawn up on the basis of an assessment by the Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) & the bloc's food safety watchdog (EFSA), which takes into account the probability of spreading, establishment & consequences of those pests for the Union. Views from a dedicated Expert Group & public feedback provided via the Better Regulation portal were also taken on board. *See <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019R1702&from=EN>

COREPER PUSH FOR STUDY ON NEW BREEDING TECHNIQUES (NBTs) BY DECEMBER 31, 2020

EU Ambassadors have called on the next Commission to submit a study on the Union's options to update the existing legislation on the production & marketing of plant reproductive material by December 31, 2020 & table a legislative proposal “if appropriate” [***12783/19**] at a meeting in Brussels on October 25. Council requests the Commission “to submit a proposal, if appropriate in view of the outcomes of the study, or otherwise to inform the Council of alternative measures required as a follow-up to the study.” The analysis should take into account the existing legal framework (Directive 2001/18) & the judgment from the European Court of Justice (July 2018) [**C-528/16**] that ruled organisms derived from certain mutagenesis techniques (such as gene editing) are GMOs & must comply with risk assessment, traceability & labelling requirements laid down by the relevant legislation [see *AGRA FOCUS*, August 2018, p.26]. The point was expected to be formally adopted at ECOFIN on November 8.

At the same meeting, CY, HU, LV, LU, PL & SI underlined that any technique, which “alters the genetic material for agricultural purposes in a way that does not occur naturally, requires special attention.” In a 2-page statement [***11728/19 ADD1**], the like-minded delegations reiterate the need to protect the environment & human health, while respecting the precautionary principle. They support the idea of a study on what they refer to as an “important topic.” But they are of the view that this study “should be based on a clear & well-defined terminology,” referring to the Court ruling on “new mutagenesis techniques” as opposed to “novel genomic techniques”, which is “not clearly defined by EU law.” “The protection of human health & the environment requires that due attention be given to controlling the risks from any technique that alters the genetic material, & the current level of protection should be maintained,” the six Member States conclude. *For further information on the **agenda points** above enter the number provided under ‘**Public Register**’ at the website goo.gl/ybwNtq;

Copa-Cogeca & Euroseeds organise conference on NBTs: The EU's largest farm lobby Copa-Cogeca & Euroseeds (European seed sector body) are organising a high-level conference on plant breeding innovation entitled ‘*Growing the Future Together*’ on November 19 at the club ‘De Warande’ in Brussels. The Finnish Presidency had previously scheduled a discussion on New Breeding Techniques (NBTs) at the last Farm Council of the year (December 16-17), with some suggesting this agenda item might be brought forward to the next meeting on November 18.

KYRIAKIDES' CABINET TAKES SHAPE

Cypriot Giorgos Rossides, current Member of Cabinet for Greek Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos (Migration, Home Affairs & Citizenship) since October 2015, looks set to get the nod as Health Commissioner-designate Stella Kyriakides' Chef de Cabinet. With a professional background in DG Justice & Consumers as Head of Sector in Communications (September 2014-September 2015) & Press & Communications Officer (September 2013-

September 2014), he holds a Master's Degree in International Affairs from Colombia University (2002-2004) & an MA Philosophy, Politics & Economics from the University of Oxford (1999-2002).

The highly-regarded Finnish lawyer Annukka Ojala, head of unit for Strategy & Coordination in DG SANTE, is tipped to become Deputy Chef de Cabinet. In her current post, Ojala reports directly to DG SANTE chief Anne Bucher & is described as "smart & extremely capable" by her colleagues. The Nordic woman previously worked with a US law firm. Roberto Reig Rodrigo, current executive assistant to Bucher, has also landed a Cabinet position. The Spanish man, who is said to be popular among colleagues, joined the Commission's Health & Food Safety Department when his fellow countryman Xavier Prats Monné took over as DG SANTE boss (2015-2018). Meanwhile, Olympia Neocleous, Deputy Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the EU (COREPER 1) (since September 2016) is said to have secured one of the six Cabinet jobs. The London School of Economics & Political Science graduate (MSc in International Relations & History, 1997-1998) served as Head of the EU Department in the Cypriot Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Neocleous was Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of Cyprus in Washington from November 2010-June 2015. In the gender balanced Cabinet, a Swede will take over as Advisor on Communications, while another Cypriot will reportedly join Kyriakides from her previous role as lawmaker in Nicosia. The new College is now expected to take office no earlier than December 2 (Monday), as (yet to be confirmed) candidates from HU, RO & FR must still go through the process of EP Hearings, ahead of a plenary vote (more than likely at the November 25-28 session in Strasbourg).

Split vote on GM maize stack: Member States delivered the customary 'no opinion' on the authorisation of the maize hybrid *Bt11xMIR162xMIR604x1507x5307xGA21* for food & feed at the Appeal Committee on October 11 [see table]. The 'no opinion' followed the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food & Feed (PAFF) on September 16, where countries such as BE, DE, EE, IT & PT joined the abstention camp. On the day of the September vote, the Lithuanian delegation was absent. There were some slight changes in voting patterns at the Appeal Committee on October 11 – in the end BE & EE supported the draft decision, while LT showed up on the day & rejected the proposal.

GM maize <i>Bt11xMIR162xMIR604x1507x5307xGA21</i> (authorisation)		
For	Against	Abstain
BE, CZ, DK, EE, IE, ES, NL, RO, FI, SE & UK	BG, EL, FR, HR, CY, LV, LT, LU, HU, MT, AT, PL, SI & SK	DE, IT & PT

EFSA launches call on research platform for food safety: The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) opened a call* to develop a research & innovation platform for food safety to make it easier to coordinate efforts on the subject (October 15). The Parma-based agency's Chief Scientist Marta Hugas said that "identifying food safety research priorities is something that is crucial for EFSA." The platform would include information on food safety research & improve coherence between national & EU funding, as well as facilitating new approaches to communication on the subject. The deadline for submissions is January 22, 2020.

*See <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/funding/calls/supporting-food-safety-systems-future>

IN BRIEF

Court allows hunting of protected species for management: The European Court of Justice (ECJ) decided on October 10 that hunting as a management tool for protected species such as wolves is allowed under EU law, provided that strict conditions are met. The case* involved questions put by Finland's Supreme Administrative Court on derogations to the EU Habitats Directive after an NGO challenged a decision to give permission to hunters to kill seven wolves. The judges essentially followed an opinion by the Attorney General delivered on May 8. The European Federation for Hunting & Conservation (FACE) said the judgment comes after years of legal argument in Finland & Sweden over the hunting of wolves. Many Member States use hunting as a management tool for carnivore populations as well as to increase social acceptance. FACE President Torbjörn Larsson said that Commission guidance on the issue, currently being updated, should stress that "improving social acceptance & decreasing illegal killing can be a justification for limited & strictly controlled hunts." He called on the EU's executive to close infringement proceedings against wolf hunting in Sweden. FACE Secretary General Dr. David Scallan said the most important thing was that "Member States apply the Habitats Directive flexibly & pragmatically." Executive Director of the Finnish Hunters' Association Heli Siitari welcomed the preliminary ruling, saying it was "a positive thing for people living in the countryside & for the acceptance of wolves in general." The European Environmental Bureau (EEB) challenged the view that Finland's wolf population is large enough to justify hunting to manage it. Sergiy Moroz, EEB Senior Policy Officer for Biodiversity & Water, said that the Court had said that "hunting should only be allowed under very strict conditions." "The importance of upholding the EU's strict nature protection rules has never been greater," he stressed. It is now up to the Finnish court to give a final verdict on the case.

*For more information go to <http://curia.europa.eu> & type C-674/17 under 'Case number';

ECA report on exceptional dairy measures: The European Court of Auditors (ECA) is examining the exceptional market measures introduced by the EU to counteract the dairy market disturbances between 2014 & 2017. Auditors at the Luxembourg-based Court are assessing whether the exceptional aid to help producers – which cost around €740 million for the EU budget – was properly designed & adequately mitigated the effects of the market disturbance following the Russian embargo (August 2014) & the end of the dairy quota regime (April 2015). Under the 'safety net' scheme, the Commission sought to temporarily remove some surpluses from the market – *inc.* public & private purchases and storage of skimmed milk powder. Audit visits will take place in FR, IT, IE & FI to examine how the measures were put into practice, while they will also check whether the Commission & Member States are now better prepared for dairy market disruption. Nikolaos Milionis, the ECA Member leading the audit, said that "milk producers were hit by a significant drop in their revenues". The Greek legal expert, who completed a PhD thesis in Public Finance Law at the University of Athens, said the court "will analyse whether the EU budget was well spent to help them overcome the crisis & whether the Commission is prepared for future market disturbances."

Call to strengthen CMO, GIs in fruit, vegetables: Industry & a number of MEPs called for the Common Market Organisation (CMO) of the fruit & vegetable sector, as well as the system of Geographical Indications to be enforced at a conference in Brussels on October 17. The conference entitled '*Governance, Common Market Organisation & Geographical Indications in the future CAP post 2020*,' organised by the Assembly of European Horticultural Regions (AREFLH), Association of European Regions for Products of Origin (AREPO) & Coalition of European AgriRegions drew more than 100 delegates *inc.* EU & regional policy-makers, representatives of professional organisations & civil society. At the meeting, they discussed progress on CAP reform & proposed amendments to the fruit &

vegetables CMO as well as planned changes to quality schemes. The conference also looked at the role of regions in managing the future CAP. In the opening session, moderator Olivier Allain, Vice-President of the Brittany Region in charge of agriculture & coordinator of AgriRegions, said regions had played a “key role in promoting & achieving the agro-ecological transition, the competitiveness & the attractiveness of farms & rural areas”. Italian MEP Herbert Dorfmann (EPP) said it was impossible to address the challenges faced by European agriculture without “reinforcing the role of the regional authorities in the management of the 2nd Pillar.” When asked about the CAP’s environmental ambition, SCA spokesperson Kari Valonen (Finnish Presidency) insisted that the European Green Deal “cannot happen without the CAP & a strong 2nd Pillar with tailored measures tackling local environment & climate challenges.” Spanish Socialist MEP Clara Aguilera told the second session that the CMO in fruit & veg had proved to be “a successful & cost-effective tool that needs to be further consolidated through a better concentration of the supply, a crucial step if we wish to strengthen the position of farmers in the food supply chain.” Simona Caselli, Regional Minister for Agriculture of the Emilia-Romagna region & President of AREFLH said that the fruit & vegetable CMO had proved itself as “an incredibly successful tool that needs to be preserved & bolstered in the future CAP.” Renew Europe’s Jérémy Decerle (FR) who is co-shadow rapporteur on the draft CMO Regulation [see AGRA FOCUS, October 2019, p.23], said that the newly-elected EP would strengthen the work initiated by past legislation concerning GIs.

2nd EU Reference Centre on poultry welfare: The Commission has designated a second European Union Reference Centre for the welfare of poultry & other small farmed animals, which aims at improving the enforcement of EU legislation applicable to those animals, such as laying hens, chickens for meat production & other small farmed animals, *inc.* their transport & killing operation. Following a public selection process, the second Centre comprises a consortium formed by the Agence Nationale de Sécurité Sanitaire de l’Alimentation (FR), the Institut de Recerca I Tecnologia Agroalimentàries (ES), Aarhus Universitet - Institut for Husdyrvidenskab (DK) & Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale della Lombardia e dell’Emilia Romagna (IT). Once up & running in 2020, the centre will provide technical support & coordinate assistance to EU countries in carrying out official controls in animal welfare & contribute to the dissemination of good practices. The consortium will also carry out scientific studies & deliver training courses. Knowledge transfer of research results & information on technical innovations are central planks of the consortium’s work. EU Health Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis welcomed the designation, stating that it “confirms the Commission’s consistent & long-term policy to support strong enforcement on animal welfare.” Following the designation of the first centre on the welfare of pigs in March 2018, a second one on poultry & other small-farmed animals “was essential since these animals are subject to intensive production methods,” the EU Health chief added. Meanwhile, the 6th meeting of the EU Platform on Animal Welfare* met on October 7. Launched in June 2017, the Platform allows Member States & stakeholders to share information & good practices. *For more https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/welfare/eu-platform-animal-welfare/meetings_en

Call for healthy diets for all on World Food Day: Delegates called for action to tackle hunger & cut food waste at a ceremony to mark World Food Day under the theme ‘*Our actions are our future - Healthy diets for a #ZeroHunger world*’ on October 16. Speaking at the gathering in Rome, Italy’s Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte said that “collective action is the high road to tackling a global challenge such as hunger in the world.” Italy supported a “vision of integrated agriculture that supports the planet & cultural identity.” In a video message to the meeting, UN Secretary-General António Guterres announced a UN Food Systems Summit to be held in 2021 as part of the Decade of Action to deliver the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with Conte proposing that Italy host the event. The former Portuguese Socialist Prime Minister Guterres (1995-2002) said rising hunger was

“unacceptable” in a world that wastes more than 1 billion tonnes of food every year. Pope Francis sent a message stressing that the “battle against hunger & malnutrition will not end as long as the logic of the market prevails & profit is sought at any cost.” FAO Director-General Qu Dongyu warned that “hunger & malnutrition will be major barriers to achieving the SDGs by 2030 if we do not act now.” “We need to walk hand-in-hand & build healthy & sustainable food systems,” the FAO chief went on, announcing that the organisation’s theme for 2020-2021, would be promoting healthy diets & preventing all forms of malnutrition. The President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) Gilbert F. Hounbo said that ending hunger would “depend on transforming global food systems so that they are inclusive of women, youth & indigenous peoples, so they are sustainable - environmentally, socially, & economically.” David Beasley, Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP) called people around the world to join WFP’s campaign to *#StopTheWaste*, explaining that “the amount of food wasted globally is enough to feed another 2 billion people,” which was “totally unacceptable.” In a statement issued on the occasion of World Food Day, outgoing Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis said he had made the “promotion of healthy lifestyles & the reduction of food waste” central to his 5-year tenure, expressing his confidence that the “good work we have done will be built upon.” Food waste must be tackled, the outgoing EU Health chief stated, where Europeans waste 88 million tonnes of food each year – amounting to over €140 billion. The “numbers are more than alarming & terribly shameful,” the earnest politician outlined, while over 800 million people suffer from hunger worldwide, over 670m adults & 120m children (aged 5-19) are obese. Andriukaitis said “healthy diets from sustainable food systems for a healthy planet should be our goal & our consumption patterns need to adapt.” This “will need to be part of the Farm to Fork Strategy & tie in the new Green Deal,” he stated, as “what we eat & what we waste, will, to a large extent, define the future of our kind & our planet.”

Kurz in talks to form new Austrian government: Sebastian Kurz, who served as Austrian Chancellor until May 28, has been in talks to form a new government following his party’s victory in the recent general election on September 29. Kurz’s Austrian People’s Party (Österreichische Volkspartei - ÖVP) gained 71, up 9, of the 183 seats in the National Council (Nationalrat), winning but falling short of the required majority. The Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ) won 40 seats, down 12, while the right-wing Freedom Party FPÖ got 31 seats, down 20. The Green Party won 26 seats, having had none before, while the liberal NEOS party won 15 seats, up 5. Born & raised in Meidling, 12th district of Vienna, Kurz met SPÖ & FPÖ parties on October 8 & was set to meet the Greens & NEOS a day later. Brigitte Bierlein, an independent politician & lawyer, has fulfilled the role of Chancellor since June 3, following Kurz’ resignation over the ‘Ibiza’ affair [*see AGRA FOCUS, June 2019, p.31*] on May 28.

Portugal's Costa wins election: Portugal faced lengthy coalition negotiations following the victory of the ruling Socialist Party (PS), led by António Costa, in parliamentary elections for the Assembleia da República on October 6. Costa’s party gained 20 seats, giving it a total of 106 of the 230 in the legislature - ten short of a majority. The Social Democratic Party (PSD), which is on the centre-right, was down 12 at 77 seats. The Left Bloc held an unchanged 19 seats. The Democratic Unity Coalition (CDU), which allies Communists & Greens, held 12 seats, down five. Costa had ruled as Prime Minister since the previous election in 2015 at the head of a coalition including Communists & the Left Bloc. The Portuguese government announced on October 8 that the President of the Republic, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, had nominated Costa as Prime Minister, after consultations with the political parties. Once official results have been published, the Assembleia da República will meet & a new government will be sworn in & present its programme, it said. Council President Donald Tusk wrote to the new Premier on October 7, congratulating him “warmly” & expressing the

“trust that over the next legislature & under your leadership, Portugal will continue to enjoy political stability, social cohesion & economic prosperity.”

Poland’s PiS wins election: Poland’s Law & Justice Party (PiS) won the October 13 election with just under 44% of the vote for seats in the Sejm, increasing its vote from the 37.6% it received in the previous, October 25, 2015 election. PiS’s 2015 performance was enough to give it 235 seats in the 460 seat chamber. Second in the elections was the Civic Coalition (KO) with just over 27%. The Left got 12.5%, while the Polish coalition got around 8.6%. Law & Justice also won 48 of the 100 seats in the Senate, with KO getting 43. PiS leader Jarosław Kaczyński declared victory at party headquarters in Warsaw late on October 14, saying there were “four years of hard work ahead.” *Commissioner-designate for Agriculture & Rural Development Janusz Wojciechowski hails from the PiS political party, which is affiliated to the ECR group in the EP.*

Romanian government collapses after no confidence vote: The Romanian government of Prime Minister Viorica Dăncilă collapsed on October 10 after losing a motion of no confidence in the country’s parliament amid accusations of incompetence & misuse of EU funds. Some 238 of the country’s 465 MPs plus Senators voted against the government. Dăncilă’s Social Democrats (PSD) lost their majority in August after their junior partner (the National Liberal Party) left the coalition. President Klaus Iohannis may ask the main opposition party of Ludovic Orban to form a new government. Orban, whose party spearheaded the no confidence vote against the Socialist government, said “we have stopped the Social Democrat Party from hurting Romania.” A Presidential election is due to be held November 10 - which former MEP Dăncilă is unlikely to win - with a general election scheduled for late 2020 (possibly December). A transitional government will take over until the next election. The centre-right National Liberal Party is expected to push for Siegfried Muresan, an MEP & vice-chair of the EPP group, to be the next Transport Commissioner.

EU GIs gain greater international recognition: The Council (October 7) adopted a legal package setting the legal basis for the EU’s accession to the Geneva Act of the Lisbon Agreement, relating to the protection of Geographical Indications (GIs). The so-called Lisbon Agreement - first adopted in 1958 - is a special pact under Article 19 of the Paris Convention for the Protection of Intellectual Property. The treaty - administered by the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO)* - currently comprises 28 members *inc.* Algeria, Burkina Faso, Congo, Cuba, Gabon, Georgia, Iran, Israel, Peru & Togo, as well as seven EU Member States (FR, HU, BG, CZ, SK, PT & IT). In May 2015, the Agreement was revised through the ‘Geneva Act’. The amendment - which followed talks since 2008 - widened the scope of the treaty to cover all GIs & allowed the membership of intergovernmental organisations, notably the EU. The move sought to grant greater legal certainty to GIs in the 28 member countries & allow members to secure protection for appellations of origins (AO) through a single registration. *At the time, the US, Argentina, Australia & Japan slammed the plan, saying it failed to adequately protect common food names & existing intellectual property rights.* EU Farm Commissioner Phil Hogan said it was a “step forward to better protect our geographical indications at a multilateral level ... they mirror the EU’s valuable geographical diversity, authenticity & know-how, in terms of agricultural products, food & drinks.” This membership “will add on to the protection already granted through international bilateral agreements,” the incoming Trade chief added. Once the bloc joins the international registration system, “it will enable the rapid, high-level & indefinite protection of all types of European GIs *inc.* food, wine, handicrafts in all current & future parties belonging to the Geneva Act,” DG AGRI officials outline. The relevant acts will now be published in the EU’s Official Journal & will enter into force 20 days after publication. The bloc will officially join the Geneva Act three months later. *See www.wipo.int;

Romanian cheese & smoked meat GIs registered: The Commission announced the approval of the Romanian cheese '*Telemea De Sibiu*' for inclusion in the register of Protected Geographical Indications (PGI) on October 16. *Telemea de Sibiu* is a cheese made from sheep's milk which has been made for centuries by shepherds called 'baci'. It's a semi-hard cheese made from freshly milked unpasteurised milk which must be matured for at least 21 days. It is offered for sale fresh & mature. The cheese is produced in the Sibiu county in Transylvania, in the centre of Romania. The specification calls for the whole process, including the raising of the sheep, to take place within that area. The product's special flavour comes from the diet of the ewes, which spend most of the year out on pasture, eating herbs & aromatic plants, giving the cheese a pleasant, subtly tangy, salty taste. A number of festivals are held in the region each year celebrating *Telemea de Sibiu*, which is a flagship product of the region. The Commission also gave the green light to the inclusion of the Romanian speciality '*Cârnați de Pleșcoi*' as a Geographical Indication (GI) in the Community Register in early October. Originally, the Pleșcoi smoked sausage was made from meat (sheep & beef) & sheep's fat, chopped with bacon & seasoned with garlic, red hot pepper, thyme, basil & salt and smoked with beech wood. Over the years, the original recipe has changed somewhat, with goat meat occasionally replacing sheep meat. Since 2008, the '*Cârnați de Pleșcoi*' annual festival takes place to celebrate the delicacy, which has been consumed on Romanian territory since the 13th century.

Bulgarian spirit gains GI approval: The Commission approved the addition of the Bulgarian spirit drink '*Ямболска гроздоваракия/ГроздоваракияотЯмбол/Yambolska grozdova rakya/Grozdova rakya ot Yambol*' to the Community Register of Geographical Indications (GIs). The spirit drink made from white & red grape varieties - with minimum alcohol strength of 40% vol. - has a sparkling & pale colour, with a dominant fruity aroma & a pronounced grapey aftertaste. Produced in numerous small distilleries since the 1930s, the Bulgarian speciality comes from an area that covers the Yambol province & part of the neighbouring province of Burgas, both in the south eastern part of the country. The new designation joins more than 235 spirit drinks that are already listed in the eAmbrosia database.

*See

[https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32018D1203\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32018D1203(01)&from=EN)

Advocate General finds against Halloumi group: Advocate General Juliane Kokott has recommended that the Court of Justice reject an appeal against the General Court's finding that BBQloumi, a trademark registered by a Bulgarian company, should be allowed. The original applicant was the Foundation for the Protection of the Traditional Cheese of Cyprus named Halloumi, based in Cyprus & the defendant was the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO). The other party to the proceedings, which first took place before EUIPO's Board of Appeal, is Bulgarian based M.J. Dairies EOOD. On July 9, 2014, M.J. Dairies EOOD filed an application with EUIPO for registration of a figurative mark containing the word BBQloumi. The Foundation opposed the registration, but EUIPO rejected its complaint. The Cyprus-based organisation then brought a case before the General Court, which dismissed it. Their reasoning was that the mark was unlikely to create confusion. The Foundation then appealed against that judgement (Case T 328/17). Kokott proposes that the Court should dismiss the appeal. She rejects the idea that the mark would create confusion & the Foundation's claim that Halloumi is a mark under the Trade Mark Regulation, noting that it is a designation of a specialist type of cheese. *Go to <http://curia.europa.eu/juris> & search for case C-766/18;

Support for Polish biotech: The European Investment Bank (EIB) has agreed to lend €30 million to Polish biotech firm Mabion to finance its growth plans, the Commission announced on October 24. Mabion is to use the money for a research & development programme, along with clinical trials & expanding its production facilities. The company

expects to employ 96 additional staff after receiving the money. The loan is backed by the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the financial pillar of the Investment Plan for Europe, the so-called Juncker Plan. Mabion develops & makes medicine to treat certain types of blood cancer & rheumatoid arthritis. EU Commissioner for Health & Food Safety Vytenis Andriukaitis said the loan was “a clear demonstration that the EU is a strong supporter of innovative, grass-roots companies in Poland & throughout Europe.”

Wine retailer takeover authorised: The Commission has authorised the takeover of wine retailers Majestic Wine Warehouses, based in the UK, & Les Celliers de Calais, which operates in France, by Fortress Investment of the US, DG COMP officials confirmed on October 25. Majestic Wine Warehouses Ltd. sells wine, beer, spirits & other beverages from over 200 Majestic stores in the UK, while Les Celliers de Calais operates two stores under the Majestic brand at Coquelles & Calais in northern France. The EU’s executive, operating under the simplified procedure, concluded that the merger would not increase concentration as the companies involved are in different markets. **For more info go to <https://ec.europa.eu/competition/elojade/iseff/index.cfm> & enter case number M.9524;*

Plastics ideas get awards: Winners in the Commission’s Social Innovation Competition awards on October 24 include two applicants who came up with ways to reduce the use of plastic packaging in the food sector. The MIWA (Minimum Waste) project from Czech-based company Arancia is a circular distribution & sale system for food & non-food products with reusable packaging, while Spraysafe, from Portugal, is an edible spray to preserve food which cuts the need for plastic packaging. The third winner VEnvirotech of Spain turns organic waste into biodegradable plastics using bacteria. EU Commissioner for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship & SMEs Elżbieta Bienkowska said that “tackling plastic pollution requires commitment, investment but also creativity,” while congratulating the winners.

PERSONNEL NEWS:

New Farm Minister in Portugal: Portugal’s government, led by Socialist Prime Minister António Costa, announced the makeup of his new Cabinet on October 21, following the October 6 election [see above]. The new Agriculture Minister is Maria do Céu Albuquerque. Born in July 1970 in Abrantes in central Portugal, Albuquerque has a Degree in Biochemistry from the Faculty of Science & Technology at the University of Coimbra, where she was a Research Fellow. She also holds a postgraduate degree in Food Quality & Safety Management from the Egas Moniz Higher Institute of Health Sciences. The Socialist politician, who was Mayor of Abrantes for nine years (2009-2018), replaces the highly-regarded & well-liked Luís Capoulas Santos, who will take a seat in the national parliament. The new State Secretary for Agriculture & Rural Development is Nuno Tiago dos Santos Russo. Born in 1976 in Santarém, in the centre-west of the country, he holds a Degree in Zootechnical Engineering from the University of Évora & an MBA in Public Administration from the Higher Institute of Management & Administration of Santarém. Since 2017, he has served as a senior technician at the Institute for Financing Agriculture and Fisheries (IFAP).

Oros named Romanian Farm Minister: Adrian Nechita Oros, a member of Romania’s National Liberal Party, has been put forward to succeed the affable Petre Daea as the country’s Agriculture Minister. The 54-year-old, who was elected to represent Cluj in the north-west of Romania in December 2016, is Vice-Chair of the Agriculture, Forestry & Food Industry Committee of the Chamber of Deputies. Between 2009-2012 he was President of PNL Cluj-Napoca & held the position of director of the Cluj Veterinary Health Department in 2000-2001 & 2008-2009. Oros is Vice-Rector of the University of Agricultural Sciences & Veterinary Medicine of Cluj-Napoca and Vice-President of the College of Veterinary Doctors

of Romania. A veterinarian by profession, he was also Vice-President of the Romanian College of Veterinary Doctors.

Lobillo Borrero appointed AGRI Principal Adviser: The Commission appointed Cristina Lobillo Borrero as Principal Adviser to DG AGRI. The Spanish woman's new title is 'Principal Adviser for Common Agricultural Policy interaction with other EU policies' in the Directorate-General. Lobillo Borrero joined the Commission in 2004 & has been Chef de Cabinet for Commissioner Miguel Arias Cañete in charge of climate action & energy since 2014. She previously worked as assistant to Jean-Luc Demarty at the end of his term as DG AGRI boss (2010) & when he took over as DG TRADE Director General (2011), with many referring to the trustworthy & competent official as his "right-hand woman". The new Principal Adviser has a Law Degree from the Universities of Cordoba & Siena (1987-1992).

Delvaux gets nod for TRADE Principal Adviser: Léon Delvaux has been made Principal Adviser for 'Coherence in trade relations' in DG Trade. Delvaux, from Luxembourg, joined the Commission from the country's diplomatic corps in 2014 to become Trade & Development Adviser in the Cabinet of President Jean-Claude Juncker, the position he currently holds. In his native country, he was Deputy Director for Economic & European Affairs from August 2013 until September 2014. Before that, he served as Deputy Director for Cooperation & Development from September 2010 until August 2013. Delvaux studied law & history in Paris.

Maeve Whyte steps down from NFU Brussels post: Irishwoman Maeve Whyte, current Director of the British Agriculture Bureau (BAB) representing all the UK farm unions, looks set to step down at the end of the year. Well-respected in agri circles, Maeve joined the NFU in London as a graduate trainee in 2001 & served as the Water Policy Adviser from 2003 until 2005. When her compatriot Betty Lee (Co. Cavan) left the organisation to work at DG AGRI, Maeve was deemed the "obvious choice" to take over the reins as Director in 2006 (then in her late 20s). Since then, she has emerged as one of the leading ladies in the Brussels lobbying sphere. Prior to working with the influential farm organisation at Copa-Cogeca HQ, she graduated with a Degree in Geography & Social Policy at University College Dublin (UCD) in 2000 & completed a Master's in Environmental Technology at Imperial College London (2001). The illustrious young woman was awarded the title of Nuffield Scholar in 2014, completing her research project on the food waste crisis, a topic close to her heart. Known for her straight-talking approach & sharp wit, the popular lobbyist once said in an interview with the reputable Southern Star that the most important thing to do as a woman in agriculture was "maintain a sense of humour, work hard & recognise intelligence as a superior tool." Maeve comes from a long line of market gardeners in Rush north Co. Dublin & plans to return to the seaside town with her young family before Christmas. *Go n-éirí an bóthar leat a chara.*

Organic lobbyists to chair dialogue groups: Two leaders of the EU's organic sector have been elected to chair Civil Dialogue Groups, the bodies which help stakeholders & the Commission liaise over farm policy. Jan Plagge, President of the organic group IFOAM EU, was re-elected as Chair of the Civil Dialogue Group on the Common Agricultural Policy (October 15). A day later, IFOAM EU Vice-President Marian Blom was elected as Chair of the Civil Dialogue Group on Organic Farming. Plagge is President of Bioland an organic farming association in Germany & South Tirol, which represents some 8 100 organic farmers & around 1 000 operators in processing & trade. He was elected as IFOAM EU Vice-President in 2016, becoming President of the movement in May 2018. Plagge converted his own horticulture operation to organic in 1992. Blom has been Regulation Officer & Project Manager in the Knowledge & Innovation department of the Dutch organic umbrella body Bionext, since 2011. The Dutchwoman has been a member of IFOAM EU's Council since

2007 & is a former Knowledge Officer at the Dutch Innovation Centre for Organic Agriculture at Wageningen University. Commenting, Plagge said he was honoured to have the trust of other stakeholders to hold a constructive dialogue on a new CAP, “which delivers more performance for public goods.” He is convinced that “organic farming can be an important bridge for transforming food & farming systems,” & contributing to the European Green Deal & the planned ‘farm to fork’ strategy. Blom, who holds an MSc. in Organic Farming (Wageningen), thanked the organic stakeholders for their trust & expressed the desire to improve dialogue between them & the Commission, particularly as a new European Organic Action Plan is being developed.

O’Flaherty swaps agri-trade for high tech: Lorcan O’Flaherty, current Head of International Trade at the consultancy firm Hume Brophy, took up his new post as Head of Public Policy & Government Relations at Google (EU HQ) in Dublin on October 7. Now in his early thirties, the down-to-earth & perspicacious O’Flaherty moved to Brussels in January 2010 & quickly emerged as a mover & shaker in the agri & international trade circle. Before climbing the ranks at one of the European capital’s top consultancies Hume Brophy - from Account Manager in October 2013 to Director in December 2017 - he cut his teeth at the Permanent Representation during Ireland’s Presidency, working directly with Dermot Ryan (the then SCA spokesperson) on the 2013 CAP reform. Prior to the 11-month stint at the Rep, he was the Regulatory Affairs Manager at FoodDrinkEurope (April 2010-August 2012). He graduated with an LLB in Law & European Studies from the University of Limerick in 2008 *inc.* a memorable spell working in Paris & completed a Master’s (Human Rights in Criminal Justice) in 2010. The proud Mountmeillick man, with West of Ireland lineage, was recently listed in the 2019 Directory of the ‘Top EU Public Affairs Consultants’ - as was his boss Jill Craig (Managing Director at HB). Well-connected to key decision-makers, O’Flaherty is highly regarded by the soon-to-be Trade Commissioner Phil Hogan & his team. Described as a “class act” & a “pure gent” by those who know him, Lorcan will be missed in the Brussels’ agri circle.

NATIONAL NEWS

BREXIT - WHAT HAPPENED WHEN?

October 29	UK General Election announced for December 12 EU-27 agree extension of Article 50 process until January 31, 2020
October 22	UK Parliament accepts Withdrawal Bill, but not the timetable, leaving the legislation in limbo
October 19	Parliament fails to approve Withdrawal Agreement Johnson forced to ask the EU for an extension of the Article 50 process
October 17	EU agrees to Johnson's amended Withdrawal Agreement proposals
October 11	Barnier & Brexit Secretary Stephen Barclay meet and promise intensified negotiations
October 8	EU frustration at Downing Street's leaked version of Merkel comments, as UK appears to blame EU for failure of talks. EU indicates Johnson's proposals are unacceptable
October 2	Johnson proposes new protocol for N. Ireland to replace the backstop in May's Withdrawal Agreement

UK TO HOLD ELECTION ON DECEMBER 12; EU-27 AGREE ART. 50 EXTENSION TO JANUARY 31, 2020

British MPs voted on October 29 to hold an election on December 12 - the third election in the country in four years - after the main opposition Labour party agreed to back an early general election, saying it was ready to fight the "most ambitious & radical campaign for real change our country has ever seen." The announcement followed the October 29 formal decision by the EU-27 to extend the Article 50 process until January 31, 2020. MPs finally voted to hold the pre-Christmas poll by 438 to 20, a majority of 418, after a day of wrangling. The opposition Labour party had tried to force Prime Minister Boris Johnson to accept a December 9 vote, but the move was defeated by 315 votes to 295. *UK general elections are traditionally held on a Thursday, but many in the opposition parties felt that the earlier date would help get students, in particular, out to vote. Many leave universities during that week of December & it is feared may not vote if they're busy travelling.* Liberal Democrats & the Scottish National Party abstained from the vote on the election after losing the chance to hold it on December 9. Moves to get the voting age reduced from 18 to 16 & to allow all EU nationals resident in the UK to vote were not selected by the presiding Deputy Speaker Lindsay Hoyle, after talk that the government would give up its attempt to hold a poll if they were successful. Citizens of the Irish Republic, Malta & Cyprus, living in the UK, already have a vote in the country's elections.

The final vote on an election came after the European Council had agreed to Johnson's unwilling request for an extension (October 19) by written procedure. President of the European Council Donald Tusk said the EU-27 "has agreed that it will accept the UK's request for a Brexit flexextension until January 31, 2020." UK Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn said on twitter (October 29) that "no deal is now off the table so tonight Labour will back a general election." In a letter to Tusk, Johnson said that it was an "unwanted prolongation" that was damaging to British democracy & to the EU-UK relationship. The New York-born politician said he accepted the decision but added that he "would also urge Member States to

make clear that a further extension after January 31 (2020) is not possible.” Tusk tweeted to his “British friends” that this extension “may be the last one.” “Please make the best use of this time,” he told them.

EU-27 DELAY BREXIT EXTENSION APPROVAL AS UK’S JOHNSON PUSHES FOR ELECTION

On October 25 EU-27 Ambassadors meeting in Brussels agreed that the Brexit deadline should be extended beyond October 31, but failed to agree on the new leaving date for the UK. France held out against agreeing to a delay until January 31, as unwillingly requested by UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson [see below]. The “remaining” 27 countries had “agreed to the principle of an extension,” Commission Chief Spokesperson Mina Andreeva told the midday briefing that day. “Work will now continue in the coming days.” UK opposition Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn said that his party would not vote for an election unless a no deal Brexit was off the table. Johnson insisted earlier that the October 31 deadline was “still possible.” “Unfortunately it depends on what the EU says,” he continued, complaining that the ‘Benn Act’, which he insists on referring to as “the surrender act” means “it is up to the EU to decide whether or not we stay in the EU & it is up to the EU how long that extension would be.” Under the Fixed Term Parliaments Act of 2011, an election can only be called with the support of two-thirds of MPs. The act made a big change to the UK political landscape. Before it was passed, Prime Ministers were able to choose the date of any vote whenever suited them - something which put the head of government in a powerful position.

EP group leaders supported the idea of an extension until January 31. Following a meeting of the Conference of Presidents on October 24, EP President David Sassoli wrote to Council President Donald Tusk to recommend acceptance of the UK request. The delay would “allow the United Kingdom to clarify its position & the European Parliament to properly exercise its role,” Sassoli said, emphasising that the EP’s consent procedure would only begin after the ratification of the Withdrawal Agreement by the UK Parliament. The Italian Socialist politician also reminded Tusk that although the planned extension is meant to be flexible, in that the UK would leave as soon as the deal is agreed, the EP, as well as the UK Parliament, would have to complete its ratification procedure before Brexit could take place.

JOHNSON FORCED TO REQUEST EXTENSION AMID BREXIT DEADLOCK

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson failed on October 19 to get the UK Parliament to agree to his Withdrawal Agreement with the EU, forcing him to ask Brussels for membership to be extended until January 31, 2020. He followed up by failing to force MPs to give just three days consideration to the government’s bill on withdrawal, leaving the timetable for the UK Parliament to scrutinise the legislation unclear. *One factor in Johnson's defeats was the loss of support from the ten MPs of the Northern Irish Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), angry at the deal's need for customs checks between NI & Britain. Chief Whip Sir Jeffrey Donaldson, said “the sensible thing for the government is to sit down with us & see if we can work this out.”*

Johnson abandoned his attempt to get MPs to agree to the withdrawal treaty on October 19 after they voted by 322 to 306 to pass an amendment from independent former Conservative MP Oliver Letwin [see below], which “withholds approval unless & until implementing legislation is passed.” The vote came as over a million pro-EU marchers, inc. AGRA FOCUS, listened outside the Houses of Parliament. On the same day, Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn told MPs that Johnson had “renegotiated the Withdrawal Agreement & made it even worse.” “He’s renegotiated the political declaration & made that even worse.” The House was debating “a text to which there is no economic impact assessment & no accompanying legal advice.” The government had “sought to avoid scrutiny throughout the process,” the 70-year-old left-wing

politician, representing Islington North added. Strictly speaking, MPs passed the government's motion without a vote, but, because the Letwin amendment requires scrutiny, they had not effectively said 'yes' to the Withdrawal Agreement by the end of October 19. The date coincided with the 'Benn Act' deadline by which the Prime Minister was obliged to send a letter to EU leaders requesting an extension of the Article 50 process until the end of January 2020.

The beleaguered British leader sent the letter later that day, but in a show of defiance did not sign it. The single-page correspondence* addressed to Council President Donald Tusk was accompanied by a cover letter from Sir Tim Barrow, UK Permanent Representative to the EU, & a private letter in which Johnson told the Polish politician that he didn't think an extension was actually a good idea. Tusk duly ignored the lack of a signature & tweeted late on October 19 that "the extension request has just arrived. I will now start consulting EU leaders on how to react." Johnson followed up on October 21, by attempting again to get MPs to pass a motion agreeing the Withdrawal Agreement. This was rejected by the Speaker of House of Commons John Bercow, under a convention which states that the same question cannot be asked of MPs twice in one session. "Today's motion is in substance the same as Saturday's motion," Bercow said. It would be "repetitive & disorderly" to vote again on it. The Speaker noted that the convention goes back to 1604. "It is a necessary rule to ensure the sensible use of the House's time & proper respect for the decisions that it takes," he stressed. With only eight days to go before the October 31 deadline, Johnson went back to Parliament on October 22, with the 110-page Withdrawal Bill**, which would put the agreement into force. The bill passed its second reading (the first time the House actually considers it), by 329 to 299 votes.

However, a few minutes later they voted to reject the 'Programme Motion' setting out how the bill would be handled, which limited discussion of the bill to three days, by 322 to 308 votes, leaving the legislation "in limbo", according to Speaker Bercow. Johnson responded that "the EU must now make up their minds over how to respond to Parliament's request for a delay." Following the UK votes on October 22, Tusk tweeted that "in order to avoid a no-deal Brexit, I will recommend the EU-27 accept the UK request for an extension." "For this I will propose a written procedure," he elaborated. On the same day, EP Brexit Coordinator Guy Verhofstadt (BE/Renew Europe) said that MEPs would not consider the deal before it had been approved by the UK's legislature. "We need the approval of the British parliament," he said in a live Facebook session. "Once that is done, it will return to the EP." President David Sassoli (EP) said that pushing back the deadline would "allow the UK to clarify its position & the EP to exercise its role." The Irish government issued a statement saying that *An Taoiseach*, Leo Varadkar, had spoken to Tusk on October 23 & confirmed his support for the Council President's view that the EU-27 should grant an extension, noting that it would be flexible, in that the UK could leave before January 31, if a deal were to be ratified earlier.

Although far too early in the game to consider the future EU-UK trade relations, there has been some clarity in terms of the division of labour from the Brussels perspective. For all aspects related to trade in services, goods & agriculture, negotiations will be led by the incoming Trade Commissioner Phil Hogan & DG TRADE services. The EU's chief negotiator Michel Barnier will lead a new team, comprising the remaining officials on the Article 50 Taskforce & the Secretariat General's Brexit Preparedness Group. The Barnier team will deal with fisheries, aviation, security, research, education, judiciary & nuclear, sources indicated in late October. *<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letters-from-the-uk-to-the-eu-council-19-october-2019>; **<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/eu-withdrawal-agreement-bill>;

EU ACCEPTS NEW WITHDRAWAL AGREEMENT; DUP OPPOSITION

EU leaders unanimously agreed a new Withdrawal Agreement on the basis of proposals from UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson on October 17, paving the way for an orderly Brexit by October 31, after the British leader backed down over arrangements to avoid a hard border in Ireland. *But the North's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) opposed the plans, ruling out their support at the forthcoming vote.* The revised deal on ending UK membership of the bloc agreed by the Council is almost the same as the Withdrawal Agreement reached by former UK Premier Theresa May (November 2018). Following a marathon session of talks, changes centre on the provisions for Northern Ireland - *inc.* alignment to a limited set of single market rules to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland (legislation on goods, rules on SPS, agricultural production/marketing, VAT & excise in respect of goods and state aid rules), while ensuring the region remains part of the UK's customs territory. The move seeks to replace the 'backstop' arrangement, meant only to apply as an insurance policy if alternative arrangements for the border could not be made to work. The move avoids a hard border on the island of Ireland, protects the all-island economy & the Good Friday Agreement, as well as safeguarding the integrity of the single market, Commission officials outline.

Under the revised 'Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland', the UK is allowed to reimburse duties paid on goods imported into Northern Ireland. To avoid customs checks, the EU's Customs Code will apply to all goods brought into Ireland. EU sanitary & phytosanitary rules will also apply. The difference between the controversial backstop in the deal agreed by former PM May is that the new arrangements are a legally operative solution, rather than an alternative solution to be put in place if needed. Under the revised arrangement, there will be checks & controls on goods entering Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK, including sanitary & phytosanitary controls on agri-food products. The checks will be carried out by the UK authorities with EU supervision. The two sides are expected to agree a way of carrying out checks away from ports & airports of entry. On VAT, Northern Ireland will be part of the UK area, with the UK setting rates & collecting the revenue, but EU VAT rules will apply in the region, with a provision for exemptions & reduced rates applying in the Republic of Ireland to be applied in NI. Northern Ireland will continue to operate the EU VAT Information Exchange System (VIES) & share data with Member States.

Speaking to reporters, Johnson urged MPs to "come together & get Brexit done", saying the deal was a "reasonable, fair outcome & reflected the large amount of work undertaken by both sides." Later at a joint press conference, Council President Donald Tusk said heads of state & government "endorsed this deal & it looks like we are very close to the final stretch." The former Polish Premier reiterated that the EU would "always stand behind Ireland & not force a deal unfavourable to Dublin." On a personal note, he expressed his sadness, saying he would always be a Remainer "in his heart." "Our door will always be open ... if our British friends decide to return one day." Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker said the new protocol on Ireland would allow "peace and stability on the island of Ireland." He acknowledged the role Ireland's *Taoiseach* Leo Varadkar had in the last-minute talks, saying "a deal would not have been possible today [without him]". The *Fine Gael* leader paid tribute to Europe's "strength of unity," which provides a "lesson for the future ... to be taken forward in future negotiations, with US, China & Turkey." The revised text "creates a unique solution ... to Northern Ireland recognising its unique history & geography," Varadkar added. The EU's chief negotiator Michel Barnier said "while the subject matter in the negotiating room related to customs, goods & the border ... it had been people in Ireland & Northern Ireland as well as peace that were central" in the process.

A further element which has caused concern is that ‘level playing field’ requirements on issues like workers’ rights, the environment, fighting tax avoidance & adhering to international standards, have been moved from the Withdrawal Agreement to the Political Declaration. This means they are no longer binding, raising fears that Johnson plans a race to the bottom on standards. The 535-page consolidated working document*, based on the Commission’s deal with the UK government, includes a revised protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland, & a revised political declaration on the future EU-UK relationship. The political declaration’s provisions on the future relationship have been changed because the Johnson government has decided it wants a Free Trade Agreement, rather than the “much closer partnership” envisaged under the May deal. There is a shared ambition to have zero tariffs & quotas between the EU & the UK, with safeguards to ensure fair competition. Under the provisions, Northern Ireland could benefit from UK trade deals with non-EU 3rd countries, but will apply EU customs legislation, *inc.* the application of EU tariffs.

The Northern Ireland Assembly, suspended since January 2017, will be asked to provide its continued support for the Protocol four years after the end of the post-Brexit transition period, ending under the agreement on December 31, 2020, during which the future relationship is to be negotiated. If not approved by the Assembly, the Protocol ceases to apply after two years. If there is cross community consent to continue to apply the Protocol, it would then apply for a further eight years. The provisions of the agreement will be overseen by a Joint Committee of the UK & EU which can decide, before July 1, 2020, to extend the transition period for one or two years.

*See https://ec.europa.eu/commission/brexit-negotiations/negotiating-documents-article-50-negotiations-united-kingdom_en

REACTIONS TO JOHNSON’S NEW WITHDRAWAL AGREEMENT

DUP opposition to Brexit deal: Northern Ireland’s Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), the Conservatives’ Parliamentary allies, publicly stated they would not support the agreement between Johnson & the EU-27 in the UK Parliament’s vote on October 19. The right-wing party, which represents voters who support keeping Northern Ireland in the UK, issued a statement* following the announcement of the deal, saying that it “had been consistent” that it would “only ever consider supporting arrangements that are in Northern Ireland’s long-term economic & constitutional interests & protect the integrity of the Union.” It is the DUP’s view the proposals are not beneficial for Northern Ireland & “they undermine the integrity of the Union.”

Pointing out that the region’s main route of east-west trade would be subject to the EU Customs Union, even with Northern Ireland officially part of the UK customs territory, they complain that “all goods would be subject to a customs check regime regardless of their final destination.” Goods going from one part of the UK to another would be subject to EU rules, for example on sanitary & phytosanitary conditions. The EU has a veto on which goods would be exempt from customs under the Joint Committee arrangements, something they describe as “not acceptable within the internal borders of the UK.” The checks would potentially mean higher costs & reduced choice for customers in Northern Ireland. The region “should not be subjected to administrative burdens which will be entrenched for the future.” On VAT, NI “will be bound into arrangements that the rest of the UK will not,” they say, complaining of a “real danger that over time Northern Ireland will start to diverge across VAT & Customs,” something that would not have “broad support from the democratic representatives of the people of Northern Ireland.” The political party recognises that “some progress has been made in recognising the issue of consent,” giving both parts of the community a voice in whether the arrangements are extended, but complains that “the elected representatives of Northern Ireland will have no say on whether Northern Ireland should enter these arrangements.” The UK government had “departed from the principle that these arrangements must be subject to the consent of both unionists & nationalists in Northern Ireland.” Although the arrangements

would be subject to a rolling review, “the principles of the Belfast Agreement on consent have been abandoned in favour of majority rule on this single issue alone.”

*See <https://www.mydup.com/news/article/statement-from-the-democratic-unionist-party5>

Deal “worse than May’s” - Corbyn: Leader of the UK’s main opposition Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn, called for Johnson’s Withdrawal Deal to be rejected & pressed again for a new referendum on the terms. “It seems the Prime Minister has negotiated an even worse deal than Theresa May’s,” the left-wing politician said in a statement from the party (October 17), noting that the previous withdrawal treaty had been “overwhelmingly rejected.” The proposals risked “triggering a race to the bottom on rights & protections: putting food safety at risk, cutting environmental standards & workers’ rights, & opening up our NHS [National Health Service] to a takeover by US private corporations.” Johnson’s deal “won’t bring the country together & should be rejected,” he elaborated. “The best way to get Brexit sorted is to give the people the final say in a public vote.” Meanwhile, the UK’s pro-EU centrist Liberal Democrat party strongly opposed Johnson’s Brexit deal, promising to push for a referendum & to continue to campaign for Britain to stay in the EU. Party leader Jo Swinson said that “Johnson’s deal would be bad for our economy, bad for our public services, & bad for our environment.” She was “more determined than ever to stop Brexit,” & would “use every possible opportunity to give the public a People’s Vote on the Brexit deal that includes the option to remain in the EU.”

NFU concerned over future partnership: The National Farmers’ Union (NFU) for England & Wales welcomed the hope of avoiding a no deal Brexit offered by Johnson’s deal at the EU Summit on October 17, but has reminded the government of the need to avoid cutting standards & keep frictionless trade with the EU. President Minette Batters said that the deal might “pave the way for an orderly Brexit.” However, “if this deal is agreed by UK & EU Parliaments in the coming days,” it would only determine how the UK leaves & not set the long-term relationship. It was “vital” that government makes sure “that British farming standards are not undercut by an ambition to open up British markets to food which would be illegal to produce here.” There must also be “free & frictionless trade with the EU in the long-term.” The union’s first female President said the lobby “had precious little reassurances on these issues so far.” She wanted the government to “be clear about its ambitions for British farming.” The Ulster Farmers’ Union is currently reviewing the Brexit proposal & “discussing it internally through our policy structures.” The priority is to “fully understand what it means for agriculture, the food industry & above all the future prosperity of family farm businesses in Northern Ireland.” They note “there are more questions than answers,” while more clarity is needed on *inter alia* the region’s access to EU trade deals once the transition period ends. They would also like to see more “certainty around the details of NI’s unfettered access to the GB market.” The “key objective from day one has been to secure trade that is as free & frictionless as possible east/west and north/south ... a no deal, however, remains the worst possible outcome for Northern Ireland’s family-run farm businesses & must be avoided.”

Deal “a backward step” says food industry: The UK’s Food & Drink Federation (FDF) warned that Johnson’s new deal will increase costs for businesses & consumers and undermine the success of the sector in the UK. Chief Executive, Ian Wright, said that it was “critical that the threat of a disastrous no deal Brexit be lifted.” But he also called on MPs to “consider what this deal means in the longer term for food & drink, the UK’s largest manufacturing sector, & the supply chain’s four million employees.” In the FDF’s view, “this deal represents a backward step in terms of securing frictionless trade with the EU,” he said, comparing it with the May agreement. It “sets us on course for regulatory divergence from our largest overseas market on critical food safety, science & quality issues,” he complained,

bemoaning the fact that the sector was “already burdened by extensive, diverting & costly planning for a no-deal exit.”

EU agri-food chain welcomes Brexit deal: EU agri-food chain representatives welcomed the agreement reached by EU & UK negotiators, calling on the EP & UK parliaments to complete the ratification procedure before October 31. In a joint statement, Copa-Cogeca (farmers), CELCAA (traders in agri-food commodities) & FoodDrinkEurope (food & drink manufacturers) said the deal “paves the way for an orderly withdrawal, a principle that the EU agri-food chain has been repeatedly calling for, thereby providing predictability to operators.” The three organisations endorsed the “revised Political Declaration, which confirms the ambition to conclude a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with zero tariffs & quantitative restrictions between the EU & the UK.” They welcomed the commitment to “maintaining customs & regulatory convergence in future,” while noting that “we will not be able to replicate the advantages of the EU customs union & Single market through an FTA.” On behalf of the European agri-food chain, the coalition “will continue to promote a comprehensive & deep FTA between the EU & UK, following the UK’s departure from the EU.” *In 2017, EU-27 agri-food exports to the UK amounted to €41 billion, while UK exports to the EU reached €17bn. This trade & businesses behind it employ 44 million people across the EU-28.*

HINT OF UK FLEXIBILITY ON IRISH BORDER

The EU & UK agreed to “intensify” discussions on a possible Brexit deal, the Commission said in a statement following a meeting in Brussels between the EU’s Chief negotiator Michel Barnier & the UK’s Brexit Secretary Stephen Barclay on October 11. The French politician briefed EU-27 Ambassadors & the EP’s Brexit Steering Group after the meeting saying sufficient reassurances had been received from London to enter “tunnel” negotiations in an attempt to clinch a last-minute divorce deal. Less than a week before the crucial European Summit (October 17-18), the Commission stressed that the EU’s position had not changed. “There must be a legally operative solution in the Withdrawal Agreement that avoids a hard border on the island of Ireland,” it said. That solution must protect “the all-island economy & the Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement in all its dimensions, & safeguard the integrity of the Single Market.”

The October 11 meeting came after a “detailed & constructive discussion,” between Prime Minister Boris Johnson & Ireland’s *Taoiseach* Leo Varadkar at Thornton Manor, Merseyside (October 10). According to a joint statement issued by the two politicians, both sides had agreed they “could see a pathway to a possible deal.” The discussion had focussed on the “challenges of customs & consent.” The apparent progress without concrete statements from Brussels, Dublin or London fuelled intense speculation that Johnson was now prepared to talk on the basis of Northern Ireland remaining part of the customs union, which would avoid any customs checks on the island of Ireland. The former Mayor of London fuelled that idea with a pooled television clip in which he refused to say, when asked, that Northern Ireland would definitely leave the customs union, saying “it would be wrong of me to give a running commentary on the negotiations.” He added that “under no circumstances will we see anything that damages the ability of the whole of the UK to take full advantage of Brexit.” Such a move was unlikely to find favour with Northern Ireland’s Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), which had been propping up the UK’s minority Conservative government. However, given that Johnson had lost a large part of his MPs, either through their own defection or his rather capricious sackings, the tiny right-wing & Eurosceptic party had likely lost its ability to influence Number 10 Downing Street. Johnson’s party had 288 MPs of a total 650 & the ten DUP members were not enough to help it win any vote without other support. DUP leader Arlene Foster issued a statement reiterating the party’s position that no barriers to trade must be erected within the UK, but hinting at a readiness to compromise. “We have held steadfast

to that position, while recognising the need to be flexible & look at Northern Ireland specific solutions,” she said. The politician from Dernawilt (Co. Fermanagh) said her party “will always exercise our considerable influence in ensuring we stand up for Northern Ireland.”

BREXIT TALKS STALLED AS UK ACCUSED OF PLAYING “BLAME GAME”

Any further substantive negotiations on a Brexit deal were unlikely following a telephone call between UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson & Germany’s Chancellor Angela Merkel on October 8 & the British government’s decision to release its apparently slanted version. A ‘Downing Street source’, understood to be Johnson’s controversial advisor Dominic Cummings, briefed journalists that the call with Merkel “showed the EU has adopted a new position.” The German leader thought the bloc “has a veto on us leaving the EU,” the ‘source’ said. Merkel had told her British counterpart that the UK could not leave the EU “without leaving Northern Ireland behind in a customs union & in full alignment forever.” She had also said that “Ireland must at least have a veto on Northern Ireland leaving.” The ‘source’ said that the telephone exchange meant a “deal is essentially impossible not just now but ever,” adding that “it also made clear they are willing to torpedo the Good Friday Agreement.” German officials refused to comment on what was supposed to be a private call, while political commentators noted that the remarks sounded very unlike anything that would have been said by the country’s usually measured & diplomatic leader. Council President Donald Tusk told Johnson over Twitter on October 8 that “what’s at stake is not winning some stupid blame game.” “At stake is the future of Europe & the UK as well as the security & interests of our people,” he went on. “You don’t want a deal, you don’t want an extension, you don’t want to revoke, quo vadis?” Ireland’s *Tánaiste* Simon Coveney responded to Tusk with “hard to disagree - reflects the frustration across EU & the enormity of what’s at stake for us all.” “We remain open to finalize a fair Brexit deal but need a UK Govt willing to work with EU to get it done,” the Corkman said.

EP President David Sassoli came out of a meeting with Johnson at Downing Street on October 8, saying the UK proposals [see below] were “not immediately operable” & a “long way from something to which the Parliament could agree.” The EP would not agree to proposals that undermine the Good Friday Agreement, he said. “There are two alternatives to a deal at this juncture: Extension or no deal,” the Italian Socialist MEP went on. Sassoli also met House of Commons Speaker John Bercow & told the British parliamentarian that the EP would support a UK request for an Article 50 extension, “in order to have time for a general election or a referendum.” The former journalist, originally from Florence, said that Bercow & he had “fully agreed on the important role that our parliaments play in the Brexit process.” There was “a common awareness that a disorderly exit of the UK from the EU would be against the interests of British & European citizens.”

NFU anger at UK tariff plans: The England & Wales National Farmers Union (NFU) reacted angrily to a UK government update* on tariffs after a no deal Brexit which threatens to remove protection for key sectors including cereals, eggs, fruit & vegetables & some dairy. NFU President Minette Batters said Prime Minister Boris Johnson had “missed a real opportunity to back British farmers.” “We will see, from day one, farm businesses facing new, high tariffs on much of the 60% of our exports that go into the EU,” she noted, “while tariffs on goods coming into the UK will be set far, far lower & in many cases won’t be applied at all.” “British egg farmers, cereal farmers, our horticultural growers & many of our dairy farmers will have zero protection,” she complained. The UK was “in danger of opening up the country to imported food which would be illegal to be produced here.” “Border tariffs have very little impact on retail food prices,” Batters explained, but they could “have a massive impact on the viability of farm businesses & our ability to produce high quality, great British

food.” The Wiltshire farmer & co-founder of the ‘Ladies in Beef’ campaign preferred “offering some limited tariff protection & managing volumes through a system of import quotas,” creating “the right balance between protecting the interests of domestic producers & keeping retail food prices under control.”

*See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/temporary-tariff-regime-updated>

BORIS JOHNSON PUTS FORWARD ‘PROTOCOL’ FOR IRISH BORDER

On October 2 UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson wrote to Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, with a new ‘protocol’ on the Irish border - supposedly designed to replace the ‘backstop’ in the original Withdrawal Agreement. Widely leaked ahead of its publication, the new UK plan to replace the “bridge to nowhere” appeared to have zero chance of being acceptable to the EU or its Member States. In the 4-page correspondence* issued after his speech to the Conservative Party conference, Johnson proposed “the potential creation of an all-island regulatory zone on the island of Ireland, covering all goods including agri-food”. The Northern Ireland Executive & Assembly would have to endorse the arrangements before they come into force & every four years afterwards. “If consent is not secured, the arrangements would lapse,” the Conservative leader continued. Northern Ireland would be “fully part of the UK customs territory” under this arrangement.

In a letter apparently meant more for public consumption in the UK than to impress the EU, the New York born politician told Juncker that “there is now very little time in which to negotiate a new Agreement between the UK & the EU under Article 50.” With just four weeks to go ahead of the Brexit deadline (October 31), Johnson said “our proposal removes the so called ‘backstop’ in the previous Withdrawal Agreement.” “A new way forward must be found.” A 7-page explanatory note* accompanying the letter says that all goods moving between the Republic & Northern Ireland would have to be “notified using a declaration”. However, Ireland’s broadcaster RTÉ (*Raidió Teilifís Éireann*) reported that the plan envisaged a series of ‘customs clearance centres’ five to ten miles either side of the border, creating an exclusion zone which would cut off the north western part of the Republic of Ireland from the rest of the country. In a statement responding to the letter, Juncker said that the Commission, which had received a legal text, would examine it “objectively.” Following a phone call with Johnson on October 2, Juncker noted that there were “still some problematic points that will need further work in the coming days, notably with regards to the governance of the backstop.” “The delicate balance struck by the Good Friday Agreement must be preserved.”

An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar, who spoke with the embattled UK Premier by telephone on October 2, said the proposals “do not fully meet the agreed objectives of the backstop.” But he vowed to study them in more detail & consult with the EU institutions & other national capitals, ahead of further talks with Johnson. *Tánaiste* Simon Coveney said that “it doesn’t seem like the basis for agreement, that’s for sure.” Meanwhile, Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn said he “cannot see” Johnson’s proposals getting support, while Scottish National Party leader Nicola Sturgeon said that it was “hard to escape (the) conclusion that they’re designed to fail.” LibDem leader Jo Swinson said on October 1 that it was “increasingly clear Boris Johnson isn’t serious about getting a deal,” while her colleague Tom Brake (MP) described the offer, as leaked, as “nothing short of derisory.” Speaking on the final day of the Tory Party conference in Manchester (September 29-October 2), Johnson insisted that “what people want, what leavers want, what remainers want, what the whole world wants, is to be calmly & sensibly done with the subject & to move on.” “We are coming out of the EU on October 31 come what may,” he assured the party faithful.

*See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-proposals-for-a-new-protocol-on-irelandnorthern-ireland>

UK introduces Environment Bill: The UK government introduced an Environment Bill* (October 15) for England only, which promises a green transformation after Brexit. The 232-page bill would hold government to account if it fails to meet environmental targets on meeting net zero emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050 as well as on biodiversity, air quality, water and resource & waste efficiency, with a requirement for Ministers to tell Parliament why & when any target has been missed. Environment Secretary Theresa Villiers called the natural environment “a vital shared resource.” The bill “leads a green transformation that will help our country to thrive,” she continued. “It positions the UK as a world leader on improving air quality, environmental biodiversity, a more circular economy, & managing our precious water resources in a changing climate.” The Minister also claimed that it “ensures that after Brexit, environmental ambition & accountability are placed more clearly than ever before at the heart of government, both now & in the future.” NFU President Minette Batters said the bill appeared “broad & ambitious.” The union would “examine the details in the coming days.”

*See <https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/environment.html>

NFU calls for national food strategy: The National Farmers Union (England & Wales) has called for a national food strategy to support farming in improving productivity, sustainability & health. The farm lobby has been talking to its members in response to a call for evidence from Henry Dimbleby, a cookery writer & restaurant operator, who has been given the job of developing food policy by the government. NFU President Minette Batters said the review was “long overdue,” & called on politicians to “take domestic farming & food production seriously as it puts plans in place for a national strategy.”

Soil Association Brexit helpline: The UK’s biggest organic certification body, the Soil Association, opened a helpline for businesses in the sector to prepare for a no deal Brexit on October 31. Launched on October 10, with a phone line, email address & online chat system, the helpline gives access to a team to answer questions & provide up-to-date information. There is also a new Brexit support page*, which will be kept up to date & live. The service is open to all UK organic businesses, not just those certified by the Soil Association. UK organic producers would not be able to sell into the EU after a no deal Brexit without certification from an EU-27 certification body. Liz Bowles, Associate Director of Farming, Soil Association, said that a no deal Brexit would mean “maximum uncertainty for organic food & farming, raising critical issues on the ability to trade & export”. She complained of a “lack of clarity & progress from government.” The hotline is funded from the government’s Brexit readiness fund. The telephone number is (+44) 03334 141451, email address is Brexitsupport@soilassociation.org;

*See <https://www.soilassociation.org/brexitforbusiness/>

FARMER PROTESTS BLOCK GERMAN, DUTCH CITIES

Large protests brought traffic to a halt in Bonn & The Hague on October 22, as farmers used their tractors to get across their complaints about being unfairly blamed for environmental issues & subject to increasingly onerous legislation. In Germany, protests took place in 17 cities, notably Bonn, where the Farm Ministry is based, but also in Berlin, Munich, Bayreuth, Erfurt, Rendsburg, Hanover, Oldenburg, Stuttgart, Freiburg, Leipzig & Görlitz, organised by a group called ‘Land schafft Verbindung’ (countryside creates connection). The main gathering was at Bonn’s Münsterplatz, where according to the regional farmers’ organisation RLV (Rheinische Landwirtschafts-Verband) almost 6 000 farmers gathered in the square while 2 000 tractors stood outside the city in a protest making clear their anger at the latest changes to farm & environmental policy. RLV President Bernhard Conzen expressed anger at what politicians were doing to farmers. “Whether it was laws on fertilisers or insect protection, there were newer & sharper requirements around every corner,” Conzen said. “Farmers were

being told they should spread less manure, do without crop protection products or not use their land at all as it was turned into protected areas.” Farmers’ loud protests should make it clear that “this cannot go on,” he said, calling for negotiations with policy-makers. Conzen wants Environment Minister Svenja Schulze to follow the example of her colleague Julia Klöckner, responsible for Food, Agriculture & Consumer Protection, & engage in a technical dialogue with farmers & other stakeholders. “We are tired of the fact that the Federal Environment Minister only follows the ideological demands of the environmental side, without any appreciation of the efforts that we farmers have made for years,” the RLV President went on. In the Netherlands, more than 2 000 farmers took to the roads on tractors on October 22, heading for The Hague & creating more than 1 000km of traffic jams. Protestors complained that their industry is being treated unfairly & being accused of mistreating animals & polluting the environment. The protest was “about our families, our future, the future of our children,” sheep farmer Bart Kemp, one of the organisers of the protest told demonstrators. “It’s about our way of life.”

BEYOND THE EU

WTO DSB DISCUSSES FERTILISER, AIRBUS PROGRESS

The October 28 meeting of the WTO Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) in Geneva heard from members about progress or lack thereof in cases concerning ammonium nitrate, Airbus & biotech products, among others. Chaired by Ambassador David Walker of New Zealand, the DSB heard from Ukraine on case *DS493: Ukraine - Anti-Dumping Measures on Ammonium Nitrate* saying it would implement a July 20, 2018 panel ruling, which required it to change anti-dumping measures it had taken against imports of Russian ammonium nitrate, to bring them into conformity with WTO rules [see *AGRA FOCUS*, October 2019, p.33]. The eastern European country produced a statement which said that it would take time to follow the necessary legal procedures & that it was ready to engage in a constructive dialogue on the issue. A Russian statement to the DSB welcomed Ukraine's announcement & looked forward to discussion with Kiev on how compliance would be achieved.

Turning to dispute *DS316: European Communities and Certain Member States – Measures affecting trade in large civil aircraft* [see below], the US complained that the EU had failed to provide a status report to the settlement body. In response, the EU said that the question was subject to new compliance proceedings & that it was under no obligation to submit a status report. The Board looked at *DS291: European Communities - Measures Affecting the Approval & Marketing of Biotech Products*. The US complained that dozens of applications for approval of biotech events had been awaiting approval for an extended period. Even when products were finally approved, Member States continued to impose restrictions viewed by the US as unwarranted. It urged the bloc to ensure that all its measures on the approval of these products, including those taken by its Member States were based on scientific principles & decisions were taken without undue delay. Indonesia reported on the status of *DS477 & DS478, Indonesia - Importation of Horticultural Products, Animals & Animal Products*. Washington complained that Jakarta continued to fail to bring its measures into line with international trade rules. In particular, the US & New Zealand said there were significant concerns with import licences *inc.* harvest period restrictions, warehouse capacity requirements, limited validity requirements, limited validity periods & fixed licence terms.

Meanwhile, the US said it was not in a position to support a proposal from 116 WTO members calling for the selection process to fill vacancies on the Appellate Body to be started. Norway told the DSB it had concluded a temporary agreement with the EU to deal with possible appeals in disputes between the two, should the Appellate Body cease to operate in December [see below]. The deal is similar to an arrangement made between Canada & the EU. The next DSB meeting is slated for November 22. **To see details of WTO disputes, go to www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/dispu_e/dispu_status_e.htm & type in the case number provided;*

EU-Norway back WTO interim appeal arbitration arrangement: Leaders of the EU & Norway backed an interim appeal arbitration arrangement on October 21 based on existing WTO rules, in a bid to preserve & safeguard a functioning WTO dispute settlement system. The US administration's long-standing decision to block new appointments to the appeals body has compromised the bloc's ability to resolve disputes, while the EU & Norway are keen to implement an "effective & binding dispute settlement for any potential trade disputes that might oppose them under WTO law." The interim arrangement will apply to disputes in the event the Appellate Body is unable to hear appeals & will remain in place until

the Appellate Body is operational. In a statement, officials say the EU's "foremost priority remains to ensure an effective functioning of the existing WTO Appellate Body", pointing out that if the current impasse persists, the Body would be unable to hear new appeals after December 10. The EU & other members of the 164-strong bloc have made formal proposals & are discussing ways to resolve the situation. In the meantime, an interim solution that mirrors the existing WTO appeal process can be established between interested WTO members, as was the case with the EU & Canada back in July.

WASHINGTON SETS PUNITIVE TARIFFS ON EU EXPORTS IN AIRBUS/BOEING DISPUTE

The World Trade Organisation's arbitration panel authorised the US administration to introduce annual retaliatory tariffs up to a value of almost \$7.5 billion on a range of European imports *inc.* wine, whiskey, olives, dairy products, cashmere sweaters, luxury goods & aircraft parts (October 2)*, in the 15-year Airbus/Boeing legal battle over subsidies. The decision marks the largest award of its kind in the trade bloc's history. Washington introduced the punitive duties from October 18 - 10% rate on large civil aircraft & 25% on agricultural & other products - further aggravating EU-US trade relations, which have become increasingly strained over the past few months. On the basis of the 16-page final product list subjected to additional *ad valorem* duties, agricultural goods are targeted but in a very complicated way. The bulk of the tariffs are applicable to imports from Airbus's founding countries - the UK, FR, DE & ES - *inc.* single-malt Irish & Scotch Whiskies, olive oil, cheese, frozen pigmeat, but food exports from all other EU countries are also targeted. Irish exports to the US such as Kerrygold butter, Bailey's Cream Liqueur, cheese, yoghurt & pork look set for hefty levies, with some commentators suggesting that the move serves as a "warning shot" from President Donald Trump to future Trade Commissioner Phil Hogan. Early next year, the Geneva-based trade body is expected to give Brussels the green light to impose its own tariffs on US imports in retaliation for subsidies that led to lost sales for Airbus.

Commenting on the litigation case, EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström said it would be "short-sighted & counterproductive" for Washington to slap tariffs on EU goods, underlining that Brussels would be allowed to do the same in a parallel case over illegal subsidies granted to Boeing. The "mutual imposition of countermeasures ... would only inflict damage on businesses & citizens on both sides of the Atlantic & harm global trade and the broader aviation industry at a sensitive time," the outgoing Trade chief stated.

The EU's largest farm lobby Copa-Cogeca called on both parties to avoid any escalation in the long-running dispute & for their commitment to negotiate trade aspects in an orderly manner. The umbrella organisation supports Commission efforts to find mutually beneficial solutions for this "non-agricultural matter." In reaction to the announcement, Secretary General Pekka Pesonen regretted that the "agricultural sector was once again paying the bill for a political decision on trade that has nothing to do with it." "Farmers on both sides of the Atlantic need stability & trust in order to make long-term investments to remain competitive & attractive," he added. FoodDrinkEurope echoed this stance, with Director General Mella Frewen urging both parties to "engage in a constructive dialogue to swiftly resolve the aircraft disputes & avoid further escalation of trade tensions ... all efforts should focus on a positive trade agenda, which aims to strengthen our long-standing transatlantic trade relations."

*For more details see www.wto.org;

US & China in preliminary trade deal: The US & China have agreed a preliminary trade deal that would see Washington hold off on a hike in tariffs on \$250 billion of Chinese imports, from 25% to 30% (which were due to come into effect on October 15), following bilateral talks in Washington (October 10-11). US President Donald Trump & China's Vice

Premier Liu He held a joint press conference at the White House (October 11), at which the American leader said that “we’ve come to a very substantial phase one deal.” Writing up the limited agreement would “probably [take] three weeks, four weeks, or five weeks,” he elaborated, telling journalists that “as you know, we’re going to be in Chile together for a big Summit,” - taken as a reference to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Ministerial in Santiago, Chile on November 13-14 (meetings run all week November 11-17). “Maybe it’ll be then, or maybe it’ll be sometime around then,” Trump went on. The 73-year-old Republican politician described the tentative bilateral accord as a “tremendous deal for farmers, involving the purchase of between \$40-\$50 billion worth of agricultural products” [*such as soybeans & pork*] - more than double the levels before the trade war. “I’d suggest the farmers have to go & immediately buy more land & get bigger tractors,” said the US leader, who is seeking re-election in November 2020.

US farmers let down on biofuels: The US National Farmers’ Union (NFU) has expressed disappointment after the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) watered down action promised by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) over the effect of small refinery exemptions on biofuel demand [*see AGRA FOCUS, August 2019, p.48*]. In an announcement on October 15, the EPA put forward a plan which would only create a much smaller than hoped for increase in demand, just 770 million gallons a year, instead of 1.35 billion. NFU Vice-President of Public Policy & Communications Rob Larew said that “again & again, the administration has made big promises to family farmers & and again & again, they have failed to deliver on those promises.” “We shouldn’t be surprised, then, when President Trump & the EPA swear to fully repair the harm inflicted by small refinery exemptions & then only offer half a solution” he went on. “We are still gravely disappointed,” he complained. “Family farmers have been burned too many times by broken promises & half-hearted support.”

*See <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2019/10/04/president-trump-delivers-key-promise-american-farmers-epa-usda>

Centre-left wins Argentine election: Alberto Fernández of the centre-left Justicialist (Peronist) party was elected on October 27 as the new President of Argentina, ousting Mauricio Macri of the centre-right Republican Proposal party. Fernández is expected to take office on December 10, following the first ever removal in an election of an incumbent Argentine President. The election was dominated by an economic crisis. Ex-President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (2007-2015) will be Vice-President in Fernández’s administration. The 60-year-old Fernández, who is from Buenos Aires, is a lawyer who was the country’s negotiator in the GATT Uruguay Round.

Uruguay election inconclusive: Uruguay faces a second round of voting on November 24 after an election on October 27 failed to produce a conclusive result. Daniel Martínez of the centre-left Broad Front coalition won the first round of the presidential election but failed to get the 50% required for an outright win. Martínez faces Luis Lacalle Pou of the conservative National Party in the November 24 vote in a campaign which has been dominated by concerns over crime & the economy.

MARKETS

EU AGRI-FOOD EXPORTS RISE IN AUGUST

The Commission reported further growth in EU agri-food exports in August, with imports marginally lower and pork, spirits and liqueurs & dairy products leading the increase in sales abroad. The 7-page report *'Monitoring EU agri-food trade: Development until August 2019'**, published on October 24, showed a rise of 5.6% in the total value of the sector's exports during the month compared with the year before, bringing it to €12.07 billion. Imports fell by 0.2% from a year earlier to €9.14bn, leaving the EU's food trade surplus at €2.93bn, +29%. For the year to the end of August, total EU agri-food exports were up by 6% at €145.1bn. Imports for the 12 months to the end of August were up 3% at €118.6bn. For August 2019 compared with August 2018, the biggest increases in sales by destination were for China, up €283m (+33.4%) & the US, up €192m (+9.9%). The biggest falls were for Hong Kong, down €66m or 21%, Libya, also down €66m or 59% and Algeria down €48m or 20%. Wheat, up €142m (+39%), pork up €132m (+36%) spirits and liqueurs up €125m (+12%), milk powders & whey up €82m (+26%) & cheese up €52m (+15%) led the hike in exports. Exports of live animals fell by 27% or €74m & those of beet and cane sugar by 57% or €52m. Exports of vegetable oils, excluding palm & olive oil were down by €21m or 11%, while beer exports were down by €20m or 6%.

By country the biggest increases in agri-food imports in August 2019, compared with August 2018 were for Ukraine, up €198m (+50%), Brazil, up €94m (+10%) & Canada, which saw its sales to the EU rise by €74m or 57%. Imports from the EU fell by €153m or 15%. Those from South Africa were down by €59m or 19% and from Indonesia by €51m or 13%. The biggest increases in imports for August compared with a year earlier were for oilseeds (other than soybeans), up €147m (+49%), coarse cereals, up €113m (53%), ethanol, up €42m (+138%), wheat, up €42m (+42%) and beet and cane sugar which was up €41m (+88%). The biggest falls in imports were for unroasted coffee & tea, down €103m or 17%, soybeans, down €58m/13%, palm oil, down €49m/11%, citrus fruit, down €48m/15% and fruit juices down €43m/22%. The report does not give reasons for the changes, but much higher pork exports are likely to be an effect of the damage African Swine Fever (ASF) has done in some parts of the world, notably South East Asia, while increased imports of oilseeds at a time of tight supply in the EU are reflected by higher total import figures from Brazil, a major producer.

*<https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/trade/trade-and-international-policy-analysis#monitoringeuagrifoodtrade>

EU AGRI-FOOD EXPORTS FARE WELL OUT OF FTAs

The EU's agri-food sector has performed strongly in exports to countries covered by Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), the Commission confirmed on October 14. A 40-page annual report on the *'Implementation of Free Trade Agreements'** (2018) shows growth in EU exports to & imports from international partners of 2% & 4.6% respectively, with a strong performance for agri-food. The Union's exports of agri-food products under preferential agreements grew by 2.2% or €1 billion in 2018, while agri-food imports declined by 0.6%. The deals "continue to contribute to developing a rules-based trading system & they improved market access for EU products & investments in partner countries," DG TRADE officials outline. EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström said the report showed that "more of our global trade is covered by preferential deals than ever before." "Our food & drink exports in particular are flourishing thanks to lower tariffs & legal protection abroad for products such as Champagne & Feta," she outlined. The bloc currently has the "largest trade network in the world," with 41

agreements covering 72 countries. Speaking to reporters, the Swedish Commissioner said that “trade is often presented as a threat to European agriculture, but our figures say that is not correct,” noting that the EU is the world’s largest exporter of food & beverages. The Union was “finding new customers for our quality products all over the world,” she added. The liberal politician also announced that she had instructed DG TRADE services to launch a WTO dispute against Colombia over frozen fries. The South American country imposed anti-dumping duties on imports of the product from NL, DE & BE in November 2018, which are “completely unjustified” in her view. “They are harming EU companies,” she complained. Malmström also told the briefing that preliminary results of a yet to be published Eurobarometer study of attitudes to trade deals showed that six in ten Europeans say they benefit from international trade, an increase of 16 percentage points since 2010.

*More details at https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_19_6074;

CHINA ASF BOOSTS EU PIGMEAT EXPORTS

China’s woes with African Swine Fever (ASF) have boosted EU pigmeat exports to the point where DG AGRI now predicts they will be up by 12% for 2019 as a whole. Cereal & milk production are also expected to rise. In the 33-page ‘*Short-Term Outlook for EU Agricultural Markets in 2019 & 2020*’, published on October 4, DG AGRI officials forecast that EU 2019/2020 gross cereal production will recover by 5.9% to reach 310 million tonnes, “if good weather conditions prevail until the end of the harvest.” Gross oilseed output is expected to fall by 1.5% to 32.43mt in 2019/2020 on adverse weather & reduced rapeseed area. The forecast for 2019/2020 sugar production is set at 18.3mt, a rise of 3.7% on the previous year. Area is estimated to be down by 4%, but this is more than offset by higher yields, largely due to favourable weather conditions. Milk production is expected to rise by 0.8% to 167.9m litres, on “sustained demand for EU dairy products, lower supply in the main EU competitors, favourable weather conditions & price environment,” authors of the report outline. Milk output is forecast to rise by a further 0.9% to 169.3ml in 2020.

Beef production will fall by 1.2% to 8.146mt in 2019, but “access to new markets & an increase of volumes to existing partners” mean a 15% rise in beef exports to 288 000t. In 2020 production will fall by a further 0.9% to 8.073mt, with exports of beef rising by 5% to 303 000t. For pigmeat, 2019 production will increase by 0.2% to 24.2mt, while exports will rise by 12% to 3mt. DG AGRI expects pigmeat production to pick up in 2020, jumping 1.4% to 24.528mt, with exports rising by a further 12% to 3.36mt. The poultry sector will see a 2.5% increase in production this year, bringing it to 15.634mt, with meat exports up 3% at 1.641mt. Production will rise next year by a further 1% to 15.798mt, with meat exports going up 1.5% to 1.665mt. Sheep & goat meat production is set to rise by 0.5% to 955mt in 2019, increasing by a further 0.5% in 2020 to 959mt. Exports for the sector will rise by 2% to 29mt in 2019 & a further 2% to 30mt in 2020. *See https://ec.europa.eu/info/files/report-eu-agricultural-markets-short-term-outlook-autumn-2019_en

IGC CUTS WORLD GRAIN CROP FORECAST

The International Grains Council (IGC) cut its forecast for global 2019/20 grain output to 2 157 million tonnes, down 2mt on the figure from September, but still well up on the previous year’s 2 142mt. The Council cut its forecasts for wheat, maize & oats. In the latest edition of its monthly *Grain Market Report**, published on October 24, the London-based international body put the wheat crop at 762mt, down from the previous forecast of 764mt & up from 733mt last year, “with reductions for Australia, Argentina, the US & Serbia more than offsetting increases for the EU, Russia & Turkmenistan.” Some 1.4mt has been added to the estimate for EU wheat production, mainly because of a 1.3mt rise in the forecast for the UK crop, to 16.3mt, compared with 14mt last year, because of increased yield & area. This brings the Union’s total to 153.6mt, +11% on the year, with France up 16% at 41.3%. The US spring wheat harvest was “delayed by wintry conditions,” officials at the IGC said. It was 96%

complete by October 20, at which point it is normally finished. “As precipitation continued late into the month, the remaining area is unlikely to meet milling specifications,” they continue, taking 0.5mt off its forecast for the country’s total production of wheat, bringing it to 53.4mt, or 4% up on the year. Argentina has been hit by drought & frosts and the IGC has reduced its crop forecast for the South American country by 0.9mt to 19.5mt, the same level as last year. Australia has suffered “sustained dryness during the critical grain filling period,” the IGC said, cutting its forecast for the country’s wheat crop by 2.1mt, to a 12-year low of 17mt, compared to 17.3mt last year.

The forecast for maize was reduced by just 1mt, to 1 098mt, “as downward revisions for Argentina, the EU & Egypt outweigh upgrades for China, Ukraine, Serbia & Russia,” the Council said. For oilseeds, the global soybean crop forecast is now “fractionally lower” at 341mt with an 18mt fall since last year “reflecting expectations for the smallest US crop in six seasons.” “Other producers may cut bigger crops, but South American prospects in particular are tentative given that seeding has been underway for only a few weeks,” the IGC noted. The forecast for rapeseed output in 2019/2020 is broadly steady, at 68.8mt compared with 72.2mt last year, “as a further reduction in the EU crop estimate is offset by increases for other producers, namely the US & China.” A slight month-on-month cut in the forecast for the EU, to 16.6mt, reflects “marginal m/m downgrades for Poland & the UK,” the IGC said. The forecast EU rapeseed crop is 16% down on 2018/19 & the lowest level for 13 years. “The disappointing harvest stemmed from heavily reduced crops in France, Germany & Romania,” the international body said. *See <https://www.igc.int>;

FRUIT & VEG MARKET OBSERVATORY KICKS OFF

The Commission (DG AGRI) launched the new fruit & vegetable market observatory* on October 18, which aims to provide greater transparency & improve market intelligence for the sector, which represents around 24% of the EU agricultural output value. The observatory will focus on pip fruit (apples & pears), citrus fruit, stone fruit (peaches & nectarines) and tomatoes, with a subgroup covering each ‘rubrique.’ The dashboard & balance sheets will be regularly updated with a wide range of market data such as prices, production & trade - complemented by market analysis in a timely manner, short-term outlook reports, medium-term prospects and regular board meetings composed of market experts to discuss the evolving market situation. The new platform follows the launch of observatories for crops, sugar, meat & milk, with the wine market observatory set to be launched on November 4. The Commission designed these hubs to “help the European agriculture sector to cope more effectively with market volatility & ensure more transparency,” DG AGRI officials outline. Speaking at the October Farm Council in Luxembourg, Commissioner Phil Hogan said the “current EU season has started with better prospects, after the difficult market situation for citrus fruit, apples & pears in the last season.” He underlined that the low harvest for those products has resulted in a significant price recovery in the start of the season in the main producer Member States.

*https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/farming/facts-and-figures/markets/overviews/market-observatories/fruit-and-vegetables_en;

**www.ifema.es/en/fruit-attraction

STUDY SHOWS BENEFITS OF PRODUCER ORGANISATIONS

Farm sector producer organisations (POs) benefit their members & the rural areas around them by strengthening farmers’ position in the food supply chain, while providing technical assistance to their members, according to a study published by the Commission on October 23. The 158-page report entitled ‘*Study on the best ways for producer organisations to be formed, carry out their activities & be supported*’* was prepared by the European Economic Interest Grouping Arcadia International, Ernst & Young & independent experts. The analysis concludes that POs benefit farmers & the communities in which they are located & “oftentimes promote sustainable farming practices.” They create employment & promote the

quality of regional or local agriculture, while the ability of these organisations, in many cases, to provide professional advice & technical services contributes to the efficiency of farms, the authors conclude. There are more than 42 000 producer organisations in the EU - defined as “any farmers’ cooperation based on a legal entity.” Some 3 505 POs & associations of producer organisations (APOs) are recognised by Member State governments. Around 60% of the total recognised POs & APOs at EU level are based in three Member States - France with 759, Germany (658) & Spain, which has 588 recognised entities. Some 1 850 POs or APOs are in the fruit & vegetable sector, followed by milk & milk products (334), olive oil & table olives (254), wine (222), beef & veal (210), cereals (177) & pigmeat (101) [*‘other products’ (107) such as potatoes & rabbit rearing*]. Authors find that the main objectives of recognised POs & APOs are common across sectors & include production planning, adapting to demand, concentration of products & placing products on the market. The most common form of producer organisation is the agricultural cooperative. POs are seen as giving farmers greater bargaining power when negotiating with other actors in the food supply chain, although some producers do see the loss of autonomy involved as too big a price to pay. Some farmers also complain of an increased administrative burden & expressed concern about the cost of setting them up.

*See https://ec.europa.eu/info/files/study-best-ways-producer-organisations-be-formed-carry-out-their-activities-and-be-supported_en

COMMISSION FERTILISER POSITION “HALF-HEARTED”, COPA-COGECA

The EU’s largest farm lobby group Copa-Cogeca has attacked the Commission’s position on imports of liquid nitrogen fertiliser as “half-hearted”, but the EU fertiliser industry has welcomed the new measures which should apply for five years. In a statement issued on October 10, the farm lobby group said that the Trade Defence Instruments Committee, which met on September 11, had failed to deliver an opinion on proposals to establish definitive anti-dumping measures on imports of urea & ammonium nitrate (UAN) from Russia, Trinidad & Tobago & the US. The ‘no opinion’ allowed the Commission to adopt its own measures (or not) under its own authority. A new Regulation* imposing additional duties on imports of 22.24 €/t for UAN originating from Trinidad & Tobago, 29.48 €/t for UAN from the US, & 42.47 €/t for the majority of UAN originating from Russia entered into force on October 10 (immediately applicable in the EU). The decision will result in an increase in production costs for European farmers, particularly in the cereal sector, farm lobbyists say. This new protection for the European fertiliser sector, “which is already not very competitive, is particularly unfair given that the agricultural markets themselves are increasingly open in the world,” they add. Industry body Fertilizers Europe said that the move showed how the modernisation of EU trade defence measures could have a positive impact. The sector welcomed the “anti-dumping measures & hopes for immediate & continued relief from the Commission investigation’s findings of proven & severe injurious dumping”, Jacob Hansen, Director General of Fertilizers Europe, said.

*<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L:2019:258:FULL&from=FR>

FOOD COMMODITY PRICES STEADY

Global food commodity prices were unchanged in September, compared with August, but 3.3% up on the September 2018 level, according to the UN’s Food & Agriculture Organisation (FAO) on October 3. The agency’s *Food Price Index** showed a sharp fall in sugar prices, which was offset by rises for vegetable oils & meat. Cereal prices were almost unchanged from August & down 3.9% from September 2018. Wheat prices firmed on a good supply outlook, while maize was down because of large export availabilities. Rising rape & palm oil prices meant that vegetable oil was up 1.4% from August to its highest level in more than a year. Demand from India & China bolstered palm, while rapeseed oil was pushed up by a deteriorating EU production outlook. Dairy prices were down 0.6% on the month - higher

quotations for milk powders more than offset by falling cheese & butter prices - with increased export availability, principally from New Zealand. Meat was up 0.8% from August, with beef & sheep meat firmer on solid demand, especially from China. Pigmeat prices fell on increased export supplies from Europe, despite high domestic prices in China, as a result of African Swine Fever. Sugar was down 3.9% from August, largely because of positive production prospects & the fact that lower international energy prices reduced demand for sugarcane for ethanol production.

*See <http://www.fao.org/worldfoodsituation/foodpricesindex/en/>

AVEC ASSEMBLY HEARS CALL FOR HELP ON MERCOSUR, UKRAINE CHALLENGES

The Commission must do more to help the poultry sector face the challenges of imports from Mercosur & Ukraine & the potential market loss due to Brexit – this was the key message emanating from the AVEC General Assembly ‘*Food for the Future*’ held in Budapest (October 4). More than 200 participants from the poultry value chain heard from AVEC President Paul Lopez about the extra 180 000 tonnes of poultry set to come into the EU market each year under the trade deal with Mercosur, which he noted was twice what was offered at the end of 2017. He also reminded delegates that Ukrainian companies have been offered an extra 50 000t in sales to the EU in return for ending the practice of using a loophole to circumvent quotas. Lopez rejected the idea that the extra imports could be taken up by increased consumption. He also raised the uncertainty surrounding Brexit. The UK is one of Europe’s biggest consumers & importers of poultry meat. He called on the Commission for funding to help the sector cope with the extra competition. More should be done to get access for EU poultry in the Chinese market, the lobbyist insisted. Lopez, from the French association Fédération des Industries Avicoles (FIA), further called for thorough controls on imports from third countries & origin labelling, including in food service establishments. Hungarian Minister of Agriculture Dr. Istvan Nagy & DG SANTE Head of Unit (Food Hygiene) Eric Thévenard were guest speakers at the Assembly. The 2019 AVEC Annual Report* was launched at the event. *See www.avec-poultry.eu under ‘Resources’;

Fines issued over canned veg cartel: The Commission issued fines of a total of €31.65 million to Dutch company Coroos & French Groupe CECAB for breaching antitrust rules on September 26. A third company, Bonduelle (FR), was not fined as it had told EU officials about the cartel. The three groups admitted that they were involved in a cartel for the supply of canned vegetables to retailers & food service companies in the European Economic Area (EEA) for 13 years. Competition Commissioner Margrethe Vestager said that “these cartels ultimately hurt European consumers,” & the decision sent a message that “cartels are not accepted.” The companies set prices & agreed on market shares & volumes, allocating customers between themselves, coordinating tender bids & exchanging information. The breach of antitrust rules lasted from January 19, 2000 to June 11, 2013 for Bonduelle, going on to October 1, 2013 for the other two companies. Coroos has to pay a fine of €13.65m, while Groupe CECAB’s hefty penalty is €18m.

AGRA FACTS DOCUMENTATION

October 2019

The following pages provide a chronological summary of the past month's events, as detailed by **AGRA FACTS**, the rapid-response fax service for agribusiness executives, direct from Brussels.

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The latest EU agriculture, environment & trade news

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- **BREXIT UPDATE: ELECTION DEC 12, AFTER EU-27 AGREE TO ARTICLE 50 EXTENSION**
- **EU BUDGET CHIEF OETTINGER RAILS AGAINST MISINFORMATION ON FUTURE MFF**
- **TRADE NEWS: EU EXPORTS UP, LED BY PORK; WTO BOARD DISCUSSES FERTILISER**
- **PERSONNEL: Macri ousted; Uruguay's 2nd round; Lobillo Borrero/Delvaux Principal Advisers;**
- **IN BRIEF: EP agri study; Plastics awards; Wine takeover; Halloumi case; 'Priority' plant pests;**
- **TIMETABLE: The week ahead;**

BRITAIN TO HOLD ELECTION ON DEC 12, AFTER EU-27 AGREE TO ARTICLE 50 EXTENSION

British MPs voted earlier this week (Oct 29) to hold an election on Dec 12 - the third election in the country in four years - after the main opposition Labour party agreed to back an early general election, saying it was ready to fight the "most ambitious & radical campaign for real change our country has ever seen." The announcement follows the Oct 29 decision by the EU-27 to extend the Article 50 process until Jan 31, 2020. MPs finally voted to hold the pre-Christmas poll by 438 to 20, a majority of 418, after a day of wrangling. The opposition Labour party had tried to force Prime Minister Boris Johnson to accept a Dec 9 vote, but the move was defeated by 315 votes to 295. *UK general elections are traditionally held on a Thursday, but many in the opposition parties felt that the earlier date would help get students, in particular, out to vote. Many leave universities during that week of Dec & it is feared may not vote if they're busy travelling.* Liberal Democrats & the Scottish National Party abstained from the vote on the election after losing the chance to hold it on Dec 9. Moves to get the voting age reduced from 18 to 16 & to allow all EU nationals resident in the UK to vote were not selected by the presiding Deputy Speaker Lindsay Hoyle, after talk that the government would give up its attempt to hold a poll if they were successful. Citizens of the Irish Republic, Malta & Cyprus, living in the UK, already have a vote in the country's elections.

The final vote on an election came after the European Council had agreed to Johnson's unwilling request for an extension (Oct 19) [see AF82-19] by written procedure. Commenting this week, President of the European Council Donald Tusk said the EU-27 "has agreed that it will accept the UK's request for a Brexit flexextension until Jan 31, 2020." UK Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn said on twitter (Oct 29) that "no deal is now off the table so tonight labour will back a general election." In a letter to Tusk, Johnson said that it was an "unwanted prolongation" that is damaging to British democracy & to the EU-UK relationship. The New York-born politician said he accepted the decision but added that he "would also urge Member States to make clear that a further extension after Jan 31 (2020) is not possible." Tusk tweeted to his "British friends" that this extension "may be the last one." "Please make the best use of this time," he told them.

EU BUDGET CHIEF OETTINGER RAILS AGAINST MISINFORMATION ON FUTURE MFF

EU Budget Commissioner Günther Oettinger used a press conference in Brussels earlier today (Oct 30) to attack the circulation of misleading figures on the next long-term budget, notably concerning Germany. In the last few days "some media have been publishing some rather misleading figures," he complained. "They say there is going to be a doubling of the German contribution to Brussels ... they are saying that this is going to be a huge blow." The outgoing Budget chief insisted that "the question of 'net payer' should not be dealt with in rather irresponsible language." In the 1970s, with 70% of the budget going into the CAP, it was easy to tell what was being paid back to a country's farmers. Now the EU had programmes which were in the interests of many Member States, "for example refugees in Turkey, to try to build their human dignity ... if we build hospitals, if we make sure the children of these refugees can get a basic education & try to provide good sanitary conditions, we are not then gaining anything," he insisted, except that those refugees "don't come into Europe." The EU's satellites were enormously useful for providing data, but there was no flow of money back to any Member State. Frontex was a further example. "This is not going to be visible in the middle of Germany or even on the border between Germany & one of its neighbouring countries," the 66-year-old German Commissioner explained. "However this will help us to ensure that we have some order," Oettinger continued. "We do not have the threat of disordered migration." If the EU wants to try to minimise the number of refugees coming from Africa by investing in countries there, "Mali, Egypt & other countries will not be contributing to the EU's coffers," he said. The CDU politician explained that the planned Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) was built on three pillars - "the Common Agricultural Policy, Cohesion Policy & a third pillar, which I would say is modernisation defence, research defence, focusing on areas such as migration." The EU now had established programmes, which were not necessarily going to pay money back to Member States. "There is no longer any relevance of this whole argument, I am a net payer, I am a net contributor," the Stuttgart native emphasised. His proposal is that each national capital pays 1.114% of

Gross National Income (GNI) into the EU budget, which “fully corresponds to the demands of some Member States, which wish to ensure that we have a smaller budget for a smaller European Union.”

On Germany, he stressed that some Member States pay more than it does on a per capita basis. “Since there are more Germans than Luxembourgers then looking at the whole context Germany pays more in,” he explained. He called on journalists to go back and check their figures with Berlin, putting the net contribution for 2018 in Germany at €13.5 billion, rising in 2020 to €14.4bn. “At the end of the next MFF the figure will be €23.5bn,” he said. “I have read figures that are €30bn or even €33bn.” Such numbers were “lies.”

TRADE NEWS: EU EXPORTS UP, LED BY PORK; WTO BOARD DISCUSSES FERTILISER, AIRBUS

EU agri-food exports rise: The Commission has reported further growth in EU agri-food exports in August, with imports marginally lower and pork, spirits and liqueurs & dairy products leading the increase in sales abroad. The 7-page report *'Monitoring EU agri-food trade: Development until August 2019'**, published on Oct 24, showed a rise of 5.6% in the total value of the sector's exports during the month compared with the year before, bringing it to €12.07 billion. Imports fell by 0.2% from a year earlier to €9.14bn, leaving the EU's food trade surplus at €2.93bn, +29%. For the year to the end of Aug, total EU agri-food exports were up by 6% at €145.1bn. Imports for the 12 months to the end of Aug were up 3% at €118.6bn. For Aug 2019 compared with Aug 2018, the biggest increases in sales by destination were for China, up €283m (+33.4%) & the US, up €192m (+9.9%). The biggest falls were for Hong Kong, down €66m or 21%, Libya, also down €66m or 59% and Algeria down €48m or 20%. Wheat, up €142m (+39%), pork up €132m (+36%) spirits and liqueurs up €125m (+12%), milk powders & whey up €82m (+26%) & cheese up €52m (+15%) led the hike in exports. Exports of live animals fell by 27% or €74m & those of beet and cane sugar by 57% or €52m. Exports of vegetable oils, excluding palm & olive oil were down by €21m or 11%, while beer exports were down by €20m or 6%.

By country the biggest increases in agri-food imports in Aug 2019, compared with Aug 2018 were for Ukraine, up €198m (+50%), Brazil, up €94m (+10%) & Canada, which saw its sales to the EU rise by €74m or 57%. Imports from the EU fell by €153m or 15%. Those from South Africa were down by €59m or 19% and from Indonesia by €51m or 13%. The biggest increases in imports for August compared with a year earlier were for oilseeds (other than soybeans), up €147m (+49%), coarse cereals, up €113m (53%), ethanol, up €42m (+138%), wheat, up €42m (+42%) and beet and cane sugar which was up €41m (+88%). The biggest falls in imports were for unroasted coffee & tea, down €103m or 17%, soybeans, down €58m/13%, palm oil, down €49m/11%, citrus fruit, down €48m/15% and fruit juices down €43m/22%.

The report does not give reasons for the changes, but much higher pork exports are likely to be an effect of the damage African Swine Fever (ASF) has done in some parts of the world, notably South East Asia, while increased imports of oilseeds at a time of tight supply in the EU are reflected by higher total import figures from Brazil, a major producer.

***<https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/trade/trade-and-international-policy-analysis#monitoringeuagrifoodtrade>**

WTO DSB discusses fertiliser, Airbus progress: This week's meeting of the WTO Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) in Geneva heard from members about progress or lack thereof in cases concerning ammonium nitrate, Airbus & biotech products, among others. Chaired by Ambassador David Walker of New Zealand, the DSB (Oct 28) heard from Ukraine on case *DS493: Ukraine - Anti-Dumping Measures on Ammonium Nitrate* saying it would implement a July 20, 2018 panel ruling, which required it to change anti-dumping measures it had taken against imports of Russian ammonium nitrate, to bring them into conformity with WTO rules [see *AF70-19*]. The eastern European country produced a statement which said that it would take time to follow the necessary legal procedures & that it was ready to engage in a constructive dialogue on the issue. A Russian statement to the DSB welcomed Ukraine's announcement & looked forward to discussion with Kiev on how compliance would be achieved.

Turning to dispute *DS316: European Communities and Certain Member States – Measures affecting trade in large civil aircraft* [see *AF76-19*], the US complained that the EU had failed to provide a status report to the settlement body. In response, the EU said that the question was subject to new compliance proceedings & that it was under no obligation to submit a status report. The Board looked at *DS291: European Communities - Measures Affecting the Approval & Marketing of Biotech Products*. The US complained that dozens of applications for approval of biotech events had been awaiting approval for an extended period. Even when products were finally approved, Member States continued to impose restrictions viewed by the US as unwarranted. It urged the bloc to ensure that all its measures on the approval of these products, including those taken by its Member States were based on scientific principles & decisions were taken without undue delay. Indonesia reported on the status of *DS477 & DS478, Indonesia - Importation of Horticultural Products, Animals & Animal Products*. Washington complained that Jakarta continued to fail to bring its measures into line with international trade rules. In particular, the US & New Zealand said there were significant concerns with import licences *inc.* harvest period restrictions, warehouse capacity requirements, limited validity requirements, limited validity periods & fixed licence terms.

Meanwhile, the US said it was not in a position to support a proposal from 116 WTO members calling for the selection process to fill vacancies on the Appellate Body to be started. Norway told the DSB it had

concluded a temporary agreement with the EU to deal with possible appeals in disputes between the two, should the Appellate Body cease to operate in Dec [see AF83-19]. The deal is similar to an arrangement made between Canada & the EU. The next DSB meeting is slated for Nov 22.

* To see details of WTO disputes, go to www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/dispu_e/dispu_status_e.htm & type in the **case number** provided;

PERSONNEL: Macri ousted; Uruguay's 2nd round; Lobillo Borrero/Delvaux Principal Advisers;

Centre-left wins Argentine election: Alberto Fernández of the centre-left Justicialist (Peronist) party was elected on Oct 27 as the new President of Argentina, ousting Mauricio Macri of the centre-right Republican Proposal party. Fernández is expected to take office on Dec 10, following the first ever removal in an election of an incumbent Argentine President. By the evening of Oct 30, as counting progressed, Fernández had received over 48% of the votes. Macri conceded defeat on Oct 27. The election was dominated by an economic crisis. Ex-President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (2007-2015) will be Vice-President in Fernández's administration. The 60-year-old Fernández, who is from Buenos Aires, is a lawyer who was the country's negotiator in the GATT Uruguay Round.

Uruguay election inconclusive: Uruguay faces a second round of voting on Nov 24 after an election held over the weekend (Oct 27) failed to produce a conclusive result. Daniel Martínez of the centre-left Broad Front coalition won the first round of the presidential election but failed to get the 50% required for an outright win. Martínez faces Luis Lacalle Pou of the conservative National Party in the Nov 24 vote in a campaign which has been dominated by concerns over crime & the economy.

Lobillo Borrero appointed AGRI Principal Adviser: The Commission appointed Cristina Lobillo Borrero as Principal Adviser to DG AGRI. The Spanish woman's new title is 'Principal Adviser for Common Agricultural Policy interaction with other EU policies' in the Directorate-General. Lobillo Borrero joined the Commission in 2004 & has been Chef de Cabinet for Commissioner Miguel Arias Cañete in charge of climate action & energy since 2014. She previously worked as assistant to Jean-Luc Demarty at the end of his term as DG AGRI boss (2010) & when he took over as DG TRADE Director General (2011), with many referring to the trustworthy & competent official as his "right-hand woman". The new Principal Adviser has a Law Degree from the Universities of Cordoba & Siena (1987-1992).

Delvaux gets nod for TRADE Principal Adviser: Léon Delvaux has been made Principal Adviser for 'Coherence in trade relations' in DG Trade. Delvaux, from Luxembourg, joined the Commission from the country's diplomatic corps in 2014 to become Trade & Development Adviser in the Cabinet of President Jean-Claude Juncker, the position he currently holds. In his native country, he was Deputy Director for Economic & European Affairs from Aug 2013 until Sept 2014. Before that, he served as Deputy Director for Cooperation & Development from Sept 2010 until Aug 2013. Delvaux studied law & history in Paris.

IN BRIEF: EP agri study; Halloumi case; 'Priority' plant pests; Polish biotech; Wine takeover;

Focus on sustainability, says report for COMAGRI: Agri-food policy should focus on sustainability as it faces up to the challenge of feeding an expanding world population in the coming decades, according to a report prepared for the European Parliament's Agriculture Committee. The 81-page report '*Megatrends in the agri-food sector: global overview & possible policy response from an EU perspective*,'* requested by COMAGRI & prepared by the EP's Policy Department for Structural & Cohesion Policies looks at how & whether, agriculture can achieve the necessary doubling in production to feed an expected world population of nearly 10 billion in 2050. *Two of the experts brought in by the Policy Department to prepare the report, Monica Pesce (VVA Brussels) & Daniel Traon (Arcadia) will present their findings to AGRI MEPs on Nov 5.*

Authors of the report ask the question whether agricultural output can be increased by the necessary amount without causing irreparable damage to the planet. They conclude that "sustainable & efficient use of land & water via technological support can increase crop yields without the need to expand agricultural land," noting that "increasing the efficiency of water use is also becoming crucial." They call for a "great food transformation" to achieve that, with increased awareness about environmentally sustainable diets & regulation on food waste. "Especially in high-income countries, it will enhance the adoption of more balanced diets comprising fewer animal products & more fruits and vegetables," they stress. The experts also want to see higher food prices, highlighting that "under-priced food can encourage the overuse of natural resources & excessive consumption that leads to health problems & food waste." Their concern is to make sure agriculture can contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, while still being able to feed growing demand. "Substantial investments are needed in order to decrease GHG emissions & minimise the impact of agri-food systems on climate change," they say. Of a range of possible scenarios the experts recommend 'sustainability for all.' "Policy-makers should focus on the agricultural productivity & foresee incentives under (the) CAP proposal for increasing &/or maximising agricultural production in the EU as well as to foster uptake & knowledge-sharing of technology & digitalisation in agricultural production as driver(s) for food security," in their view. Sustainability should be targeted at all levels of the food chain. The EU should continue to support global initiatives to reduce emissions, such as the Paris Agreement, as well as those focussed on cutting biodiversity loss. The Union, the authors say, should make sure all trade agreements

consider environmental protection as well as ensuring its own commitments on cutting GHG emission are effectively implemented, in a timely fashion, including in agriculture. **For more <http://bit.ly/MGT629Ag>*

Advocate General finds against Halloumi group: Advocate General Juliane Kokott has recommended that the Court of Justice reject an appeal against the General Court's finding that BBQloumi, a trademark registered by a Bulgarian company should be allowed. The original applicant was the Foundation for the Protection of the Traditional Cheese of Cyprus named Halloumi, based in Cyprus & the defendant was the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO). The other party to the proceedings, which first took place before EUIPO's Board of Appeal, is Bulgarian based M.J. Dairies EOOD. On July 9, 2014, M.J. Dairies EOOD filed an application with EUIPO for registration of a figurative mark containing the word BBQloumi. The Foundation opposed the registration, but EUIPO rejected its complaint. The Cyprus-based organisation then brought a case before the General Court, which dismissed it. Their reasoning was that the mark was unlikely to create confusion. The Foundation then appealed against that judgement (Case T 328/17). Kokott proposes that the Court should dismiss the appeal. She rejects the idea that the mark would create confusion & the Foundation's claim that Halloumi is a mark under the Trade Mark Regulation, noting that is a designation of a specialist type of cheese. **Go to <http://curia.europa.eu/juris> & search for case C-766/18;*

Commission publishes pest list: The Commission recently published a list of 20 priority plant pests on the EU territory. The list*, unveiled on Oct 11, includes those regulated quarantine pests which have the most severe economic, environmental & social impact, among them Xylella Fastidiosa, the Japanese beetle, Asian long-horned beetle, citrus greening & Citrus Black Spot. Member States will be under an obligation to launch public information campaigns, carry out annual surveys, prepare contingency plans, simulation exercises & action plans aimed at eradicating the pests on the list. EU Health & Food Safety Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis said "plant health has been high on the agenda of my mandate over the past five years," while he was "glad to count in my legacy this prioritisation that will help the EU & Member States to increase preparedness & early actions against very dangerous plant pests." The move would "contribute to the European green deal, protecting our biodiversity, the natural ecosystems & the EU agriculture," the outgoing Lithuanian Commissioner said. The selection of pests was drawn up on the basis of an assessment by the Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) & the bloc's food safety watchdog (EFSA), which takes into account the probability of spreading, establishment & consequences of those pests for the Union. Views from a dedicated Expert Group & public feedback provided via the Better Regulation portal were also taken on board.

**See <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019R1702&from=EN>*

Support for Polish biotech: The European Investment Bank (EIB) has agreed to lend €30 million to Polish biotech firm Mabion to finance its growth plans, the Commission announced on Oct 24. Mabion is to use the money for a research & development programme, along with clinical trials & expanding its production facilities. The company expects to employ 96 additional staff after receiving the money. The loan is backed by the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the financial pillar of the Investment Plan for Europe, the so-called Juncker Plan. Mabion develops & makes medicine to treat certain types of blood cancer & rheumatoid arthritis. EU Commissioner for Health & Food Safety Vytenis Andriukaitis said the loan was "a clear demonstration that the EU is a strong supporter of innovative, grass-roots companies in Poland & throughout Europe."

Wine retailer takeover authorised: The Commission has authorised the takeover of wine retailers Majestic Wine Warehouses, based in the UK, & Les Celliers de Calais, which operates in France, by Fortress Investment of the US, DG COMP officials confirmed on Oct 25. Majestic Wine Warehouses Ltd. sells wine, beer, spirits & other beverages from over 200 Majestic stores in the UK, while Les Celliers de Calais operates two stores under the Majestic brand at Coquelles & Calais in northern France. The EU's executive, operating under the simplified procedure, concluded that the merger would not increase concentration as the companies involved are in different markets.

**For more info go to <https://ec.europa.eu/competition/elojade/isef/index.cfm> & enter case number M.9524;*

Plastics ideas get awards: Winners in the Commission's Social Innovation Competition awards on Oct 24 include two applicants who came up with ways to reduce the use of plastic packaging in the food sector. The MIWA (Minimum Waste) project from Czech-based company Arancia is a circular distribution & sale system for food & non-food products with reusable packaging, while Spraysafe, from Portugal, is an edible spray to preserve food which cuts the need for plastic packaging. The third winner VEnvirotech of Spain turns organic waste into biodegradable plastics using bacteria. EU Commissioner for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship & SMEs Elżbieta Bieńkowska said that "tackling plastic pollution requires commitment, investment but also creativity," while congratulating the winners.

TIMETABLE: Week ahead (in Brussels unless otherwise stated)

- Nov 4** Health Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis participates in a Citizens' Dialogue & a Lithuanian Political Forum in Plungė;
- Nov 5** Andriukaitis meets Ukrainian Healthcare Minister Zoriana Skaletska; Special Committee on Agriculture (SCA) *inc.* CAP Strategic Plans (green architecture) & poss. transitional rules; Trade

Commissioner Cecilia Malmström attends the WTO mini-Ministerial in Shanghai (China) on WTO reform, crisis of the Appellate Body & current global trade tensions; **COMAGRI inc.** vote on opinion on allocation of country-specific allocation to the US under the TRQ for high-quality beef & conclusion of the agreement in the form of an exchange of letters between the EU & Ukraine amending the trade preferences of poultry meat & poultry meat preparations, presentation of study on *'Mega trends in the agri-food sector'* [see above], exchange of views with Commission officials from DGs AGRI, COMP & TRADE on the long-term prospects for the European beef sector;

Nov 6 Andriukaitis meets Executive Director of European Medicines Agency Guido Rasi; **COMINTA (&7) inc.** vote on the conclusion of the Agreement of an exchange of letters between the EU & Ukraine amending the trade preferences for poultry meat & poultry meat preparations, joint debate on conclusion of the FTA between the EU & Vietnam (plus debrief on results of ad hoc INTA delegation to Vietnam, Oct 29-31), conclusion of agreement with the US on the allocation of a country-specific share in the TRQ for imports of high-quality beef, presentation by Malmström on the outcome of the WTO Mini-Ministerial in Shanghai (Nov 5) & the situation of the Appellate Body & state of play on the negotiations for an EU-China Agreement on Geographical Indications (GIs); **COMENVI (&7) inc.** votes on four objections (pursuant to Rule 112) on GM cotton *LLCotton25*, soybean *MON89788*, maize *MON89034x1507xNK603xDAS-40278-9* & maize *Bt11xMIR162xMIR604x1507x5037xGA21*, signing of the renewal of the EP's Environmental Policy in the presence of David Sassoli, EP President & Secretary General Klaus Welle and exchange of views with the Commission on the work & mission of the Health & Food Audits & Analysis Directorate of DG SANTE; ENRD Workshop *'Agriculture & environment: speaking the same language within the CAP Strategic Plans'* https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/enrd-workshop-agriculture-and-environment-speaking-same-language-within-cap_en;

Nov 7 Eurogroup; Andriukaitis meets EFSA Executive Director Bernhard Url;

Nov 8 ECOFIN; Education, Youth, Culture & Sports Council (Education); 1st Annual Forum on Endocrine Disruptors bringing together public & private stakeholders & scientists with expertise on EDs to exchange information, identify challenges & build synergies https://ec.europa.eu/environment/chemicals/reach/events_en.htm;

Management & Regulatory Committees

Nov 6 Standing Committee on Plant Health;

*There will be no edition of AGRA FACTS on All Saints' Day (Nov 1),
the next one will follow on Nov 6;*

ENDS

The latest EU agriculture, environment & trade news

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- **EU-27 DELAY BREXIT EXTENSION APPROVAL AS UK'S JOHNSON PUSHES FOR ELECTION**
- **"BUSINESS AS USUAL" FOR CURRENT COLLEGE UNTIL NEW TEAM TAKES OFFICE IN DEC**
- **COREPER PUSH FOR STUDY ON NEW BREEDING TECHNIQUES (NBTs) BY DEC 31, 2020**
- **MARKET UPDATES: IGC cuts world grain forecast; EU-Norway interim appeal system; POs;**
- **IN BRIEF: New Farm Ministers in Portugal & Romania; Farm protests in Germany & NL;**
- **TIMETABLE: The week ahead;**

EU-27 DELAY BREXIT EXTENSION APPROVAL AS UK'S JOHNSON PUSHES FOR ELECTION

EU-27 Ambassadors meeting in Brussels today (Oct 25) agreed that the Brexit deadline should be extended beyond Oct 31, but failed to agree on the new leaving date for the UK. France held out against agreeing to a delay until Jan 31, as unwillingly requested by UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson [see AF82-19]. The "remaining" 27 countries had "agreed to the principle of an extension," Commission Chief Spokesperson Mina Andreeva told the midday briefing earlier today. "Work will now continue in the coming days." The intention was that final agreement would be by written procedure. The EU-27 are expected to make a decision on Oct 28 or 29 on the extension, without a further meeting. French President Emmanuel Macron is effectively taking the same stance as the British leader & wants to put pressure on UK MPs to agree to an election, which Johnson wants to be held on Dec 12, in a Commons vote due next week (Oct 28).

UK opposition Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn has said that his party will not vote for an election unless a no deal Brexit is off the table. Johnson insisted earlier today that the Oct 31 deadline was "still possible." "Unfortunately it depends on what the EU says," he continued, complaining that the 'Benn Act', which he insists on referring to as "the surrender act" means "it is up to the EU to decide whether or not we stay in the EU & it is up to the EU how long that extension would be." Under the Fixed Term Parliaments Act of 2011, an election can only be called with the support of two-thirds of MPs. *The act made a big change to the UK political landscape. Before it was passed, Prime Ministers were able to choose the date of any vote whenever suited them something which put the head of government in a powerful position.*

EP group leaders have supported the idea of an extension until Jan 31. Following a meeting of the Conference of Presidents yesterday (Oct 24), EP President David Sassoli wrote to Council President Donald Tusk to recommend acceptance of the UK request. The delay would "allow the United Kingdom to clarify its position & the European Parliament to properly exercise its role," Sassoli said, emphasising that the EP's consent procedure would only begin after the ratification of the Withdrawal Agreement by the UK Parliament. The Italian Socialist politician also reminded Tusk that although the planned extension is meant to be flexible, in that the UK would leave as soon as the deal is agreed, the EP, as well as the UK Parliament, would have to complete its ratification procedure before Brexit could take place.

NFU calls for national food strategy: The National Farmers Union (England & Wales) has called for a national food strategy to support farming in improving productivity, sustainability & health. The farm lobby has been talking to its members in response to a call for evidence from Henry Dimbleby, a cookery writer & restaurant operator, who has been given the job of developing food policy by the government. NFU President Minette Batters said the review was "long overdue," & called on politicians to "take domestic farming & food production seriously as it puts plans in place for a national strategy."

"BUSINESS AS USUAL" FOR CURRENT COLLEGE UNTIL NEW TEAM TAKES OFFICE IN DEC

Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker has invited the current College to continue to participate in the weekly meetings & ensure the Commission's external & inter-institutional representation *inc.* in trilogues, until the new 'team' takes office (no earlier than Dec 1). In a 2-page correspondence dated today (Oct 25), the outgoing Commission chief refers to the "delay in the process leading to the appointment of the new Commission as from 1 November 2019." As in "previous occasions, the powers of the Commission in this situation are limited to dealing with 'current business' ('affaires courantes') based on the need to ensure continuity as a caretaker Commission." During this period, "we will continue the day-to-day administration of public affairs in accordance with the rules of the Union & the management of ongoing files or procedures, without pre-empting the political choices of the incoming Commission," the Luxembourg politician outlines. The current Commission "may nevertheless & subject to a margin of discretion, take decisions involving political choices if they are required by urgency," he notes, where "mandatory deadlines apply, &/or by the need to comply with its role as guardian of the Treaties or the need to safeguard the interest of the Union." Juncker also underlines that the current College should be able to "accept or reject amendments proposed by the European Parliament or Council on ongoing legislative procedures."

Paris nominates Thierry Breton for Commission: French President Emmanuel Macron nominated Thierry Breton, CEO of technology & consulting firm Atos, to be Commissioner for the Internal Market, it emerged this week (Oct 24). The 64-year-old politician was the country's Finance Minister under President Jacques Chirac, from Feb 25, 2005 until May 18, 2007 as a member of the then UMP Party (Union pour un Mouvement Populaire), later renamed Les Républicains (part of the EPP group). Born in Paris, Breton became Chairman & CEO of Atos in 2009 and is also Honorary Chairman of both Thomson & France Télécom, among a wide range of business roles, *inc.* leading France Télécom (2002-2005). Breton has a Master's degree in Electrical Engineering & Computer Science from the Paris École Supérieure d'Électricité (Supélec) & has followed an academic career, which involved being a professor at Harvard Business School (2007-2008) & Chairman of the University of Technology at Troyes (1997-2005). The new Commissioner-designate is "devoting himself now to the preparation of hearings before the relevant Committees of the European Parliament," according to a statement sent to Agence France-Presse & quoted by Le Monde. He was "honoured by the trust placed in me by the President of the Republic Emmanuel Macron & the President-elect of the European Commission, Mrs. Ursula von der Leyen," & emphasised that he was "aware of the importance of the issues associated with this portfolio for the future of our continent." The nomination follows the rejection by the EP of the original candidate, Deputy Governor of the Bank of France Sylvie Goulard amid investigations by the French authorities & the European Anti-fraud Office (OLAF).

Earlier in the month, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said that he would nominate Ambassador Olivér Várhelyi, Hungary's Permanent Representative in Brussels, as the country's candidate for European Commissioner. Dr. Várhelyi has been leading the office since Oct 1, 2015. At the end of Sept, the EP's Legal Affairs Committee rejected Hungary's initial Commissioner-designate László Trócsányi on the grounds that there were conflicts of interest between the post & the activities of legal firm Nagy és Trócsányi. Following the collapse of the Romanian government of Prime Minister Viorica Dăncilă on Oct 10 [see AF78-19] & the EP's rejection of Social Democrat Rovana Plumb at the end of Sept, Bucharest has not yet nominated its candidate. MEP & vice-chair of the EPP group Siegfried Mureşan was previously floated as a possible contender to take over the Transport portfolio [see AF78-19].

COREPER PUSH FOR STUDY ON NEW BREEDING TECHNIQUES (NBTs) BY DEC 31, 2020

EU Ambassadors have called on the next Commission to submit a study on the Union's options to update the existing legislation on the production & marketing of plant reproductive material by Dec 31, 2020 & table a legislative proposal "if appropriate" [*12783/19] at a meeting in Brussels today (Oct 25). Council requests the Commission "to submit a proposal, if appropriate in view of the outcomes of the study, or otherwise to inform the Council of alternative measures required as a follow-up to the study." The analysis should take into account the existing legal framework (Directive 2001/18) & the judgment from the European Court of Justice (July 2018) [C-528/16] that ruled organisms derived from certain mutagenesis techniques (such as gene editing) are GMOs & must comply with risk assessment, traceability & labelling requirements laid down by the relevant legislation [see AF62-19]. The point is likely to be formally adopted at ECOFIN on Nov 8.

At the same meeting today, CY, HU, LV, LU, PL & SI underlined that any technique, which "alters the genetic material for agricultural purposes in a way that does not occur naturally, requires special attention." In a 2-page statement [*11728/19 ADD1], the like-minded delegations reiterate the need to protect the environment & human health, while respecting the precautionary principle. They support the idea of a study on what they refer to as an "important topic." But they are of the view that this study "should be based on a clear & well-defined terminology," referring to the Court ruling on "new mutagenesis techniques" as opposed to "novel genomic techniques", which is "not clearly defined by EU law." "The protection of human health & the environment requires that due attention be given to controlling the risks from any technique that alters the genetic material, & the current level of protection should be maintained," the six Member States conclude. *For further information on the **agenda points** above enter the number provided under '**Public Register**' at the website goo.gl/ybwNtq;

Copa-Cogeca & Euroseeds organise conference on NBTs: The EU's largest farm lobby Copa-Cogeca & Euroseeds (European seed sector body) are organising a high-level conference on plant breeding innovation entitled 'Growing the Future Together' on Nov 19. The gathering, which takes place at the club 'De Warande' (1, Rue Zinner) Brussels, will kick off at 9.30am & is expected to be wrapped up by lunch-time (1pm). The Finnish Presidency had previously scheduled a discussion on New Breeding Techniques (NBTs) at the last Farm Council of the year (Dec 16-17), with some suggesting this agenda item might be brought forward to the next meeting on Nov 18.

MARKET UPDATES: IGC cuts world grain forecast; EU-Norway interim appeal system; POs;

IGC cuts world grain crop forecast: The International Grains Council (IGC) cut its forecast for global 2019/20 grain production to 2 157 million tonnes, down 2mt on the figure it came out with a month ago, but still well up on the previous year's 2 142mt. The Council cut its forecasts for wheat, maize & oats. In the latest edition of its monthly Grain Market Report*, published on Oct 24, the London-based international body put the wheat crop at 762mt, down from the previous forecast of 764mt & up from 733mt last year, "with reductions for Australia, Argentina, the US & Serbia more than offsetting increases for the

EU, Russia & Turkmenistan.” Some 1.4mt has been added to the estimate for EU wheat production, mainly because of a 1.3mt rise in the forecast for the UK crop, to 16.3mt, compared with 14mt last year, because of increased yield & area. This brings the Union’s total to 153.6mt, +11% on the year, with France up 16% at 41.3%. The US spring wheat harvest was “delayed by wintry conditions,” officials at the IGC said. It was 96% complete by Oct 20, at which point it is normally finished. “As precipitation continued late into the month, the remaining area is unlikely to meet milling specifications,” they continue, taking 0.5mt off its forecast for the country’s total production of wheat, bringing it to 53.4mt, or 4% up on the year. Argentina has been hit by drought & frosts and the IGC has reduced its crop forecast for the South American country by 0.9mt to 19.5mt, the same level as last year. Australia has suffered “sustained dryness during the critical grain filling period,” the IGC said, cutting its forecast for the country’s wheat crop by 2.1mt, to a 12-year low of 17mt, compared to 17.3mt last year. The forecast for maize was reduced by just 1mt, to 1 098mt, “as downward revisions for Argentina, the EU & Egypt outweigh upgrades for China, Ukraine, Serbia & Russia,” the Council said. For oilseeds, the global soybean crop forecast is now “fractionally lower” at 341mt with an 18mt fall since last year “reflecting expectations for the smallest US crop in six seasons.” “Other producers may cut bigger crops, but South American prospects in particular are tentative given that seeding has been underway for only a few weeks,” the IGC noted. The forecast for rapeseed output in 2019/2020 is broadly steady, at 68.8mt compared with 72.2mt last year, “as a further reduction in the EU crop estimate is offset by increases for other producers, namely the US & China.” A slight month-on-month cut in the forecast for the EU, to 16.6mt, reflects “marginal m/m downgrades for Poland & the UK,” the IGC said. The forecast EU rapeseed crop is 16% down on 2018/19 & the lowest level for 13 years. “The disappointing harvest stemmed from heavily reduced crops in France, Germany & Romania,” the international body said. [*https://www.igc.int](https://www.igc.int);

EU-Norway back interim appeal arbitration arrangement: Leaders of the EU & Norway backed an interim appeal arbitration arrangement this week (Oct 21) based on existing WTO rules, in a bid to preserve & safeguard a functioning WTO dispute settlement system. The US administration’s long-standing decision to block new appointments to the appeals body has compromised the bloc’s ability to resolve disputes, while the EU & Norway are keen to implement an “effective & binding dispute settlement for any potential trade disputes that might oppose them under WTO law.” The interim arrangement will apply to disputes in the event the Appellate Body is unable to hear appeals & will remain in place until the Appellate Body is operational. In a statement issued this week, officials say the EU’s “foremost priority remains to ensure an effective functioning of the existing WTO Appellate Body”, pointing out that if the current impasse persists, the Body would be unable to hear new appeals after Dec 10. The EU & other members of the 164-strong bloc have made formal proposals & are discussing ways to resolve the situation. In the meantime, an interim solution that mirrors the existing WTO appeal process can be established between interested WTO members, as was the case with the EU & Canada back in July.

Study shows benefits of Producer Organisations (POs): Farm sector producer organisations (POs) benefit their members & the rural areas around them by strengthening farmers’ position in the food supply chain, while providing technical assistance to their members, according to a study published by the Commission this week (Oct 23). The 158-page report, entitled ‘*Study on the best ways for producer organisations to be formed, carry out their activities & be supported*’, was prepared by the European Economic Interest Grouping Arcadia International, Ernst & Young & independent experts. The analysis concludes that POs benefit farmers & the communities in which they are located & “oftentimes promote sustainable farming practices.” They create employment & promote the quality of regional or local agriculture, while the ability of these organisations, in many cases, to provide professional advice & technical services contributes to the efficiency of farms, the authors conclude. There are more than 42 000 producer organisations in the EU - defined as “any farmers’ cooperation based on a legal entity.” Some 3 505 POs & associations of producer organisations (APOs) are recognised by Member State governments. Around 60% of the total recognised POs & APOs at EU level are based in three Member States - France with 759, Germany (658) & Spain, which has 588 recognised entities. Some 1 850 POs or APOs are in the fruit & vegetable sector, followed by milk & milk products (334), olive oil & table olives (254), wine (222), beef & veal (210), cereals (177) & pigmeat (101) [*‘other products’ (107) such as potatoes & rabbit rearing*]. Authors find that the main objectives of recognised POs & APOs are common across sectors & include production planning, adapting to demand, concentration of products & placing products on the market. The most common form of producer organisation is the agricultural cooperative. POs are seen as giving farmers greater bargaining power when negotiating with other actors in the food supply chain, although some producers do see the loss of autonomy involved as too big a price to pay. Some farmers also complain of an increased administrative burden & expressed concern about the cost of setting them up. [*https://ec.europa.eu/info/files/study-best-ways-producer-organisations-be-formed-carry-out-their-activities-and-be-supported_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/files/study-best-ways-producer-organisations-be-formed-carry-out-their-activities-and-be-supported_en)

IN BRIEF: New Farm Ministers in Portugal & Romania; Farm protests in Germany & NL;

New Farm Minister in Portugal: Portugal’s government, led by Socialist Prime Minister António Costa, announced the makeup of his new Cabinet earlier this week (Oct 21), following the Oct 6 election [see AF77-19]. The new Agriculture Minister is Maria do Céu Albuquerque. Born in July 1970 in Abrantes in central

Portugal, Albuquerque has a Degree in Biochemistry from the Faculty of Science & Technology at the University of Coimbra, where she was a Research Fellow. She also holds a postgraduate degree in Food Quality & Safety Management from the Egas Moniz Higher Institute of Health Sciences. The Socialist politician, who was Mayor of Abrantes for nine years (2009-2018), replaces the highly-regarded & well-liked Luís Capoulas Santos, who will take a seat in the national parliament.

The new State Secretary for Agriculture & Rural Development is Nuno Tiago dos Santos Russo. Born in 1976 in Santarém, in the centre-west of the country, he holds a Degree in Zootechnical Engineering from the University of Évora & an MBA in Public Administration from the Higher Institute of Management & Administration of Santarém. Since 2017, he has served as a senior technician at the Institute for Financing Agriculture and Fisheries (IFAP).

Oros named Romanian Farm Minister: Adrian Nechita Oros, a member of Romania's National Liberal Party, has been put forward to succeed the affable Petre Daea as the country's Agriculture Minister. The 54-year-old, who was elected to represent Cluj in the north-west of Romania in Dec 2016, is Vice-Chair of the Agriculture, Forestry & Food Industry Committee of the Chamber of Deputies. Between 2009-2012 he was President of PNL Cluj-Napoca & held the position of director of the Cluj Veterinary Health Department in 2000-2001 & 2008-2009. Oros is Vice-Rector of the University of Agricultural Sciences & Veterinary Medicine of Cluj-Napoca and Vice-President of the College of Veterinary Doctors of Romania. A veterinarian by profession, he was also Vice-President of the Romanian College of Veterinary Doctors.

Farmer protests block German, Dutch cities: Large protests brought traffic to a halt in Bonn & The Hague earlier this week (Oct 22) as farmers used their tractors to get across their complaints about being unfairly blamed for environmental issues & subject to increasingly onerous legislation. In Germany, protests took place in 17 cities, notably Bonn, where the Farm Ministry is based, but also in Berlin, Munich, Bayreuth, Erfurt, Rendsburg, Hanover, Oldenburg, Stuttgart, Freiburg, Leipzig & Görlitz, organised by a group called '*Land schafft Verbindung*' (countryside creates connection). The main gathering was at Bonn's Münsterplatz, where according to the regional farmers' organisation RLV (Rheinische Landwirtschafts-Verband) almost 6 000 farmers gathered in the square while 2 000 tractors stood outside the city in a protest making clear their anger at the latest changes to farm & environmental policy. RLV President Bernhard Conzen expressed anger at what politicians were doing to farmers. "Whether it was laws on fertilisers or insect protection, there were newer & sharper requirements around every corner," Conzen said. "Farmers were being told they should spread less manure, do without crop protection products or not use their land at all as it was turned into protected areas." Farmers' loud protests should make it clear that "this cannot go on," he said, calling for negotiations with policy-makers. Conzen wants Environment Minister Svenja Schulze to follow the example of her colleague Julia Klöckner, responsible for Food, Agriculture & Consumer Protection, & engage in a technical dialogue with farmers & other stakeholders. "We are tired of the fact that the Federal Environment Minister only follows the ideological demands of the environmental side, without any appreciation of the efforts that we farmers have made for years," the RLV President went on. In the Netherlands, more than 2 000 farmers took to the roads on tractors on Oct 22, heading for The Hague & creating more than 1 000km of traffic jams. Protestors complained that their industry is being treated unfairly & being accused of mistreating animals & polluting the environment. The protest was "about our families, our future, the future of our children," sheep farmer Bart Kemp, one of the organisers of the protest told demonstrators. "It's about our way of life."

TIMETABLE: Week ahead (in Brussels unless otherwise stated), all Councils in Luxembourg;

- Oct 27** General election in Argentina to elect the President, members of the national congress & governors of most provinces; General elections in Uruguay, if no Presidential candidate receives a majority in the first round of voting, a runoff will take place on Nov 24;
- Oct 28** Health Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis receives Bernhard Url, Executive Director of EFSA (European Food Safety Authority);
- Oct 29** Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker receives Martin Schulz, former President of the European Parliament (2012-2017); Juncker receives Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić; Competition Commissioner Margrethe Vestager in Dortmund (DE), delivers a keynote speech at the Digital Summit www.de.digital/DIGITAL/Navigation/DE/Digital-Gipfel/digital-gipfel.html & meets Germany's Finance Minister Peter Altmaier; EIP-AGRI Workshop '*Small is smart*' – *Innovative solutions for small agricultural & forestry holdings in Bucharest* (&30) <https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/event/eip-agri-workshop-small-smart-innovative-solutions>;
- Oct 30** College meeting *inc.* 20th Security Union Progress Report & Mandate for negotiations for an agreement between the EU & New Zealand on the exchange of personal data for fighting serious crime & terrorism;
- Oct 31** Brexit deadline; Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič receives young climate activists;
- Nov 1** *EU institutions closed for All Saints' Day; 'New' Commission College will not take office [see above]; There are no Management or Regulatory Committee meetings scheduled for next week;*

ENDS

The latest EU agriculture, environment & trade news

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- **UK's BORIS JOHNSON FORCED TO REQUEST EXTENSION AMID BREXIT DEADLOCK**
- **EX EXEC ALLOCATES €200m TO PROMOTE AGRI-FOOD PRODUCTS AT HOME & ABROAD**
- **EP DEBRIEF: EP tough on bee protection; EU Budget 2020; EU funding for UK in no deal;**
- **MS VOTE AGAINST RENEWAL OF NEONIC PESTICIDE THIACLOPRID; SUMOFUS REJOICE;**
- **IN BRIEF: ECA report on exceptional dairy measures; COREPER wants action on NBTs;**

UK'S BORIS JOHNSON FORCED TO REQUEST EXTENSION AMID BREXIT DEADLOCK

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson failed on Oct 19 to get the UK Parliament to agree to his Withdrawal Agreement with the EU, forcing him to ask Brussels for membership to be extended until Jan 31, 2020. He followed up by failing to force MPs to give just three days consideration to the government's bill on withdrawal, leaving the timetable for the UK Parliament to scrutinise the legislation unclear. With politicians failing to agree a timetable for discussion of the deal with the EU, there is speculation that the Conservative leader's next move may be to attempt to get Parliament to agree to an election. *One factor in Johnson's defeats has been the loss of support from the ten MPs of the Northern Irish Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), angry at the deal's need for customs checks between NI & Britain. Chief Whip Sir Jeffrey Donaldson, said "the sensible thing for the government is to sit down with us & see if we can work this out."*

Johnson abandoned his attempt to get MPs to agree to the withdrawal treaty over the weekend (Oct 19) after they voted by 322 to 306 to pass an amendment from independent former Conservative MP Oliver Letwin [see AF81-19], which "withholds approval unless & until implementing legislation is passed." The vote came as over a million pro-EU marchers, *inc. Agra Facts*, listened outside the Houses of Parliament. On the same day, Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn told MPs that Johnson had "renegotiated the Withdrawal Agreement & made it even worse." "He's renegotiated the political declaration & made that even worse." The House was debating "a text to which there is no economic impact assessment & no accompanying legal advice." The government had "sought to avoid scrutiny throughout the process," the 70-year-old left-wing politician, representing Islington North added. *Strictly speaking, MPs passed the government's motion without a vote, but, because the Letwin amendment requires scrutiny, they had not effectively said 'yes' to the Withdrawal Agreement by the end of Oct 19. The date coincided with the 'Benn Act' deadline by which the Prime Minister was obliged to send a letter to EU leaders requesting an extension of the Article 50 process until the end of Jan 2020.*

The beleaguered British leader sent the letter later that day, but in a show of defiance did not sign it. The single-page correspondence* addressed to Council President Donald Tusk was accompanied by a cover letter from Sir Tim Barrow, UK Permanent Representative to the EU & a private letter in which Johnson told the Polish politician that he didn't think an extension was actually a good idea. Tusk duly ignored the lack of a signature & tweeted late Oct 19 that "the extension request has just arrived. I will now start consulting EU leaders on how to react." Johnson followed up on Monday (Oct 21), by attempting again to get MPs to pass a motion agreeing the Withdrawal Agreement. This was rejected by the Speaker of House of Commons John Bercow, under a convention which states that the same question cannot be asked of MPs twice in one session. "Today's motion is in substance the same as Saturday's motion," Bercow said. It would be "repetitive & disorderly" to vote again on it. The Speaker noted that the convention goes back to 1604. "It is a necessary rule to ensure the sensible use of the House's time & proper respect for the decisions that it takes," he stressed. With only eight days to go before the Oct 31 deadline, Johnson came back to Parliament yesterday (Oct 22), with the 110-page Withdrawal Bill**, which would put the agreement into force. The bill passed its second reading (the first time the House actually considers it), by 329 to 299 votes.

However, a few minutes later they voted to reject the 'Programme Motion' setting out how the bill would be handled, which limited discussion of the bill to three days, by 322 to 308 votes, leaving the legislation "in limbo", according to Speaker Bercow. Johnson responded that "the EU must now make up their minds over how to respond to Parliament's request for a delay." Following the UK votes (Oct 22), Tusk tweeted that "in order to avoid a no-deal Brexit, I will recommend the EU-27 accept the UK request for an extension." "For this I will propose a written procedure," he elaborated. On the same day, EP Brexit Coordinator Guy Verhofstadt (BE/Renew Europe) said that MEPs would not consider the deal before it has been approved by the UK's legislature. "We need the approval of the British parliament," he said in a live Facebook session. "Once that is done, it will return to the EP." President David Sassoli (EP) said earlier today that he thinks "it is advisable, as requested by President Donald Tusk, that the European Council should accept this extension." Pushing back the deadline would "allow the UK to clarify its position & the EP to exercise its role." The Irish government issued a statement saying that *An Taoiseach*, Leo Varadkar, had spoken to Tusk

earlier today (Oct 23) & confirmed his support for the Council President's view that the EU-27 should grant an extension, noting that it would be flexible, in that the UK could leave before Jan 31, if a deal is ratified earlier.

Although far too early in the game to consider the future EU-UK trade relations, there has been some clarity in terms of the division of labour from the Brussels perspective. For all aspects related to trade in services, goods & agriculture, negotiations will be led by the incoming Trade Commissioner Phil Hogan & DG TRADE services. The EU's chief negotiator Michel Barnier will lead a new team, comprising the remaining officials on the Article 50 Taskforce & the Secretariat General's Brexit Preparedness Group. The Barnier team will deal with fisheries, aviation, security, research, education, judiciary & nuclear, sources indicated this week. *<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letters-from-the-uk-to-the-eu-council-19-october-2019>; **<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/eu-withdrawal-agreement-bill>;

EU EXEC ALLOCATES €200m TO PROMOTE AGRI-FOOD PRODUCTS AT HOME & ABROAD

The EU budget dedicated to promoting EU agri-food products at home & abroad will be €200 million for 2020, comprising 81 campaigns* (56 for simple programmes & 25 for multi-programmes) to be rolled out over the next three years, the Commission confirmed on Oct 23. Under the banner '*Enjoy it's from Europe*', the budget allocation will co-finance programmes (at rates of 70-85%) on the internal & external markets, with an increased focus on campaigns that promote EU quality schemes. Of the campaigns approved (covering 19 Member States), 55 target non-EU countries such as Brazil, Canada, China, Mexico & India covering a wide range of products including fruit & vegetables, organic food, dairy, meat, olive & olive oil. Farm Commissioner Phil Hogan said that European agri-food products are "renowned across the globe for their quality & authenticity." He recalled the many trade missions during his 5-year mandate - accompanied by senior executives in the agri-food industry - to China, Japan, Indonesia, Mexico & Colombia where he experienced first-hand the positive reaction to European produce. The Commission supports producers' "hard work by spreading the word & maintaining a good reputation at a global level," the Irishman added.

This year €100m has been earmarked for 'simple promotion programmes' on the EU & 3rd country markets (submitted by one or more proposing organisations from the same Member State), with 23% of the budget allocated to the fruit & vegetable sector, followed by a 'basket of products' (21%), meat (20%), cheese/dairy (14%) and wine, cider & vinegar (6%). Key "winners" include IT (17 accepted proposals), EL (8), FR (6), BE (6), ES (6) & PL (3), which were granted the bulk of the overall 'simple promotion schemes' budget, with emphasis on EU quality schemes & organic production. Other Member States such as FI, DK, IE, DE, NL & LV each had one proposal accepted, while LT & SI had two. Under the 'simple promotion programmes', Germany (coordinated by Naturland) looks set to secure around €1m for the promotion of a 'basket for products' *inc.* bovine meat (fresh, chilled & frozen), bread, pastry, cakes, confectionary, biscuits, cereals, cheese, chocolate & derived products, coffee & tea, dairy products (excl. cheese), eggs, pasta, olive oil & fruit or nuts (*inc.* table olives) targeted at the Vietnamese market. Similarly, Ireland has one entry (Bord Bia) for the promotion of pork & poultry in China & Mexico (worth just over €3m).

An additional €90.5m will fund so-called 'multi programmes', submitted by at least two proposing organisations from at least two Member States or one or more European organisations. The US, China & Japan are the key external target markets, followed by South Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam & Singapore, while meat (bovine, poultry & meat preparations), wine, cider & vinegar, fruit & vegetables, olive oil & cereals make up the bulk of the product base. Multi-programmes are directly managed by the EU's consumers, health, agriculture & food executive agency (CHAFEA), while the so-called 'simple' ones are managed by national administrations. A further €9.5m will fund the Commission's "own initiatives" *inc.* communication campaigns in 3rd countries *inc.* pavilions in major agri-food trade fairs, organisation of business delegations visits, seminars, technical support as well as campaigns in the event of market disturbance & loss of consumer confidence. *<https://ec.europa.eu/chafea/agri/funding-opportunities/evaluation-and-selection>

EP DEBRIEF: EP tough on bee protection; EU Budget 2020; EU funding for UK in no deal;

EP tough on bee protection: The EP blocked a Commission proposal today after Member States watered down draft legislation that seeks to eliminate pesticides that pose the greatest danger to pollinators. Following the adoption of a resolution with an absolute majority - 533 votes to 67 & 100 abstentions - MEPs effectively sent the Commission "back to the drawing board", requesting policy-makers to table a new proposal based on the latest scientific & technical knowledge. The original draft was intended to incorporate into EU law the European Food Safety Authority's (EFSA) 2013 guidance to cut the use of pesticides that harm bees. The guidance indicated how pesticides should be tested, in order to protect bees from both acute & chronic exposure, with chemicals remaining on the market only if they pass these new tests.

During discussions at Committee level, over a dozen Member States opposed the full implementation of the 2013 bee guidance, forcing the Commission into a tricky compromise. MEPs said the draft text "only introduces modifications ... with regard to acute toxicity to honeybees, but remains silent on chronic toxicity to honeybees, as well as on toxicity to bumble bees & solitary bees". The text "would not change the level of protection" already in place, they add. Commenting after the vote, Environment Committee Chair Pascal Canfin said "by opposing evaluation criteria which are far too weak given the danger that pesticides pose to

bees, we wanted to ask a simple question: are we serious about protecting the environment? Are we serious about protecting living organisms? Are we serious about the Green Deal?" The prominent French MEP (Renew Europe) said the result was "very clear ... a very large majority of the EP did not want watered down legislation on the protection of bees." Recent Commission studies indicate a dramatic decline in the occurrence & diversity of European wild insect pollinators *inc.* wild bees, hoverflies, butterflies & moths, while numerous pollinator species are extinct or threatened with extinction. In the EU alone, around 84% of crop species & nearly 80% of wildflower species depend, at least in part, on animal pollination. Up to almost €15 billion of the EU's annual agricultural output is directly attributed to insect pollinators, according to figures cited by MEPs.

MEPs agree 2020 budget resolution: MEPs agreed a resolution setting the 2020 EU budget at almost €171 billion in commitment appropriations (+€2.7bn compared to the Commission's draft budget) & €159.1bn in payments at today's plenary session in Strasbourg (Oct 23) *inc.* an additional €30 million in EU support for pigmeat, poultry, bee-keeping & other animal products & €88m for halting & reversing biodiversity loss [see table below]. The House boosted the Commission's draft budget by adding more than €2bn to climate protection & increased the Youth Employment Initiative & Erasmus+ programmes, with euro-deputies viewing next year's Budget as the "last chance for the EU to come closer to meeting the political commitments set for that period, including towards reaching the bloc's climate target." It should also pave the way for the next financial perspectives (2021-2027).

The Parliament budgetary resolution*, voted through by 529 votes to 130, with 43 abstentions, reinstates all Council cuts to the CAP budget & sets as priorities "sustainable growth, innovation, competitiveness, security, tackling root causes of refugees & migration flows, managing refugee & migration flows, the fight against climate change & the transition to sustainable energy". General Rapporteur for the 2020 EU Budget, Germany's Monika Hohlmeier (EPP) said the vote "shows Parliament's united front

<i>Nomenclature</i>	<i>Above Draft Budget (Commitments)</i>
05 02 15 99 - Other measures for pigmeat, poultry, eggs, bee-keeping, other animal products	+30 000 000
05 02 18 - School schemes	+2 000 000
07 02 01 - Contributing to a greener & more resource-efficient economy & to the development & implementation of Union environmental policy & legislation	+62 000 000
07 02 02 - Halting & reversing biodiversity loss	+88 000 000
07 02 03 - Supporting better environmental governance & information at all levels	+20 000 000
07 02 06 - European Environment Agency	+1 300 000
11 06 62 01 - Scientific advice & knowledge	+1 000 000
34 02 01 - Reducing Union greenhouse gas emissions	+35 000 000
34 02 02 - Increasing the resilience of the Union to climate change	+20 000 000
34 02 03 - Better climate governance & information at all levels	+8 000 000

& a common understanding among the political groups: ambitious climate targets & environmental protection can go hand in hand with programmes that create new jobs, support European research & development facilities & boost competitiveness." MEPs also "confirmed our commitment to further increase the Youth Employment Initiative, Erasmus+ & DiscoverEU ... to provide 18-year-olds with Interrail tickets to give them the opportunity to discover a Europe without borders," the CSU euro-deputy from München added.

In response, Council informed the EP that it could not accept all of the amendments for the 2020 EU Budget adopted in plenary, thus triggering a 3-week conciliation process, which will kick off on Oct 29 (until Nov 18). Commenting today, Finland's State Secretary in the Ministry of Finance & chief Council negotiator for the 2020 Budget, Kimmo Tiilikainen expressed his satisfaction that the Council & EP "share many priorities for next year's budget," with "job creation, fighting climate change ... security & migration, & focusing in particular on young people" at the core. It "provides a good basis for our efforts to agree on a budget with appropriate funding levels for the different programmes & areas, based on a prudent & realistic approach & the best interest of European taxpayers."

The first meeting of the Conciliation Committee is scheduled for Nov 4, with another slated for Nov 15 which normally goes on until the wee hours. The ECOFIN/Budget Council on the same day (Nov 15) is expected to give the Presidency guidance in its talks with the EP. If no agreement is reached by midnight on Nov 18, the Commission must table a new draft budget for 2020, which would fall under a "fast-tracked" procedure, so it could be wrapped for the Dec plenary session in Strasbourg (16-19). The final EU Budget for 2019 is expected to be adopted at an EP plenary session by the end of the year, with EP officials hopeful of an accord at the Nov II plenary session (25-28).

*See <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/texts-adopted.html> (under Oct 23);

2020 EU funding for UK in no deal Brexit: The EP approved a measure yesterday (Oct 22) to make sure that EU funds for 2020 are fully available if the UK leaves the EU in a no deal Brexit scenario. The draft regulation extends to 2020 the contingency plan approved by MEPs on April 17, previously limited to 2019.

The House backed the draft recommendation, tabled by the Chair of the Budgets Committee, Johan Van Overtveldt (ECR, BE), by 543 votes in favour, 30 against, with 46 abstentions. Under the provisions, UK researchers, students & farmers would continue to get Community support next year if the country leaves the bloc without a deal, provided London continues to pay its contributions & accepts the necessary controls & audits. The aim is to “minimise any negative impact that the UK’s withdrawal may have on beneficiaries of EU funding ... such as Horizon 2020, Erasmus+ and agriculture & regional policies,” EP officials outline. An additional contingency measure, allowing Member States directly impacted by Brexit to access financial support via the EU Solidarity Fund (hitherto reserved for natural disasters) is up for a vote tomorrow (Oct 24).

MS VOTE AGAINST RENEWAL OF NEONIC PESTICIDE THIACTLOPRID; SUMOFUS REJOICE;

Member States voted against the renewal of the EU license for the neonicotinoid pesticide Thiacloprid at yesterday's Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food & Feed (PAFF), with all delegations voting in favour of the draft regulation on the “non-renewal of approval” & only the UK abstaining (due to Brexit). The decision will be formally adopted by the Commission in the coming weeks, while the ban will come into effect on April 30, 2020, when the current license expires.

Some 383 000 people signed a petition by the international consumer group SumOfUS* demanding a ban on the pesticide developed by Bayer “because of its links to cancer & reproductive issues in farm workers & evidence that it harms bees & other pollinators.” Commenting this week, Rebecca Falcon, Campaign Manager at SumOfUs said “today Europeans persuaded our decision-makers to unite behind the science & ban toxic Thiacloprid, despite every attempt by its producer Bayer & the agro-industry.” “As a result of this ban, farm workers won't be exposed to the cancer-linked chemical and bees & other pollinators won't suffer its harmful effects,” the former Senior Campaigns Adviser at Save the Children UK & graduate from King's College London (English Language & Literature) added.

Bayer said it “respects” the decision, adding that the company “continues to believe that Thiacloprid-based crop protection products can be used safely when appropriate risk mitigation measures are applied.”

At the same meeting, there was no qualified majority (QM) in favour of two draft implementing decisions on the non-repetition of “emergency authorisations” for neonicotinoids in Romania & Lithuania [see table above], as the reasons presented by both countries could not be justified. An Appeal Committee will consider both dossiers in the coming weeks (possibly in early Dec tbc). *SumOfUS is a global movement of consumers, investors & workers, united to hold corporations to account - for more see www.sumofus.org;

Draft Commission Implementing Decision on the non-repetition of emergency authorisations for neonics by Romania		
For	Against	Abstain
BE, CY, DK, DE, FR, HR, LU, MT, NL & SE	BG, EL & RO	AT, CZ, EE, IE, ES, IT, LV, LT, HU, PL, PT, SI, SK, FI & UK

Draft Commission Implementing Decision on the non-repetition of emergency authorisations for neonics by Lithuania		
For	Against	Abstain
BE, DK, DE, FR, HR, CY, LU, MT, NL & SE	BG, EL, LT & FI	AT, CZ, EE, IE, ES, IT, LV, HU, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK & UK

IN BRIEF: ECA report on exceptional dairy measures; COREPER wants action on NBTs;

ECA report on exceptional dairy measures: The European Court of Auditors (ECA) is examining the exceptional market measures introduced by the EU to counteract the dairy market disturbances between 2014 & 2017, it emerged this week. Auditors at the Luxembourg-based Court are assessing whether the exceptional aid to help producers – which cost around €740 million for the EU budget – was properly designed & adequately mitigated the effects of the market disturbance following the Russian embargo (Aug 2014) & the end of the dairy quota regime (April 2015). Under the ‘safety net’ scheme, the Commission sought to temporarily remove some surpluses from the market – inc. public & private purchases and storage of skimmed milk powder. Audit visits will take place in FR, IT, IE & FI to examine how the measures were put into practice, while they will also check whether the Commission & Member States are now better prepared for dairy market disruption. Commenting this week, Nikolaos Milionis, the ECA Member leading the audit, said that “milk producers were hit by a significant drop in their revenues”. The Greek legal expert, who completed a PhD thesis in Public Finance Law at the University of Athens, said the court “will analyse whether the EU budget was well spent to help them overcome the crisis & whether the Commission is prepared for future market disturbances.”

COREPER want action on NBTs: EU Ambassadors are expected to call on the next Commission to submit a study on the Union’s options for addressing the legal situation of new genomic techniques [poss by July 2021] & table a legislative proposal “if appropriate,” when they meet in Brussels on Friday (Oct 25). Based on documents circulating ahead of the meeting, they are likely to request a study that takes into account the existing legal framework (Directive 2001/18) & the judgment from the European Court of Justice (July 2018) (C-528/16) that ruled organisms derived from certain mutagenesis techniques (such as gene editing) are GMOs & must comply with risk assessment, traceability & labelling requirements laid down by the relevant legislation [see AF62-19].

ENDS

The latest EU agriculture, environment & trade news

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- **BREXIT: JOHNSON STRIKES DEAL WITH EU LEADERS; DUP OPPOSITION; CRUCIAL VOTE;**
- **EU HEADS OF STATE & GOV. WANT MFF 'NEGOTIATING BOX' WITH FIGURES BY DECEMBER**
- **IN BRIEF: US duties; Fruit & veg market observatory; CMO plea; World Food Day; New GI;**
- **TIMETABLE: Week ahead;**

BREXIT: JOHNSON STRIKES DEAL WITH EU LEADERS; DUP OPPOSITION; CRUCIAL VOTE

EU leaders unanimously agreed a new Withdrawal Agreement on the basis of proposals from UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson yesterday (Oct 17), paving the way for an orderly Brexit by Oct 31, after the British leader backed down over arrangements to avoid a hard border in Ireland. *But the North's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) may yet scupper the plans, ruling out their support at a crunch vote in the House of Commons tomorrow (Oct 19) [see below].* The revised deal on ending UK membership of the bloc agreed by the Council is almost the same as the Withdrawal Agreement reached by former UK Premier Theresa May (Nov 2018). Following a marathon session of talks, changes centre on the provisions for Northern Ireland - *inc.* alignment to a limited set of single market rules to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland (legislation on goods, rules on SPS, agricultural production/marketing, VAT & excise in respect of goods and state aid rules), while ensuring the region remains part of the UK's customs territory. The move seeks to replace the 'backstop' arrangement, meant only to apply as an insurance policy if alternative arrangements for the border could not be made to work. The move avoids a hard border on the island of Ireland, protects the all-island economy & the Good Friday Agreement, as well as safeguarding the integrity of the single market, Commission officials outline.

Under the revised 'Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland', the UK is allowed to reimburse duties paid on goods imported into Northern Ireland. To avoid customs checks, the EU's Customs Code will apply to all goods brought into Ireland. EU sanitary & phytosanitary rules will also apply. The difference between the controversial backstop in the deal agreed by former PM May is that the new arrangements are a legally operative solution, rather than an alternative solution to be put in place if needed. Under the revised arrangement, there will be checks & controls on goods entering Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK, including sanitary & phyto sanitary controls on agri-food products. The checks will be carried out by the UK authorities with EU supervision. The two sides are expected to agree a way of carrying out checks away from ports & airports of entry. On VAT, Northern Ireland will be part of the UK area, with the UK setting rates & collecting the revenue, but EU VAT rules will apply in the region, with a provision for exemptions & reduced rates applying in the Republic of Ireland to be applied in NI. Northern Ireland will continue to operate the EU VAT Information Exchange System (VIES) & share data with Member States.

Speaking to reporters yesterday, Johnson urged MPs to "come together & get Brexit done", saying the deal was a "reasonable, fair outcome & reflected the large amount of work undertaken by both sides." Later in the afternoon at a joint press conference, Council President Donald Tusk said heads of state & government "endorsed this deal & it looks like we are very close to the final stretch." The former Polish Premier reiterated that the EU would "always stand behind Ireland & not force a deal unfavourable to Dublin." On a personal note, he expressed his sadness, saying he would always be a Remainer "in his heart." "Our door will always be open ... if our British friends decide to return one day." Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker said the new protocol on Ireland would allow "peace and stability on the island of Ireland." He acknowledged the role Ireland's *Taoiseach* Leo Varadkar had in the last-minute talks, saying "a deal would not have been possible today [without him]". The *Fine Gael* leader paid tribute to Europe's "strength of unity," which provides a "lesson for the future ... to be taken forward in future negotiations, with US, China & Turkey." The revised text "creates a unique solution ... to Northern Ireland recognising its unique history & geography," Varadkar added. The EU's chief negotiator Michel Barnier said "while the subject matter in the negotiating room related to customs, goods & the border ... it had been people in Ireland & Northern Ireland as well as peace that were central" in the process.

A further element which has caused concern is that 'level playing field' requirements on issues like workers' rights, the environment, fighting tax avoidance & adhering to international standards, have been moved from the Withdrawal Agreement to the Political Declaration. This means they are no longer binding, raising fears that Johnson plans a race to the bottom on standards. The 535-page consolidated working document*, based on the Commission's deal with the UK government, includes a revised protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland, & a revised political declaration on the future EU-UK relationship. The political declaration's provisions on the future relationship have been changed because the Johnson government has decided it wants a Free Trade Agreement, rather than the "much closer partnership" envisaged under the

May deal. There is a shared ambition to have zero tariffs & quotas between the EU & the UK, with safeguards to ensure fair competition. Under the provisions, Northern Ireland could benefit from UK trade deals with non-EU 3rd countries, but will apply EU customs legislation, *inc.* the application of EU tariffs.

The Northern Ireland Assembly, suspended since Jan 2017, but set to meet on Oct 21, will be asked to provide its continued support for the Protocol four years after the end of the post-Brexit transition period, ending under the agreement on Dec 31, 2020, during which the future relationship is to be negotiated. If not approved by the Assembly, the Protocol ceases to apply after two years. If there is cross community consent to continue to apply the Protocol, it would then apply for a further eight years. Now that the Withdrawal treaty has Council approval, the agreement will be sent to the EP, which is expected to receive the text Oct 21 & discuss it at the plenary session in Strasbourg on (Oct 23 or 24). The provisions of the agreement will be overseen by a Joint Committee of the UK & EU which can decide, before July 1, 2020, to extend the transition period for one or two years. Pending approval by Oct 31, debates on UK-EU future relations are expected to kick off on Nov 1. *https://ec.europa.eu/commission/brexit-negotiations/negotiating-documents-article-50-negotiations-united-kingdom_en

UK MPs to vote on deal Oct 19: UK MPs will vote on the Johnson deal tomorrow (Oct 19), which coincides with the 'Benn Act' deadline for the Prime Minister to ask for an extension if he can't get agreement from Parliament. A narrow margin either way appears likely. The rare 'super Saturday' sitting is the last chance Johnson has to get agreement before he would be forced to write a specified extension letter to EU leaders. MPs will hold a meaningful vote on the deal, while the government has also proposed a motion, in case the deal is rejected, calling for members of the legislature to approve a no deal for the same day. On the main motion on the deal, MPs have proposed amendments calling for revocation of Article 50 instead (from Angus MacNeil of the Scottish National Party), for an extension to hold an election (Ian Blackford, Leader of the SNP in the Commons) & to withhold agreement unless & until implementing legislation has been passed (Oliver Letwin, an independent former Conservative). Further amendments may be proposed for the debate which starts at 9.30am in the morning.

Under the terms of the Benn Act, if Parliament doesn't approve the meaningful vote, the Prime Minister must send a letter to the Council President Donald Tusk & ask for an extension to Article 50 until Jan 31, 2020. Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker has appeared to have ruled out granting the UK "any kind of prolongation" beyond Oct 31, although this is most likely a tactic to help Johnson ahead of tomorrow's vote. An extraordinary European Council has been floated for later this month if an extension appears to be required. If the EU were to come back with an offer of a longer or shorter extension, which is not something other EU leaders have discussed, the former Mayor of London would have two days to agree to it, or persuade MPs to reject it. Johnson does not have a majority. His party depended on the ten MPs of the Northern Irish Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) to govern, until the New York born politician threw out many of his own Conservative party. He currently has just 288 of the 650 MPs in the House of Commons. Given that he has lost the support of the DUP, getting the deal through means persuading Tory Brexiteers in his own Conservative party to vote for it, getting some of the Tory rebels he's sacked to support him & having enough MPs in the opposition parties rebel against their own leadership to make up the numbers. Around ten Labour MPs may vote Johnson's way & with wavering rebels on both sides of the argument, the vote looks close.

DUP opposes Brexit deal: Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), the Conservatives' Parliamentary allies, have publicly stated they will not support the agreement between UK Premier Boris Johnson & the EU-27 when it comes up for vote in the London Parliament tomorrow (Oct 19). The right-wing party, which represents voters who support keeping Northern Ireland in the UK, issued a statement* following the announcement of the deal yesterday afternoon saying that it "had been consistent" that it would "only ever consider supporting arrangements that are in Northern Ireland's long-term economic & constitutional interests & protect the integrity of the Union." It is the DUP's view the proposals are not beneficial for Northern Ireland & "they undermine the integrity of the Union."

Pointing out that the region's main route of east west trade would be subject to the EU Customs Union, even with Northern Ireland officially part of the UK customs territory, they complain that "all goods would be subject to a customs check regime regardless of their final destination." Goods going from one part of the UK to another would be subject to EU rules, for example on sanitary & phytosanitary conditions. The EU has a veto on which goods would be exempt from customs under the Joint Committee arrangements, something they describe as "not acceptable within the internal borders of the UK." The checks would potentially mean higher costs & reduced choice for customers in Northern Ireland. The region "should not be subjected to administrative burdens which will be entrenched for the future." On VAT, NI "will be bound into arrangements that the rest of the UK will not," they say, complaining of a "real danger that over time Northern Ireland will start to diverge across VAT & Customs," something that would not have "broad support from the democratic representatives of the people of Northern Ireland." The political party recognises that "some progress has been made in recognising the issue of consent," giving both parts of the community a voice in whether the arrangements are extended, but complains that "the elected representatives of Northern Ireland will have no say on whether Northern Ireland should enter these arrangements." The UK government had "departed from the principle that these arrangements must be subject to the consent of both unionists & nationalists in

Northern Ireland.” Although the arrangements would be subject to a rolling review, “the principles of the Belfast Agreement on consent have been abandoned in favour of majority rule on this single issue alone.” “Saturday’s vote in Parliament on the proposals will only be the start of a long process to get any Withdrawal Agreement Bill through the House of Commons,” the political party, led by Arlene Foster, warns.

*See <https://www.mydup.com/news/article/statement-from-the-democratic-unionist-party5>

Deal “worse than May’s” says Corbyn: Leader of the UK’s main opposition Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn, has called for Johnson’s Withdrawal Deal to be rejected & pressed again for a new referendum on the terms. “It seems the Prime Minister has negotiated an even worse deal than Theresa May’s,” the left-wing politician said in a statement from the party (Oct 17), noting that the previous withdrawal treaty had been “overwhelmingly rejected.” The proposals risked “triggering a race to the bottom on rights & protections: putting food safety at risk, cutting environmental standards & workers’ rights, & opening up our NHS [National Health Service] to a takeover by US private corporations.” Johnson’s deal “won’t bring the country together & should be rejected,” he elaborated. “The best way to get Brexit sorted is to give the people the final say in a public vote.”

Meanwhile, the UK’s pro-EU centrist Liberal Democrat party has strongly opposed Johnson’s Brexit deal, promising to push for a referendum & to continue to campaign for Britain to stay in the EU. Party leader Jo Swinson said that “Johnson’s deal would be bad for our economy, bad for our public services, & bad for our environment.” She was “more determined than ever to stop Brexit,” & would “use every possible opportunity to give the public a People’s Vote on the Brexit deal that includes the option to remain in the EU.”

NFU concerned over future partnership: The National Farmers’ Union (NFU) for England & Wales has welcomed the hope of avoiding a no deal Brexit offered by Johnson’s deal at the EU Summit yesterday (Oct 17), but has reminded the government of the need to avoid cutting standards & keep frictionless trade with the EU. President Minette Batters said that the deal might “pave the way for an orderly Brexit.” However, “if this deal is agreed by UK & EU Parliaments in the coming days,” it would only determine how the UK leaves & not set the long-term relationship. It was “vital” that government makes sure “that British farming standards are not undercut by an ambition to open up British markets to food which would be illegal to produce here.” There must also be “free & frictionless trade with the EU in the long-term.” The union’s first female President said the lobby “had precious little reassurances on these issues so far.” She wanted the government to “be clear about its ambitions for British farming.”

The Ulster Farmers’ Union is currently reviewing the Brexit proposal & “discussing it internally through our policy structures.” The priority is to “fully understand what it means for agriculture, the food industry & above all the future prosperity of family farm businesses in Northern Ireland.” They note “there are more questions than answers,” while more clarity is needed on *inter alia* the region’s access to EU trade deals once the transition period ends. They would also like to see more “certainty around the details of NI’s unfettered access to the GB market.” The “key objective from day one has been to secure trade that is as free & frictionless as possible east/west and north/south ... a no deal, however, remains the worst possible outcome for Northern Ireland’s family-run farm businesses & must be avoided.”

Deal “a backward step” says food industry: The UK’s Food & Drink Federation (FDF) has warned that that Johnson’s new deal will increase costs for businesses & consumers and undermine the success of the sector in the UK. Chief Executive, Ian Wright, said that it was “critical that the threat of a disastrous no deal Brexit be lifted.” But he also called on MPs to “consider what this deal means in the longer term for food & drink, the UK’s largest manufacturing sector, & the supply chain’s four million employees.” In the FDF’s view, “this deal represents a backward step in terms of securing frictionless trade with the EU,” he said, comparing it with the May agreement. It “sets us on course for regulatory divergence from our largest overseas market on critical food safety, science & quality issues,” he complained, bemoaning the fact that the sector was “already burdened by extensive, diverting & costly planning for a no-deal exit.”

EU agri-food chain welcome Brexit deal: EU agri-food chain representatives welcome the agreement reached by EU & UK negotiators this week, calling on the EP & UK parliaments to complete the ratification procedure before Oct 31. In a joint statement, Copa-Cogeca (farmers), CELAA (traders in agri-food commodities) & FoodDrinkEurope (food & drink manufacturers) said the deal “paves the way for an orderly withdrawal, a principle that the EU agri-food chain has been repeatedly calling for, thereby providing predictability to operators.” The three organisations endorse the “revised Political Declaration, which confirms the ambition to conclude a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with zero tariffs & quantitative restrictions between the EU & the UK.” They welcome the commitment to “maintaining customs & regulatory convergence in future,” while noting that “we will not be able to replicate the advantages of the EU customs union & Single market through an FTA.” On behalf of the European agri-food chain, the coalition “will continue to promote a comprehensive & deep FTA between the EU & UK, following the UK’s departure from the EU.” *In 2017, EU-27 agri-food exports to the UK amounted to €41 billion, while UK exports to the EU reached €17bn. This trade & businesses behind it employ 44 million people across the EU-28.*

EU HEADS OF STATE & GOV. WANT MFF 'NEGOTIATING BOX' WITH FIGURES BY DECEMBER

EU leaders have requested the Finnish Presidency submit a negotiating box with Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) figures ahead of the next Summit in Dec (12-13). The negotiating box should focus on the overall level of funding, volumes of the main policy areas & financing (revenue). In a 3-page (limited) document circulated ahead of today's meeting in Brussels (Oct 18), Presidency officials consider the "appropriate overall level range would be 1.03%-1.08% (EU-27 GNI)" resulting in €1.050-1.10 trillion range for the next programming period (2019-2024), compared to the €1.135 trillion proposed by the Commission (total commitments, excluding special instruments.) Member States have embraced the "modernised approach" tabled by the EU's exec, "geared towards the political priorities & new challenges," authors note, while the importance of continued support for Cohesion & CAP "have been highlighted by many." The Presidency suggests keeping the division between the main policy areas (approx. 1/3 to Cohesion, 1/3 to CAP & 1/3 to "other programmes"), balancing the volumes of Cohesion & CAP and increasing funding for "other programmes" compared to the current MFF, but less than proposed by the Commission. The approach "would result in a reallocation of funding from Pillar I to Pillar II", with the adjustment leading to a "nominal freeze in Pillar I compared to the current MFF." Some additional reallocations from other headings would be made to Pillar II, which would result in a level slightly under a nominal freeze in the 2nd Pillar.

Based on Presidency's consultations, the gradual alignment of direct support levels between Member States "would need to continue," while a detailed solution "needs to be developed." Expenditure needs to be "in line with EU policies & values," where both conditionalities & positive incentives are needed on the Rule of Law mechanism as well as climate & migration policies. Elsewhere, in a set of conclusions adopted this afternoon, heads of state & government "remain determined to ensure that the EU will continue to lead the way to a socially fair & just green transition." The European Council will finalise its guidance on the EU's long-term strategy on climate change at the end-of-year meeting, while EU enlargement & Turkey's military action in north-east Syria were also on today's agenda.

IN BRIEF: US duties; Fruit & veg market observatory; CMO plea; World Food Day; New GI:

Trade chief "regrets" Washington decision on duties: The EU's Trade Chief Cecilia Malmström regrets Washington's decision to move ahead with punitive duties on imports from the EU *inc. agri-food products* from today (Oct 18), following the decision by the WTO's arbitration panel in the 15-year Airbus/Boeing legal dispute on Oct 2 [see AF76-19]. *The panel authorised the US administration to introduce annual retaliatory tariffs - 10% rate on large civil aircraft & 25% on agricultural & other products - up to a value of almost \$7.5 billion on a range of European imports inc. cashmere sweaters, luxury goods, aircraft parts wine, olives, dairy products & whisky (with distilleries reportedly air freighting bottles of the beverage across the Atlantic before the tariffs take effect).*

In a statement issued today, the Trade chief said the announcement "leaves us no alternative but to follow through in due course with our own tariffs in the Boeing case, where the US has been found in breach of WTO rules," on products such as frozen fish, fresh & dried nuts (such as brazil nuts, cashew, almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts), chocolate, tomato ketchup, sparkling & white wines, rum & vodka and industrial goods such as tractors & heavy machinery. "Imposing tariffs on each other serves nobody's long-term interest," as it "will inflict very significant damage to the highly integrated supply chain of the aircraft sectors in the US & the EU and will result in collateral damage to many other sectors already suffering under the current trade tensions." As both sides have been found in breach of WTO rules, the EU & US "have a joint responsibility to sit down [as the world's largest aircraft manufacturers] & negotiate a settlement that is balanced & compliant with the WTO." The Swedish liberal politician recalled the concrete proposals on "clearly identified existing aircraft subsidies & on future support to our respective aircraft sectors," which, Malmström says, remain on the table. The EU's executive will "monitor the impact of the announced US countermeasures on the European products concerned, notably in the agricultural sector," she said, while it was committed to "defending European companies, farmers & consumers."

*See https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_19_6132

Fruit & veg market observatory kicks off: The Commission (DG AGRI) launched the new fruit & vegetable market observatory* today (Oct 18), which aims to provide greater transparency & improve market intelligence for the sector, which represents around 24% of the EU agricultural output value. The observatory will focus on pip fruit (apples & pears), citrus fruit, stone fruit (peaches & nectarines) and tomatoes, with a subgroup covering each 'rubrique.' The dashboard & balance sheets will be regularly updated with a wide range of market data such as prices, production & trade - complemented by market analysis in a timely manner, short-term outlook reports, medium-term prospects and regular board meetings composed of market experts to discuss the evolving market situation. The new platform follows the launch of observatories for crops, sugar, meat & milk, with the wine market observatory set to be launched on Nov 4. The Commission designed these hubs to "help the European agriculture sector to cope more effectively with market volatility & ensure more transparency," DG AGRI officials outline.

Speaking at Monday's Farm Council in Luxembourg, Commissioner Phil Hogan said the "current EU season has started with better prospects, after the difficult market situation for citrus fruit, apples & pears in the last season." He underlined that the low harvest for those products has resulted in a significant price

recovery in the start of the season in the main producer Member States. *Elsewhere, the international trade show for the fruit & vegetable industry - Fruit Attraction** - takes place in Madrid from Oct 22-24.*

***https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/farming/facts-and-figures/markets/overviews/market-observatories/fruit-and-vegetables_en;**

****www.ifema.es/en/fruit-attraction**

Call to strengthen CMO, GIs in fruit, vegetables: Industry & a number of MEPs called for the Common Market Organisation (CMO) of the fruit & vegetable sector, as well as the system of Geographical Indications to be enforced at a conference in Brussels yesterday (Oct 17). The conference entitled ‘*Governance, Common Market Organisation & Geographical Indications in the future CAP post 2020*,’ organised by the Assembly of European Horticultural Regions (AREFLH), Association of European Regions for Products of Origin (AREPO) & Coalition of European AgriRegions drew more than 100 delegates *inc.* EU & regional policy-makers, representatives of professional organisations & civil society. At the meeting, they discussed progress on CAP reform & proposed amendments to the fruit & vegetables CMO as well as planned changes to quality schemes. The conference also looked at the role of regions in managing the future CAP.

In the opening session, moderator Olivier Allain, Vice-President of the Brittany Region in charge of agriculture & coordinator of AgriRegions, said regions had played a “key role in promoting & achieving the agro-ecological transition, the competitiveness & the attractiveness of farms & rural areas”. Italian MEP Herbert Dorfmann (EPP) said it was impossible to address the challenges faced by European agriculture without “reinforcing the role of the regional authorities in the management of the 2nd Pillar.” When asked about the CAP’s environmental ambition, SCA spokesperson Kari Valonen (Finnish Presidency) insisted that the European Green Deal “cannot happen without the CAP & a strong 2nd Pillar with tailored measures tackling local environment & climate challenges.” Spanish Socialist MEP Clara Aguilera told the second session that the CMO in fruit & veg had proved to be “a successful & cost-effective tool that needs to be further consolidated through a better concentration of the supply, a crucial step if we wish to strengthen the position of farmers in the food supply chain.” Simona Caselli, Regional Minister for Agriculture of the Emilia-Romagna region & President of AREFLH said that the fruit & vegetable CMO had proved itself as “an incredibly successful tool that needs to be preserved & bolstered in the future CAP.” Renew Europe’s Jérémy Decerle (FR) who is co-shadow rapporteur on the draft CMO Regulation [see AF72-19], said that the newly-elected EP would strengthen the work initiated by past legislation concerning GIs.

Call for healthy diets for all on World Food Day: Delegates called for action to tackle hunger & cut food waste at a ceremony to mark World Food Day under the theme ‘*Our actions are our future - Healthy diets for a #ZeroHunger world*’ earlier this week (Oct 16). Speaking at the gathering in Rome, Italy’s Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte said that “collective action is the high road to tackling a global challenge such as hunger in the world.” Italy supported a “vision of integrated agriculture that supports the planet & cultural identity.” In a video message to the meeting, UN Secretary-General António Guterres announced a UN Food Systems Summit to be held in 2021 as part of the Decade of Action to deliver the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with Conte proposing that Italy host the event. The former Portuguese Socialist Prime Minister Guterres (1995-2002) said rising hunger was “unacceptable” in a world that wastes more than 1 billion tonnes of food every year. Pope Francis sent a message stressing that the “battle against hunger & malnutrition will not end as long as the logic of the market prevails & profit is sought at any cost.”

FAO Director-General Qu Dongyu warned that “hunger & malnutrition will be major barriers to achieving the SDGs by 2030 if we do not act now.” “We need to walk hand-in-hand & build healthy & sustainable food systems,” the FAO chief went on, announcing that the organisation’s theme for 2020-2021, would be promoting healthy diets & preventing all forms of malnutrition. The President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) Gilbert F. Houngbo said that ending hunger would “depend on transforming global food systems so that they are inclusive of women, youth & indigenous peoples, so they are sustainable - environmentally, socially, & economically.” David Beasley, Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP) called people around the world to join WFP’s campaign to #StopTheWaste, explaining that “the amount of food wasted globally is enough to feed another 2 billion people,” which was “totally unacceptable.”

In a statement issued on the occasion of World Food Day, outgoing Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis said he has made the “promotion of healthy lifestyles & the reduction of food waste” central to his 5-year tenure, expressing his confidence that the “good work we have done will be built upon.” Food waste must be tackled, the outgoing EU Health chief stated, where Europeans waste 88 million tonnes of food each year – amounting to over €140 billion. The “numbers are more than alarming & terribly shameful,” the earnest politician outlined, while over 800 million people suffer from hunger worldwide, over 670m adults & 120m children (aged 5-19) are obese. Andriukaitis said “healthy diets from sustainable food systems for a healthy planet should be our goal & our consumption patterns need to adapt.” This “will need to be part of the Farm to Fork Strategy & tie in the new Green Deal,” he stated, as “what we eat & what we waste, will, to a large extent, define the future of our kind & our planet.”

Romanian cheese GI registered: The Commission announced the approval of the Romanian cheese ‘*Telemea De Sibiu*’ for inclusion in the register of Protected Geographical Indications (PGI)* today (Oct 16). *Telemea de Sibiu* is a cheese made from sheep’s milk which has been made for centuries by shepherds

called 'baci'. It's a semi-hard cheese made from freshly milked unpasteurised milk which must be matured for at least 21 days. It is offered for sale fresh & mature. The cheese is produced in the Sibiu county in Transylvania, in the centre of Romania. The specification calls for the whole process, including the raising of the sheep, to take place within that area. The product's special flavour comes from the diet of the ewes, which spend most of the year out on pasture, eating herbs & aromatic plants, giving the cheese a pleasant, subtly tangy, salty taste. A number of festivals are held in the region each year celebrating *Telemea de Sibiu*, which is a flagship product of the region.

*Go to <https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/quality/door/list.html> & search for **RO/PGI/0005/02473**;

TIMETABLE: Week ahead (in Brussels unless otherwise stated), all Councils in Luxembourg;

- Oct 21** Special Committee on Agriculture (SCA) *inc.* CAP Strategic Plans (exchange of views on financial flexibility & sectoral types of interventions) & Commission reports on the adoption of delegated acts; EP plenary session in Strasbourg *inc.* end-of-term assessment of the Juncker Commission, debate on results of the EU Summit, climate & ecological emergency, how EU money was spent in 2018 (ECA report), adoption of position on EU Budget 2020, EU funding for UK beneficiaries until end 2020 in no deal Brexit & measures to protect bees from pesticides; Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker receives Renew Europe MEP Monica Semedo (LU) & Joseph Daul, President of the European People's Party (EPP) & Manfred Weber, Chairman of the EPP Group in the EP; Foreign Affairs chief Federica Mogherini in Tokyo (until 22/10) meets Japanese Ministers Toshimitsu Motegi (Foreign Affairs), Tarō Kōno (Defence) & Fumio Kishida, Member of the National Diet of Japan & former Japanese Foreign Minister; Economic & Financial Affairs Commissioner Pierre Moscovici in Paris, meets with Henri Nallet, President of the Haut-Conseil de la coopération agricole & President of the Foundation Jean Jaurès;
- Oct 22** College meeting *inc.* Communication on the verification of the full application of the Schengen acquis by Croatia; Juncker addresses the EP plenary session on the conclusions of the European Council & on the review & achievements of 2014-2019 mandate, receives Ursula von der Leyen, Commission President-elect; Mogherini in Tokyo, attends the inauguration ceremony of Emperor Naruhito of Japan;
- Oct 23** Mogherini in Tokyo, attends a dinner hosted by Prime Minister Shinzō Abe & hosts a roundtable with Japanese academia & civil society representatives; Health Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis in Dublin, participates in the '*Animal Health Ireland – 10th Anniversary Conference*';
- Oct 24** Employment, Social Policy, Health & Consumer Affairs Council (Employment & Social Policy); Juncker delivers keynote speech at the European Policy Centre (EPC); Mogherini in Beijing, meets Wang Yi, State Councilor & China's Minister for Foreign Affairs, General Wei Fenghe, State Councillor & Minister for National Defence & representatives of Chinese civil society; Vice-President Jyrki Katainen visits the Executive Agency for SMEs (EASME) in Brussels; Competition Commissioner Margrethe Vestager delivers keynote speech at a Conference on Sustainability & Competition Policy at the Committee of the Regions;
- Oct 25** Mogherini in New York, participates in the annual board meeting of the International Crisis Group & meets with UN Secretary-General António Guterres; Farm Commissioner Phil Hogan in Kilkenny (IE), attends the official launch of Entegro's new centre of excellence <https://entegro.ie/>; Vestager in Athens, participates in the ALDE party congress;

Management & Regulatory Committees

- Oct 21** Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food & Feed (PAFF) – Phyto-pharmaceuticals legislation (&22), Phytopharmaceuticals – Pesticides Residues (subsection of the Phytopharmaceuticals – Legislation meeting) *inc.* neonicotinoides;
- Oct 22** PAFF on Novel Food & Toxicological Safety; Agricultural Funds Committee;
- Oct 24** Committee for the Common Organisation of Agricultural Markets: Wine; PAFF on Animal Health & Welfare and Control & Import Conditions (joint meetings) (&25); Standing Committee on Plant Health;
- Oct 25** Committee for the Common Organisation of Agricultural Markets: Promotion;

ENDS

The latest EU agriculture, environment & trade news

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- **UK PREMIER BORIS JOHNSON STRUGGLES IN LONDON TO GET BREXIT DEAL AGREED**
- **COUNCIL DEBRIEF: Call for “coordinated” forestry strategy; Knowledge transfer; Wolves;**
- **SANTE NEWS: Split vote on GM maize; EFSA call on research platform; Kyriakides' Cabinet;**
- **TRADE UPDATES: EU agri-food exports perform well in FTAs; US, China agree ‘limited’ deal**
- **IN BRIEF: CAP files to plenary; Organic lobbyists on dialogue groups; UK Envi bill; Biofuels;**

UK PREMIER BORIS JOHNSON STRUGGLES IN LONDON TO GET BREXIT DEAL AGREED

EU politicians appear to believe that a new deal with Prime Minister Boris Johnson has been done, but the UK Premier was floundering this evening as he attempted to get Northern Ireland's DUP politicians & the most extreme anti-EU element of his own Conservative party to accept the result. During a visit to Airbus HQ in Toulouse with French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said talks were in the “final sprint,” while the Frenchman hoped “agreement will be found in the coming hours.” Council President Donald Tusk told a Polish broadcaster that the foundations of a deal were ready, but there were “certain doubts on the British side.” The EU's chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier made no statement as he arrived to brief EU Ambassadors in Brussels early evening. *At the time of going to press, senior UK government figures said there would be “no deal” tonight.*

There is speculation that Johnson could arrive in Brussels early in the morning in a final dash to reopen part of the negotiations ahead of the crucial EU Summit (Oct 17-18). However, the parties in London appeared deadlocked, amid speculation that Johnson was offering some sort of financial incentive to Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) to get its leaders to accept the idea of a customs barrier between Britain & the island of Ireland. The deal reportedly seeks to replace the controversial backstop over the border in Ireland with a separate arrangement for the North, something the DUP has objected to strongly in the past [see AF78-19]. Under the ‘Benn Act’, Johnson must ask the EU to extend the Article 50 process if no accord is struck by Oct 19. However, MP Steve Baker, leader of the pro-Brexit European Research Group (ERG) of Conservative MPs insisted that the Prime Minister had promised at a meeting in Downing Street that the UK would be out on Nov 1. The right-winger pointed out that a text would have to be agreed by the European Council (Oct 17) & then by UK MPs at a special session of the London Parliament expected on Oct 19, an unusual Saturday sitting, set to take place against the background of a massive pro-EU demonstration in the centre of the capital.

COUNCIL DEBRIEF: Call for “coordinated” forestry strategy; Knowledge transfer; Wolves;

Ministers call for “coordinated” forestry strategy: Agriculture Ministers strongly backed the idea of a new EU Forestry Strategy at their meeting in Luxembourg on Monday (Oct 14), with many stressing the need to make sure it was coordinated with all other Community policies (ES, DE, RO, FR, LV, LU, CY, BE, AT, SK, SE & PL) & the EU's aims on issues like climate change & the environment. A few still wanted major decisions to be left in Member States' hands, but there was no doubt they want the Commission to move forward with the new plan.

In a discussion based around a four-page background paper from the Presidency [*12491/19], Hungary's Zsolt Feldman said the forestry sector was central to the development of the EU. There was “no doubt Europe needs a forestry strategy post-2020,” he said, emphasising that it should not contradict the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. However, because forestry coverage varied throughout the EU, it should be possible for forestry management to be different in each Member State. Danish Minister Mogens Jensen echoed his Hungarian colleague, saying that the sustainable management of forests was fundamental for meeting the UN's development goals. Slovenian Minister Aleksandra Pivec called for a new comprehensive forestry strategy, with sustainable management at its core. Spanish Minister Luis Planas wanted a strategy that “should allow us to be consistent in all of our European policies that deal with forests.” He also raised the issue of forest fires & the need to mitigate climate change. The strategy would have to be aligned with the European Green Deal, particularly on biodiversity, the Socialist politician added. Portugal's Luís Capoulas Santos emphasised the need to encourage re-forestation, but felt that a strategy could work using the existing legal measures & wanted subsidiarity to be observed.

Germany's Julia Klöckner stressed the need for healthy forests & a more effective EU blueprint. It should have a “closer interface” with other policy areas, the CDU politician stated. The Latvian delegation accepted the need for an EU-level strategy, which should improve synergies & coordination, while Romania wanted to see efficient coordination to deal with the growing challenges facing the sector. Secretary of State Daniel-Eugeniu Crunțeanu also said there was a need to promote native species, which would be better

suited to local conditions. French Minister Didier Guillaume stressed that forests affect all EU citizens. A number of the difficulties facing the sector were cross-border in nature, giving the bark beetle & repeated droughts as examples. "We want a strengthened forestry strategy ... we want a harmonised policy for the forestry strategy," he added. Luxembourg's Romain Schneider said there was a need to focus on the major challenges, climate change & biodiversity, rather than having a strategy that attempted to be too broad. Cypriot Minister Costas Kadis was pleased with "efforts to have a deepened, sustainable forest strategy." It was important to have more cooperation & coordinate with other policy areas. The Lithuanian delegation agreed with the need for a strategy, calling for closer cooperation & exchanging good practice, as well as the importance of educating young people the role of forests. Belgium's Denis Ducarme emphasised the need for an "innovative & coordinated approach," which should be "linked in to other relevant EU strategies," while Italy's Secretary of State Giuseppe L'Abbate said the real challenge was to "bring forests into a broader based approach to managing resources." Austrian Minister Maria Patek wanted the policy to be "coherent & consistent," & "anchored in the green deal," while her Bulgarian counterpart Desislava Taneva was pushing a "stronger & more independent forest strategy," emphasising the need for research & development & stressing the protection of biodiversity. Slovakia said it was essential for the EU to have a strategy for forestry & called for a "holistic approach" which would "prevent any further fragmentation of forestry policy." Sweden's Jennie Nilsson described a renewed forest policy as a good idea, stressing the need for coordination, while Estonia's Environment Minister Rene Kokk wanted action to raise awareness on forest issues. He would also like to have the principle of subsidiarity maintained. Ireland's Michael Creed said that forestry was becoming more and more of a key issue, with economic, environmental & socio-cultural impacts. The new strategy should "recognise the need to increase forest cover," the Macroom man said.

EU Farm Commissioner Phil Hogan stressed the importance of forests & the issues facing the sector. "Protecting forests effectively, & maximizing their potential to support our policy priorities, demands a coherent policy framework that seeks the right balance of actions," he said. The EU Farm chief explained that the Commission's own review of the 2013-2020 Forest Strategy had concluded that it was "a valid policy tool that allows the EU & Member States to address the many challenges & roles of forests." The new Commission's priorities & the European Green Deal offered "a timely & most relevant opportunity to reflect how a new strategic approach to forests & the forest-based sector can effectively maximize forests' contribution." The Commission's vision was a new EU Forest Strategy which could "secure consistency of EU policies" as well as being "a tool to work jointly in maximizing the contribution of forests to the delivery of all the services they can provide to address the sustainability challenges of the future."

Slovenia reports on knowledge transfer ideas [*12886/19]: Slovenia's Agriculture Minister Aleksandra Pivec told her colleagues about a commitment from a wide range of European countries, including some outside the EU, to improve the availability of know-how in agriculture. During her intervention at the Council meeting in Luxembourg on Monday evening (Oct 14) [see AF79-19], she referred to a conference entitled '*Strengthening the generation & transfer of knowledge for the progress of agriculture & rural areas*' organised by the Slovenia's Farm Ministry in Ptuj, in the north east of the country (Aug 23). *Ptuj is home to the Bistra Scientific Research Centre, which was managed by Dr. Pivec (PhD in Chemical Engineering) for nearly 8 years before her Ministerial appointment in Sept 2018.* The meeting, in the margins of the 57th International Fair of Agriculture & Food AGRA, was attended by Ministers or officials from AT, BG, CZ, CY, FR, HU, LV, NL, PL & SI as well as Bosnia & Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia & Turkey. There were also representatives of scientific & research institutions present. Delegates looked at examples of good practice from Slovenia in transferring knowledge & innovation & the Agricultural Knowledge & Innovation System (AKIS). The day produced a joint statement reaffirming their commitment to strengthen AKIS in Europe post 2021, noting the key role to be played by the reformed 2021-2027 CAP. Delegates undertook to increase investment on research & development as well as demonstration & cooperation, particularly for small & medium holdings. There was also a commitment to establishing an environment conducive to the faster development of innovation & better evaluation of existing knowledge, stressing the importance of cooperation between European countries, as well as research institutions, advisory services & farmers.

French leads declaration on wolf management [*12888/19]: The French, with support from DK, EE, IT & LV, are looking for greater flexibility in the Guidance document on the strict protection of species of Community interest under the Habitats Directive to "ensure the best possible management of wolf populations." In an Any Other Business (AOB) point raised by French Minister Didier Guillaume on Monday, he said that sustainable wolf population control should be "based on best local practices" & allow for the "entire flexibility provided by the Directive." In a 1½-page joint declaration circulated at the meeting, the five countries say that wolf populations are expanding in Europe "because of local improvements in habitat quality, increased populations of some prey species, public support & favourable international, European & national legislation." Based on research conducted by the EP (2018), it is estimated at 17 000. The rapid population growth "raises multiple questions of coexistence with natural & human activities, notably on pastoralism & other agricultural activities, & remains a huge challenge for Member States." The coalition expressed "deep concern" about the draft revised Guidance document, tabled in Oct 2018 "which shows a stricter interpretation of the Habitat Directive." The changes "threaten the possibilities for Member States to

adequately manage wolf populations,” while calling for “additional flexibility ... so that they adapt their practices to local realities & fully address social, cultural & economic issues” in any future proposal. In response, EU Farm Commissioner Phil Hogan urged all sides to “find a balance,” in the hopes of ensuring a “sustainable co-existence.” He reminded delegates of measures under Rural Development *inc.* technical assistance to defend against large carnivores. The services are currently analysing the recent ECJ court ruling. **For further information on the agenda points listed above enter the number provided under ‘Public Register’ at the website goo.gl/ybwNtq;*

SANTE NEWS: Split vote on GM maize; EFSA call on research platform; Kyriakides’ Cabinet;

Split vote on GM maize stack: Member States delivered the customary ‘no opinion’ on the authorisation of the maize hybrid *Bt11xMIR162xMIR604x1507x5307xGA21* for food & feed at the Appeal Committee on Oct 11 [see table below]. The ‘no opinion’ followed the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food & Feed (PAFF) on Sept 16, where countries such as BE, DE, EE, IT & PT joined the abstention camp. On the day of the vote last month, the Lithuanian delegation was absent. There were some slight changes in voting patterns at the Appeal Committee last Friday – in the end BE & EE supported the draft decision, while LT showed up on the day & rejected the proposal.

GM maize <i>Bt11xMIR162xMIR604x1507x5307xGA21</i> (authorisation)		
For	Against	Abstain
BE, CZ, DK, EE, IE, ES, NL, RO, FI, SE & UK	BG, EL, FR, HR, CY, LV, LT, LU, HU, MT, AT, PL, SI & SK	DE, IT & PT

EFSA launches call on research platform for food safety:

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) this week opened a call* to develop a research & innovation platform for food safety to make it easier to coordinate efforts on the subject (Oct 15). The Parma-based agency’s Chief Scientist Marta Hugas said that “identifying food safety research priorities is something that is crucial for EFSA.” The platform would include information on food safety research & improve coherence between national & EU funding, as well as facilitating new approaches to communication on the subject. The deadline for submissions is Jan 22, 2020.

*See <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/funding/calls/supporting-food-safety-systems-future>

Kyriakides’ Cabinet takes shape: Cypriot Giorgos Rossides, current Member of Cabinet for Greek Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos (Migration, Home Affairs & Citizenship) since Oct 2015 looks set to get the nod as Health Commissioner-designate Stella Kyriakides’ Chef de Cabinet. With a professional background in DG Justice & Consumers as Head of Sector in Communications (Sept 2014-Sept 2015) & Press & Communications Officer (Sept 2013-Sept 2014), he holds a Master’s Degree in International Affairs from Colombia University (2002-2004) & an MA Philosophy, Politics & Economics from the University of Oxford (1999-2002).

The highly-regarded Finnish lawyer Annukka Ojala, head of unit for Strategy & Coordination in DG SANTE, is tipped to become Deputy Chef de Cabinet. In her current post, Ojala reports directly to DG SANTE chief Anne Bucher & is described as “smart & extremely capable” by her colleagues. The Nordic woman previously worked with a US law firm. Roberto Reig Rodrigo, current executive assistant to Bucher, has also landed a Cabinet position. The Spanish man, who is said to be popular among colleagues, joined the Commission’s Health & Food Safety Department when his fellow countryman Xavier Prats Monné took over as DG SANTE boss (2015-2018). Meanwhile, Olympia Neocleous, Deputy Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the EU (COREPER 1) (since Sept 2016) is said to have secured one of the six Cabinet jobs. The London School of Economics & Political Science graduate (MSc in International Relations & History, 1997-1998) served as Head of the EU Department in the Cypriot Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Neocleous was Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of Cyprus in Washington from Nov 2010-June 2015. In the gender balanced Cabinet, a Swede will take over as Advisor on Communications, while another Cypriot will reportedly join Kyriakides from her previous role as lawmaker in Nicosia. The new College is now expected to take office no earlier than Dec 2 (Monday), as (yet to be confirmed) candidates from HU, RO & FR must still go through the process of EP Hearings, ahead of a plenary vote (more than likely at the Nov session in Strasbourg 25-28).

In other news, unconfirmed reports suggest a former French member of a previous Agri Cabinet is set to make a return on Janusz Wojciechowski’s team. Fresh from elections where his Law & Justice (PiS) party emerged victor over the weekend (Oct 13), the incoming Farm chief is reportedly considering candidates from FR, IT & DE (possibly a well-known Agri figure from the EP). More details to follow when names have been confirmed. But as the new College is now expected to take office on Dec 2, there is no rush in finalising the line-up.

TRADE UPDATES: EU agri-food exports perform well in FTAs; US, China agree ‘limited’ deal;

EU agri-food exports fare well out of FTAs: The EU’s agri-food sector has performed strongly in exports to countries covered by Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), the Commission confirmed on Oct 14. A 40-page annual report on the ‘Implementation of Free Trade Agreements’* (2018) shows growth in EU exports to & imports from international partners of 2% & 4.6% respectively, with a strong performance for agri-food. The

Union's exports of agri-food products under preferential agreements grew by 2.2% or €1 billion in 2018, while agri-food imports declined by 0.6%. The deals "continue to contribute to developing a rules-based trading system & they improved market access for EU products & investments in partner countries," DG TRADE officials outline. EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström said the report showed that "more of our global trade is covered by preferential deals than ever before." "Our food & drink exports in particular are flourishing thanks to lower tariffs & legal protection abroad for products such as Champagne & Feta," she outlined. The bloc currently has the "largest trade network in the world," with 41 agreements covering 72 countries. Speaking to reporters, the Swedish Commissioner said that "trade is often presented as a threat to European agriculture, but our figures say that is not correct," noting that the EU is the world's largest exporter of food & beverages. The Union was "finding new customers for our quality products all over the world," she added. The liberal politician also announced that she had, that day, instructed the DG TRADE services to launch a WTO dispute against Colombia over frozen fries. The South American country imposed anti-dumping duties on imports of the product from NL, DE & BE in Nov 2018, which are "completely unjustified" in her view. "They are harming EU companies," she complained. Malmström also told the briefing that preliminary results of a yet to be published Eurobarometer study of attitudes to trade deals showed that six in ten Europeans say they benefit from international trade, an increase of 16 percentage points since 2010. *More details at https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_19_6074;

US China in preliminary trade deal: The US & China have agreed a preliminary trade deal that would see Washington hold off on a hike in tariffs on \$250 billion of Chinese imports, from 25% to 30% (due to come into effect on Oct 15), following bilateral talks in Washington (Oct 10-11). US President Donald Trump & China's Vice Premier Liu He held a joint press conference at the White House (Oct 11), at which the American leader said that "we've come to a very substantial phase one deal." Writing up the limited agreement would "probably [take] three weeks, four weeks, or five weeks," he elaborated, telling journalists that "as you know, we're going to be in Chile together for a big Summit," - taken as a reference to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Ministerial in Santiago, Chile on Nov 13-14 - meetings run all week (Nov 11-17). "Maybe it'll be then, or maybe it'll be sometime around then," Trump went on. The 73-year-old Republican politician described the tentative bilateral accord as a "tremendous deal for farmers, involving the purchase of between \$40-\$50 billion worth of agricultural products" [such as soybeans & pork] - more than double the levels before the trade war. "I'd suggest the farmers have to go & immediately buy more land & get bigger tractors," the US leader, who is seeking re-election in Nov 2020, said.

IN BRIEF: CAP files to plenary; Organic lobbyists on dialogue groups; UK Envi bill; Biofuels;

Green light to advance CAP files to plenary: The Conference of Presidents (EP President & leaders of political groups) gave the green light earlier today to forward the three CAP reform files to plenary (poss. Jan/Feb 2020). When the CAP dossiers (from the previous mandate) are sent before the full House, one or more political groups or at least 38 MEPs may ask for a motion to refer the dossiers back to the Committee, allowing the newly-appointed MEPs to table amendments & adapt the text accordingly. Otherwise, MEPs - particularly those on the ENVI Committee - would still have a chance to table amendments (previously not approved) at plenary level as per the normal legislative procedure. The EP's AGRI Committee agreed on Sept 4 to take forward the three reports on CAP reform agreed by the Committee pre-election. The consensus at the time was "to continue rather than start from scratch." AGRI MEPs agreed the reports on the Common Market Organisation (CMO) & the CAP Strategic Plans on Apr 1 [see AF26-19] & on Financing, Management & Monitoring (Horizontal Regulation) on Apr 8 [see AF28-19]. The move means that the Committee has avoided restarting the legislative procedure from the beginning, although Committee Chair Norbert Lins (EPP, DE) (& most coordinators) previously stressed that "we must ensure that new MEPs are given a chance to contribute to the draft laws." AGRI Coordinators are expected to clarify the next steps in early Nov (4-5). *Agriculture Ministers will discuss the new green architecture when they meet in Brussels on Nov 18, where EU Farm Commissioner Phil Hogan is expected to attend, as the new College is unlikely to take office by then (more than likely Dec 2).*

Organic lobbyists to chair dialogue groups: Two leaders of the EU's organic sector have been elected to chair Civil Dialogue Groups, the bodies which help stakeholders & the Commission liaise over farm policy. Jan Plagge, President of the organic group IFOAM EU, was re-elected as Chair of the Civil Dialogue Group on the Common Agricultural Policy (Oct 15). Earlier today, IFOAM EU Vice-President Marian Blom was elected as Chair of the Civil Dialogue Group on Organic Farming. Plagge is President of Bioland an organic farming association in Germany & South Tirol, which represents some 8 100 organic farmers & around 1 000 operators in processing & trade. He was elected as IFOAM EU Vice-President in 2016, becoming President of the movement in May 2018. Plagge converted his own horticulture operation to organic in 1992. Blom has been Regulation Officer & Project Manager in the Knowledge & Innovation department of the Dutch organic umbrella body Bionext, since 2011. The Dutchwoman has been a member of IFOAM EU's Council since 2007 & is a former Knowledge Officer at the Dutch Innovation Centre for Organic Agriculture at Wageningen University. Commenting this week, Plagge said he was honoured to have the trust of other stakeholders to hold a constructive dialogue on a new CAP, "which delivers more performance for public goods." He is convinced that "organic farming can be an important bridge for transforming food & farming

systems,” & contributing to the European Green Deal & the planned ‘farm to fork’ strategy. Blom, who holds MSc. in Organic Farming (Wageningen), thanked the organic stakeholders for their trust & expressed the desire to improve dialogue between them & the Commission, particularly as a new European Organic Action Plan is being developed.

UK introduces Environment Bill: The UK government this week introduced an Environment Bill* (Oct 15), for England only, which promises a green transformation after Brexit. The 232-page bill would hold governments to account if it fails to meet environmental targets on meeting net zero emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050 as well as on biodiversity, air quality, water and resource & waste efficiency, with a requirement for Ministers to tell Parliament why & when any target has been missed.

Environment Secretary Theresa Villiers called the natural environment “a vital shared resource.” The bill “leads a green transformation that will help our country to thrive,” she continued. “It positions the UK as a world leader on improving air quality, environmental biodiversity, a more circular economy, & managing our precious water resources in a changing climate.” The Minister also claimed that it “ensures that after Brexit, environmental ambition & accountability are placed more clearly than ever before at the heart of government, both now & in the future.” NFU President Minette Batters said the bill appeared “broad & ambitious.” The union would “examine the details in the coming days.”

*See <https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/environment.html>

US farmers let down on biofuels: The US National Farmers’ Union (NFU) has expressed disappointment after the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) watered down action promised by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) over the effect of small refinery exemptions on biofuel demand [see AF54-19]. In an announcement on Oct 15, the EPA put forward a plan which would only create a much smaller than hoped for increase in demand, just 770 million gallons a year, instead of 1.35 billion. NFU Vice-President of Public Policy & Communications Rob Larew said that “again & again, the administration has made big promises to family farmers & and again & again, they have failed to deliver on those promises.” “We shouldn’t be surprised, then, when President Trump & the EPA swear to fully repair the harm inflicted by small refinery exemptions & then only offer half a solution” he went on. “We are still gravely disappointed,” he complained. “Family farmers have been burned too many times by broken promises & half-hearted support.”

*See <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2019/10/04/president-trump-delivers-key-promise-american-farmers-epa-usda>

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- **FARM COUNCIL: US PUNITIVE TARIFFS (AIRBUS DISPUTE) ECLIPSE CAP REFORM TALKS**
- **DELEGATIONS SLAM US DUTIES ON EU AGRI-FOOD; CALL FOR MARKET SUPPORT TOOLS;**
- **MARKET REPORT: EU'S EXEC READIES PRIVATE STORAGE AID (PSA) FOR OLIVE OIL**
- **CAP PROGRESS REPORT "GOOD BASIS FOR DISCUSSION" MORE WORK TO BE DONE**
- **EU FARM MINISTERS SUPPORT COMMISSION CALL FOR ACTION ON DEFORESTATION**
- **SANTE: Wild boar control & biosecurity in fight against ASF; V4+4 on ASF; 5-year legacy;**
- **IN BRIEF: Ministers want farmers to tap into bio-economy; Poland's PiS wins election;**

FARM COUNCIL: US PUNITIVE TARIFFS (AIRBUS DISPUTE) ECLIPSE CAP REFORM TALKS

EU Agriculture & Fisheries Ministers returned to the CAP reform package (in public deliberation) at today's Council in Luxembourg (Oct 14), while the impact of US punitive tariffs on European agri-food products, particularly on countries such as the UK, ES, DE, FR, IT & IE dominated discussions. Under the chairmanship of Finnish Agriculture Minister Jari Leppä, the jam-packed meeting kicked off just after 10am, with discussions on a regulation fixing fishing opportunities in the Baltic Sea for 2020. *Fisheries-related items will resume in the morning (from 10am)*. Just before 11am, Ministers held a lively debate on the Communication on 'Stepping up EU action to protect & restore the world's forests' (public session) [**11449/1/19 REV1*], followed by an exchange of views on the EU Forestry Strategy post-2020 [**12491/19*]. On behalf of the Visegrád Group (CZ, HU, PL & SK), BG, HR & SI, the Czech delegation presented a declaration on 'Forests, sustainable forest management & adaptation to climate change' [**12883/19*]. After lunch (from 3.40pm), Ministers turned their attention to future farm policy (in public session) [**12693/19 & 12693/19 COR1*], with delegations voicing, what they see, as the main outstanding points in the draft regulations. During the debate, the vast majority of delegates (now 20) backed a joint statement on the CAP budget, led by France [**12894/19 & below*]. In his last appearance as the EU's Farm Chief, Phil Hogan updated Council on the market situation (from around 5.15pm), with Italy providing information on damage caused by the Asian stink bug to its fruit & vegetable sector [**12882/19*]. From 6.30pm, Leppä debriefed his Ministerial colleagues on a conference on the 'European Bio-economy Scene 2019' held in Helsinki on July 8-10 (public session) [**12539/19*], while Slovenia provided feedback on the Ministerial conference 'Strengthening the Generation & Transfer of Knowledge for the Progress of Agriculture & Rural Areas' held in the city of Ptuj (Aug 23) [**12886/19*]. Delegations from Italy, Spain & France led the charge on the main consequences of additional US duties on certain EU agri-food exports [**12884/19 & *12885/19 & *12976/19*], with the majority of delegations calling for a "negotiated settlement" rather an escalation of trade tensions on both sides of the Atlantic. Outgoing Health Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis provided information on the state of play on African Swine Fever (ASF) from 8.15pm [**12570/19*], while the Czechs presented a joint declaration from the Visegrád Group, plus BG, HR, RO, & SI on combatting the viral disease [**12881/19*]. As he prepares to hand over the baton to his successor Stella Kyriakides (CY), Andriukaitis also took the opportunity to recap on his legacy over the past five years - state of play on major food safety issues [**12861/19*]. Council proceedings were wrapped up at around 9.20pm. **For further information on the agenda points listed above enter the number provided under 'Public Register' at the website [goo.gl/ybwNtq](https://video.consilium.europa.eu/en/webcast); *Debates at <https://video.consilium.europa.eu/en/webcast>; Any agenda items not covered in this edition will follow on Oct 16;*

Coalition calls for stable farm budget: The CAP budget must be maintained at the current EU-27 level (in current prices) for the next programming period (2021-2027), according to a joint statement from a coalition of 17 delegations today [**12894/19*]. In a move led by France, supported by AT, BG, CY, CZ, EE, HU, EL, IE, LV, LT, LU, PL, PT, RO, SK & ES*, the group of like-minded countries insist on a stable farm budget to "meet the new challenges faced by European agriculture & forestry" & "meet the expectations of EU citizens." They also refer to the "urgent need to take action to meet the climate challenge." During his address in the chamber this afternoon, French Minister Didier Guillaume insisted that "no compromise can be found without clarity on the budget," underlining the role of farm expenditure "to face up to future challenges." Given the uncertainty on the long-term financial perspectives, the former Vice-President of the Senate (2011-2014) said "none of the three draft regulations can be set down in stone." A robust budget is key for an agriculture that is "innovative, sustainable & paves the way for the environmental transition." The call comes ahead of a crucial EU Summit on Oct 17-18, where EU leaders are expected to advance discussions on the Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF). Speaking to reporters this evening, Commissioner Phil Hogan said that delegations wanted to "see the money before they sign off on the policy", something the outgoing Farm chief can understand. **SI, HR & BE backed the declaration today;*

DELEGATIONS SLAM US DUTIES ON EU AGRI-FOOD; CALL FOR MARKET SUPPORT TOOLS;

Spain, Italy & France slammed the introduction of US punitive duties on a range of EU agri-food exports in the long-running dispute over aircraft subsidies & urged the Commission to take a strong stance on the issue at today's Council meeting in Lux (Oct 14). *Washington got clearance from the WTO on Oct 2 to impose annual retaliatory tariffs up to a value of almost \$7.5 billion on a range of European imports inc. wine, whiskey, olives, dairy products, cashmere sweaters, luxury goods & aircraft parts [see AF76-19]. The move was formally endorsed by the Dispute Settlement Board in Geneva this morning (Oct 14).*

During this evening's debate (from around 7.30pm) on the Any Other Business (AOB) point, Spain's Luis Planas said Madrid wanted the Commission to maintain a firm position in the negotiations **[*12885/19]**. He warned that trade tariffs were "not good for anyone," as they are "negative for Spain & negative for other Member States." The decision on a similar case over US aircraft manufacturer Boeing was due in eight to ten months, he told Ministers. In terms of products affected by the decision, he mentioned bottled olive oil & table olives "which for the second time have been subjected to tariffs by the US." "This is not a problem that should fall on the shoulders of our sector," he said. The Italian delegation called for Private Storage Aid (PSA) for its high-quality cheese **[*12884/19]**. The country's Secretary of State Giuseppe L'Abbate said the announcement would have major repercussions for the Italian agri-food sector particularly for pigmeat products, beverages & producers of quality cheeses, which "have invested a lot in the American market." The impact will be felt in the processing industries & job creation, he added. He urged the Commission to "intervene," & provide a "firm response to protect Italian excellence," floating the activation of PSA for cheese & greater investment in promotion programmes for "those sectors hard hit by the effect of the tariffs." Didier Guillaume (FR) echoed this sentiment, saying it was "indispensable to present a united & firm ... clear & unambiguous response" **[*12976/19]**. French wine exports are going to take a hit, with some producers expected to go out of business. Guillaume stressed the need to "mobilise all the CAP instruments." The French wine sector was being particularly badly affected *inc. consignments already in transit to the US*. He suggested promotion programmes "with easier to implement measures on 3rd countries" & exceptional measures under the Common Market Organisation. Delegations from CZ, UK, NL, EL, PT, HU, LT & DE also took to the floor, with most pushing for a "negotiated settlement" & "finding a solution" to "de-escalate trade tensions on the market." The UK, home to production of parts for Airbus, although likely for not much longer, supported "taking a united approach," while Germany's outgoing State Secretary Hermann Onko Aeikens regretted that agriculture "was being dragged into a 15-year-old dispute involvement large aircraft."

In response, Farm Commissioner Phil Hogan said the EU's executive remains "convinced that both US & EU trade interests are best served by a negotiated solution to the long-standing Boeing/Airbus dispute which is at the origin of these tariffs." The incoming Trade chief recalled the "serious & credible opening in July for a negotiated settlement," while he regrets the US "did not seize the opportunity to take up our invitation." Both sides should be focused on "de-escalating tensions rather than adding further uncertainty to an already delicate world trade & economic situation." Imposing tariffs (at 25% on agricultural products) is not a positive move, as it is "only a matter of time before we have the opportunity to impose tariffs on imports from the US in retaliation for the damage arising from their subsidies to Boeing," he added. The Irishman pointed out that "the four EU Member States where Airbus manufacturing is concentrated, UK, France, Germany & Spain, together with Italy & Ireland account for almost 97% of the total food exports of €4.3 billion exposed to the tariffs." *Some commentators suggest the inclusion of some of Ireland's iconic products such as Kerrygold butter & Bailey's Irish Cream Liqueur is a "shot over the bows" by US President Donald Trump to the incoming Trade chief.* The products targeted were "in most cases representative of the best of our food production systems" *inc. Parmigiano cheese, extra virgin Spanish olive oils, PDO & PGI wines, Irish butter & Scotch Whisky.* The "apparent targeting of high value cheeses, which are among the flagship products covered by GIs has caused understandable concern," he noted, assuring delegates that the protection of high-quality products "is & will remain an absolute priority." Referring to market management instruments such as private storage, Hogan pledged to "assess & analyse the situation carefully in the near future, when we will have more information on the impact on farmers." The Commission will "review the opportunity to apply market measures if necessary," he added, calling on national capitals to exploit promotion programmes (worth €200 million in 2020) particularly for 3rd country markets in Asia "to mitigate the impact of the US punitive tariffs."

A number of developments over the coming weeks will provide more clarity on the next steps, he stated, *inc. any changes in the current provisional tariff list, the wider developments on the WTO front in relation to the US measures inc. likely timetable for tariffs in the Boeing case, more feedback from exporters on the impact, further information on the extent of front-loading of exports, in anticipation of the tariffs, which would offset their impact as well as more clarity on Brexit negotiations & the likely outcome.* In conclusion, Hogan pledged to "travel to the US at the earliest opportunity to engage with the US administration ... with a positive & constructive approach."

Additional US tariffs "not the solution," Malmström: The EU stands ready to "negotiate a settlement for both the Airbus & the Boeing case addressing remaining compliance obligations on both sides, putting these cases behind us ... as imposing additional duties in the two aircraft cases is not the solution," EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström outlined in a letter to US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer on Friday

(Oct 11). The single-page correspondence, with incoming Trade Commissioner Phil Hogan in copy, is an attempt to encourage Washington to enter into talks with Brussels in order to solve the aircraft dispute. The Swedish Commissioner expresses her regret that the US “appears to have taken the decision to impose its countermeasures on EU exports following the WTO arbitration panel decision in the Airbus case.” “This will make finding a negotiated settlement more difficult, & it will push the EU into putting countermeasures in place when the time comes on the parallel Boeing case (2020),” she outlines. Both sides “have been found at fault by the WTO dispute settlement system for continuing to provide certain unlawful subsidies to Airbus & Boeing, respectively.” Malmström recalls concrete proposals shared in July “for a new regime on aircraft subsidies”, which “remain unanswered & unaddressed by the US side.” In conclusion, she urges her US counterpart to “engage in negotiations to frame future subsidy disciplines for the aircraft sector, not least to address the challenge of an entry into the market of new heavily subsidised competitors.”

MARKET REPORT: EU'S EXEC READIES PRIVATE STORAGE AID (PSA) FOR OLIVE OIL

The EU's executive is readying a proposal to trigger Private Storage Aid (PSA) for olive oil, Farm Commissioner Phil Hogan confirmed this afternoon, as it is the “best instrument to provide meaningful support to the sector.” During an update on the agricultural market situation (from around 5.45pm), the incoming Trade chief said the situation in “both the olive oil & table olive sectors tops the Commission's list of current concerns.” He described the market as “very difficult ... largely due to exceptionally high harvest triggering weak prices, especially in Spain the main producer.” EU production in the next marketing year is expected to reach 2.1 million tonnes (close to average level), he outlined, noting this is “insufficient to reduce the high levels of stocks accumulated in recent years.” He referred to the recent decision of the US administration to impose tariffs on Spanish exports of bottled olive oil & green olives, but it is “worth acknowledging the difficulties in this sector independently of the application of any US tariffs.” Beef is “another sector under pressure,” he underlined, “performing below 2018 levels.” The Commission “is well aware of the risk that Brexit & other international considerations present,” he stated, seeking to reassure delegations that his services are “ready to respond, using the instruments available under the CAP measures to address any destabilisation of the markets.” “Despite the reduction in demand in some of our important trade partners, our trade balance remains largely positive & exports remain dynamic,” he noted. The outgoing Farm chief presented a positive picture on pigmeat, with increasing prices since the beginning of 2019, largely driven by good export demand in Jan-July especially from certain Asian countries (in particular China, which is fighting African Swine Fever). EU average pig prices are currently at their highest since Sept 2013 €184/100kg, 28% up on last year. Some of the key producers are reducing their production (DE, PL & DK), while ES, NL & FR have reported hikes in output. Uncertainty surrounding Brexit & the threat posed by ASF both in the EU & 3rd countries are key concerns for the sector.

Meanwhile, Hogan described the milk market as “positively balanced”, with deliveries increasing by only 0.2% so far this year (until July), while the current EU season for citrus fruit, apples & pears “has started with better prospects.” He recalled the establishment of an EU market observatory for fruits & vegetables to “improve market transparency & step up efforts in market intelligence.” On sugar, the latest EU average price (Aug 2019) is low at €320 per tonne. “It is not really possible to foresee any immediate changes due to the difficult contractual negotiation dynamics among sugar sellers & users.” But EU spot prices “continue to be substantially higher than the EU average price” as these are based on contracts that were signed months in advance. World prices are also low, while sugar stocks are high, not helped as India announces new subsidies for 6 million tonnes of exports of the sweetener, he indicates. The oversupply situation since the end of the sugar quota regime has been rebalanced, while the EU “sugar sector continues its transition to a market-orientated environment, where stakeholders adjust their business decisions to market signals.”

Italy raises damage caused by Brown Stink Bug: The Brown Stink Bug “accidentally introduced into the EU through the multiple routes of international trade”, is wreaking havoc with Italy's fruit & vegetables sector, according to the Italian delegation at today's Farm Council in Lux [*12882/19]. Widespread throughout the country, but particularly in the North, the bug has caused serious damage to apples, pears, kiwis, peaches, cherries, apricots, but also maize, soya & sunflower. The bug is resistant to insecticides & proliferates quickly, with the authorities considering bringing in the ‘Samurai Wasp’ - native to East Asia but now found in Europe & North America - chiefly known as parasitizing the *Halyomorpha halys*. The brown marmorated bug damages the fruit, making them unusable for both consumption & processing, while farmers have been putting in place “expensive measures” e.g. installation of anti-insect nets, traps etc. in order to avoid infestations. During his intervention today, Secretary of State Giuseppe L'Abbate reported economic losses of around €500 million “in lost revenue for Italian farmers,” which is having a knock-on effect on the wider rural economy, labour force & processing industries. He urged the Commission to trigger the options provided by Article 221 of Regulation 1308/2013 “in order to safeguard the key role that the fruit & vegetable Producer Organisations can play in this context.”

CAP PROGRESS REPORT “GOOD BASIS FOR DISCUSSION” MORE WORK TO BE DONE

Delegations agree that the Presidency progress report on the CAP reform is a good basis for discussion [*12693/19], but that more works need to be done on *inter alia* the green architecture (flexibility of

payments), new delivery model (indicators, assessment & reporting), eco-schemes, definition of a 'genuine farmer', move towards green transition & sectoral interventions. During the 2-hour debate that kicked off after lunch (from around 3.40pm), some 20 delegations voiced the need for a robust farm budget in the next programming period (2021-2027) [see above]. Portugal's Luís Capoulas Santos rejects any budgetary cuts to POSEI, wine programmes, rural development programmes & would like to see a "particular emphasis on small-holders." Poland's Ryszard Zarudzki (Under Secretary of State) insisted that "if we want to be more ambitious in terms of the environment, we need to have money to deliver on more ambitions." Hungary's Zsolt Feldman said the budget must be maintained at EU-27 level, going as far as suggesting the transfer of funds within the MFF "to traditional policies such as the CAP, if EU leaders do not increase the ceilings." Spanish Minister Luis Planas called for a "specific debate on the CMO Regulation" given ongoing trade conflicts & price volatility on the market – a sentiment shared by the Belgian & Dutch delegations (POs & IBOs). Others such as DK, NL & DE used the debate to voice their opposition to voluntary coupled support, while DK, HR, BE & SI voiced reservations on the move towards greater external convergence. A number of speakers such as Ireland's Michael Creed & his Danish colleague Mogens Jensen called on the Commission to table the transitional arrangements to grant legal certainty to farmers, as did ES, IT, SK, BG, & LT, with the latter underlining that "no CAP document, such as the CMO regulation, should be considered closed."

Speaking to reporters this evening, Finland's Agriculture Minister Jari Leppä said the Presidency aimed to "get as far as possible in Council," when it came to the updated texts on all three regulations. A number of key issues require further work, he conceded, citing in particular the green architecture, eco-schemes & flexibility requirements. Without going into any detail, he also referred to the "new transition period." In what is likely to be his last appearance as Farm Commissioner – unless the appointment of the College is delayed until Dec 1 – Hogan said it was "now a matter for my successor (Janusz Wojciechowski) to drive things forward in completing the work." In his parting words, he reiterated the need to "simplify the policy in terms of the farmer" as the farmer is at the centre in relation to the provision of public goods.

EU FARM MINISTERS SUPPORT COMMISSION CALL FOR ACTION ON DEFORESTATION

Delegations backed Commission plans on how to address the fight against deforestation at today's Farm Council in Luxembourg (Oct 14). During a debate on the '*Commission Communication on stepping up EU action to protect & restore the world's forests*' published on July 23 [***11449/19**], Agriculture Ministers accepted that current EU policies had not been sufficient to combat deforestation at a global level. Finland's Minister Jari Leppä opened the discussion by describing the world's forests as "under serious threat," welcoming the "long-awaited initiative" by the Commission. He invited Ministers to give feedback with the intention of adopting Council Conclusions before the end of the Presidency. Outgoing Environment Commissioner Karmenu Vella described forests as "indispensable," while forests had to be protected to allow the EU to achieve its climate change obligations. Agriculture was responsible for around 80% of global deforestation, while emissions from land use were responsible for nearly 12% of all greenhouse gases. The Maltese politician also pointed out that the EU consumes a third of globally traded agricultural products associated with deforestation. "We are therefore part of the problem," he said. He wanted the EU to be part of the solution, playing its part in fighting deforestation. The EU's executive plans involve encouraging consumption of products from deforestation-free supply chains, deforestation proofing international aid, international cooperation, redirecting finance to support more sustainable land use & supporting access to information on forests. The objective was to halt global forest loss by 2030.

Ministers broadly welcomed the Commission document. Spanish Minister Luis Planas wanted to create a dialogue platform for all the stakeholders & stressed the need to reduce the impact of deforestation on the supply chain. There should be broader certification systems, while trade agreements should recognise the need to halt deforestation. Julia Klöckner from Germany was another Minister who called for a certification process, citing that for cocoa as an example of what could be achieved. The EU needed to work on re-afforestation on its own territory for the sake of credibility on the issue. It would be "good for our image to show that we can replant." Italy stressed the "clear responsibility for the farming sector." Secretary of State Giuseppe L'Abbate bemoaned a lack of instruments, legislation & funding. "Let's define an action plan in concrete terms," he said. Slovenia's Aleksandra Pivec supported all the priorities outlined in the Communication & underlined the need to involve the private sector. She would like to see sustainable forest management be part of international trade deals. The Romanian delegation described the threat to forests as "one of the major challenges when it comes to sustainability." Secretary of State Daniel-Eugeniu Crunțeanu (RO) raised the issue of imports & stressed the need to "work hand in hand" with producing countries. Czech Minister Miroslav Toman said it was "not admissible for the EU market to allow access to agricultural products linked to deforestation," while Luxembourg's Romain Schneider said that the forest fires in the Amazon had shown "how urgent this is." French Minister Didier Guillaume said the fight against deforestation needed to be led at a European level, while products had to be traceable. Portugal's Minister Luís Capoulas Santos stressed the need for the EU's actions to follow the demands of international agreements. Poland described deforestation as "one of the biggest problems we're facing in the world today," whereby policy should be "consistent & coherent." There was also a "need to tweak our development policy," as well as for more research.

Danish Minister Mogens Jensen said it was “urgent that we step up EU action.” He wanted the measures put forward by the Commission to be given high priority. Cypriot Costas Kadis said that there was a need for more cooperation to strengthen the legislative framework on forest management. Lithuania’s Vice-Minister Evaldas Gustas wanted action “as soon as possible,” with work done to achieve public awareness. The UK delegation echoed this sentiment, with Deputy Permanent Representative Katrina Williams calling on her counterparts to “rapidly reverse the current alarming trends” in deforestation & “for swift action.”

Belgium’s Denis Ducarme wanted work on forests to be on a broad scope, while there was a need to come up with a way of working which had a balanced approach (Commission vs. Council positions). Bulgarian Desislava Taneva called the issue “most urgent.” She wanted more to be done about products which resulted in deforestation, with the system of certification. Combating deforestation should be included in trade agreements, she added. Slovakia’s Gabriel Csicsai was pleased to say that the Commission’s Communication supported a partnership approach, including the private sector & civil society. “The EU will have to adopt more ambitious measures,” he said. Sweden’s Jennie Nilsson called for an impact assessment. The bureaucratic burden of any changes must be limited, while better regulation & Member States’ competencies must be respected, Nilsson added. Estonia’s Mart Järvi reacted positively but was also concerned about increasing costs while the representative from Latvia raised the regulatory burden.

Greek Minister Makis Vouridis welcomed the Commission’s priorities, but said there was also a need to work internationally. Croatia’s Secretary of State Tugomir Majdak supported the initiative tabled before the summer holidays & called for legislation to ensure the financial sector acts diligently on the issue. Deforestation free production & supply chains should be made easier to identify. The Dutch hoped that the new Commission would be able to take the proposals on board. They wanted to see “clear time-lined targets.” Austrian Minister Maria Patek said the EU’s aim must be to “reduce our own nefarious footprint.” She also suggested taking advantage of the expertise of the FAO in combating deforestation. Vella assured Ministers that his successor would be looking forward to working with the Farm Council on the issue.

Sector groups seek international approach to deforestation: The bodies representing the European grain & oilseed trade, crushers & feed processors wrote to Finnish Farm Minister Jari Leppä (Oct 11) calling for international cooperation to tackle deforestation. The grain trade body COCERAL, the oilseed crushers’ group FEDIOL & the feed industry association FEFAC sent the 1½ -page letter ahead of today’s Farm Council in Luxembourg, which discussed the *‘Communication on stepping up EU action to protect & restore the world’s forests’*. The three organisations told the current Council chair that a “permanent & effective multilateral institutional dialogue with exporting countries” would be “the most effective way to address sustainable forest management & assist value chain partners in building responsible supply chains.” The trade, crushing & feed sectors had been “extensively engaged over the last years in initiatives aimed at removing products at risk of causing deforestation from their supply chains.” They had engaged in partnerships with producer countries & stressed that “efficiently addressing deforestation starts with the implementation of environmental legislation in the country of production.” Certification “has not proven to be effective in all sectors & commodities,” & they suggest exploring “the need for financial incentives to avoid legal conversion of forests into agricultural land.” They express strong agreement with the “notion that long-term solutions cannot be unilateral & cooperation with international partners is essential.” The letter is co-signed by COCERAL President Philippe Mitko, FEDIOL President John Grossmann & FEFAC President Nick Major.

Call for more effective solutions to forestry challenges: A coalition of Central & Eastern Member States voiced the need to strengthen policy to help the forestry sector face challenges such as climate change & pests & diseases at today’s Farm Council in Lux. The discussion was based on a 5-page joint declaration [***12883/19**] from the Visegrád Four (CZ, HU, PL & SK) & BG, HR, SI on *‘Forests, Sustainable Forest Management & Adaptation to Climate Change’*. Introducing the paper, Czech Minister Miroslav Toman told Council that his country supported a more important role for forestry in the CAP. “We have to speed up the process of state aid approvals,” he said. He would like to strengthen the role of the Standing Committee on Forestry & also wanted to see the forestry sector modernised, with greater investment into science & research.

During a meeting in Prague on Oct 4, the V4 stressed the need for “climate smart approaches” to be incorporated into sustainable forest management & called for effective legislative & financial instruments at national & EU level to find solutions for the challenges, like climate change, drought, natural disasters, pests & diseases, that the sector faces. They emphasise the need for a new EU Forest Strategy & welcomed the *‘Commission Communication on stepping up EU action to protect & restore the world’s forests’* [***11449/19**]. The coalition - joined by colleagues from BG, HR & SI - is pushing for the development of new innovative approaches to adapt the forestry sector to climate change. They want to see better international exchange of information on the spread of pests & diseases, with best practice being shared. There’s a call for innovative financial measures from the EU & the reduction of the administrative burden in Community forestry measures. The Ministers want to see the sector modernised, something they say is needed to fulfil the aims of the EU Bio-economy Strategy & the Circular Economy Action Plan. There’s also a reference to the Regulation on Land use, land-use change, & forestry (LULUCF), with a call for the current damage to forest to be reflected in the National Action Plans it requires, taking into account the reduced capacity of forests to

contribute to CO2 sinks in coming years. The group of Ministers would also like to see support of macro regional networks such as the BIOEAST Forestry Working Group.

SANTE NEWS: Wild boar control & biosecurity in fight against ASF; V4+4 on ASF; 5-year legacy;

Wild boar control & biosecurity in fight against ASF: Agriculture Ministers stressed the importance of managing the wild boar population, improving biosecurity, maintaining regionalisation & fostering public awareness in the fight against African Swine Fever (ASF) this evening. In a debate held on the basis of a 2-page information note from the Commission **[*12570/19]** & a 3-page paper **[*12881/19]** presented by the Czech delegation on behalf of the Visegrád Group (CZ, HU, PL & SK) plus BG, HR, RO & SI, there was much praise for the speed & effectiveness of help from the Commission, despite some complaints about how compensation is calculated & calls for it to be paid more speedily.

EU Health Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis outlined developments in the disease since July. "There have been worrying developments, for example, in Romania, Hungary & Bulgaria with possible consequences for the Balkan countries," he told delegations. "Our efforts should further increase proportionately to the level of the threat we are facing." The Commission had set up regionalisation measures in affected Member States, dispatched veterinary teams at short notice & had many meetings on the problem. The outgoing Health chief reminded Ministers that capitals had endorsed the EU's common strategic approach to management of the disease & now it was up to them to translate it into national strategies. By properly applying regionalisation the EU had ensured safe trade & limited the spread of the disease since it was first found in the bloc in 2014. "Our job isn't yet done & the hard work must continue," the Lithuanian Commissioner said. As he hands over the baton to his successor Stella Kyriakides, he insists on the "structural changes needed in some areas to cope with the disease", but he was "confident that achieving an ASF-free EU is a real possibility & our real objective in the years to come."

During the debate that ensued, Belgium's Minister Denis Ducarme explained the situation in his country, where there have been cases in wild boar, but the domestic pig population has been kept ASF free. He stressed that any reduction in the level of EU aid would be "very unwelcome." Deputy Director-General Guido Landheer (NL) called for more research on how the disease spreads, while the Polish delegation would like to see the reduction of the wild boar population being dealt with at EU level. Slovakia was faced with a deteriorating situation having first detected the disease at the end of July. There had now been 11 cases in backyard herds & 17 in wild boar. Luxembourg's Romain Schneider stressed the importance of controlling wild boar & effective biosecurity, while Greek Minister Makis Voridis said his country was taking a number of measures to make sure the disease did not get in. Lithuanian Vice-Minister Evaldas Gustas stressed the need for vigilance, while the French said it was possible to control the disease *inc.* controlling wild boar & biosecurity. Bulgaria's Desislava Taneva praised the amount of expertise available from the Commission to tackle the disease. She wanted more controls, with 100% sampling, & more to be done to increase the scientific knowledge of the disease. Taneva also called for payments to be made to farmers more quickly. Slovenia's Aleksandra Pivec emphasised the need for harmonised rules for controlling the disease. She highlighted the importance of raising public awareness, improve biosecurity & control wild boar populations. "We would like to see a new vaccine for ASF developed," she said. Hungarian Secretary of State Zsolt Feldman called for a review of the calculation of payments, which currently only covered a fraction of the actual costs. Germany supported the joint declaration presented by the Czech Minister, also stressing the need to remain in dialogue with trading partners.

V4 plus 4 on fighting ASF: A coalition of Member States - the Visegrád Group (CZ, HU, PL & SK), plus BG, HR, RO & SI - has called on the Commission for an increase in EU co-financing to help them deal with the cost of tackling ASF. In a joint declaration on 'Combatting ASF in the EU' **[*12881/19]**, they say they would also like to see the method of calculation of co-financing changed. At present, it is based on figures for the income in each Member State & results, they say, in payments which only reflect a fraction of the actual cost. Czech Minister Miroslav Toman explained that the group of like-minded Ministers had come up with the declaration following a meeting in Prague (Oct 4). There is also a call in the declaration for more cooperation in research on the epidemiology of the disease, with a focus on the behaviour of wild boar.

Andriukaitis looks back on 5-year legacy: EU Health Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis took the opportunity to present a state of play on the major food safety issues **[*12861/19]** this evening, looking back over his 5-year tenure. As part of his legacy, the outgoing Commissioner left in place a strong legal framework & harmonised official controls "helping to protect the EU against unsafe food & food fraud and improve cooperation in times of crisis." Multiple rules had been combined in the new Animal Health Law. Concrete steps had been taken to secure higher animal welfare for the future *inc.* the establishment of the new Animal Welfare Platform and the creation of two EU reference centres (pig welfare and poultry & other small farmed animals). He reminded Ministers that the EU had adopted the 'European One Health Action Plan against Antimicrobial Resistance' in 2017 & pointed out that not all the Member States had developed comprehensive national action plans on the issue. He recalled a new harmonised methodology for food waste measurement which "will help Member States design effective food waste prevention strategies," while the EU platform on Food Losses & Food Waste "has also proved a valuable tool." Better communication & more accountability have been important topics in this mandate, he outlined, pointing to the adoption of the

General Food Law earlier this year, which introduced “targeted changes to improve transparency in the risk assessment process.” “All these actions in the area of plant & animal health, on animal welfare, on food waste, on transparency are the essence of a new approach to sustainability,” he said. They have paved the way “to the European Green Deal that the future Commission will launch.” “In a dynamic policy area like this (which celebrated its 30th anniversary on Oct 10), we will never be able to say ‘job done,’ he stated, “but what we can say is “we made it better”, expressing his pride “to have played a part in this.”

Just before the Council meeting was wrapped up this evening, the French called for more action on food fraud, proposing the setting up of a taskforce to combat it. They also raised the issue of origin labelling, including for ingredients, something which Paris had experimented with in milk & meat & which now, in the French view, should be put into harmonised EU legislation. Italy agreed with France on the labelling issue, while Danish Minister Mogens Jensen wanted to see a new animal welfare law, with the use of antibiotics reduced & people protected “from unwanted chemicals.”

Call for faster food safety communication, labelling: Following recent outbreaks of *Listeria* in Member States, Belgian Minister Denis Ducarme told his Ministerial colleagues this evening (Oct 14), that communication needed to be speeded up. France told the same meeting that country of origin labelling for ingredients was needed to boost food safety. Presenting a single-page paper [***13003/19**], the Belgian politician explained that there had been several cases in the EU & three people had died in the Netherlands. He said that the problem “should encourage us to reflect on the best way to manage possible trans-border consequences.” He thanked the Netherlands for its cooperation. Acknowledging that the Rapid Alert System for Food & Feed (RASFF) works well, he still felt that the bloc should seek ways to speed up information sharing between Member States.

IN BRIEF: Ministers want farmers to tap into bio-economy benefits; Poland's PiS wins election;

Ministers want farmers to share bio-economy benefits: Agriculture Ministers are keen to see Europe make the most of the potential benefits of the bio-economy, but they insist that primary producers must get a fair share of the added value it can create. This evening's discussion was on the basis of a 3-page paper outlining the results of a conference entitled ‘*European Bio-economy Scene 2019*’ held in Helsinki (July 8-10) [***12539/19**]. During his address in the chamber, Finland's Jari Leppä said the “bio-economy was a central priority for his country,” explaining that the meeting had attracted around 350 delegates from all over Europe. There was “huge potential,” including in agriculture, for the bio-economy to create new jobs & viable growth, but “a lot of study” was still required. There was a need for clear political commitment & a strategic approach, while a lack of consumer awareness remained to be tackled. The Presidency was working on Council Conclusions on the updated bio-economy strategy - expected to be adopted at the Nov Council (18-19).

Farm Commissioner Phil Hogan backed the conference's conclusions on the importance of the bio-economy for decarbonising the economy & keeping rural areas alive, which had been adopted as one of the strategic objectives of the post-2020 CAP. The Kilkenny politician emphasised that the bio-economy was a key part of the European Green Deal proposed by President-elect Ursula von der Leyen. The Romanian delegation reminded Council that the first conference on the bio-economy was held under its Presidency. The bio-economy is a “key part of the switch from a non-sustainable to a sustainable economic model,” Bucharest believes. The French were keen to make sure that the value added created by the bio-economy was evenly distributed & that “farmers gain from it.” Austria stressed the need for the exchange of information on best practice. The bio-economy would be “an important factor in overcoming the challenges of climate change.” Germany was “delighted” that the Presidency had emphasised the important role of agriculture in the bio-economy. It could also make possible the “transformation of industrial production,” making the economy more sustainable & creating jobs.

Poland's PiS wins election: Poland's Law & Justice Party (PiS) won the Oct 13 election with just under 44% of the vote for seats in the Sejm, increasing its vote from the 37.6% it received in the previous, Oct 25, 2015 election. At the time of going to press, results have yet been finalised. PiS's 2015 performance was enough to give it 235 seats in the 460 seat chamber. Second in the elections was the Civic Coalition (KO) with just over 27%. The Left got 12.5%, while the Polish coalition got around 8.6%. Law & Justice also won 48 of the 100 seats in the Senate, with KO getting 43. PiS leader Jarosław Kaczyński declared victory at party headquarters in Warsaw late on Oct 14, saying there were “four years of hard work ahead.” Commissioner-designate for Agriculture & Rural Development Janusz Wojciechowski hails from the PiS political party, which is affiliated to the ECR group in the EP.

ENDS

The latest EU agriculture, environment & trade news

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- **FARM COUNCIL PREVIEW: CAP, AGRI MARKET SITUATION & AIRBUS DISPUTE ON MENU**
- **EU AUDITORS RECORD (STABLE) ERROR RATE OF 2.4% FOR CAP SPENDING IN 2018**
- **BREXIT UPDATES: EU & UK “intensify” talks to clinch deal; Soil Association opens helpline;**
- **MARKET NEWS: EU pigmeat boost; Canned veg cartel; UAN: Food prices; AVEC Assembly;**
- **EP ROUND-UP: MEPs oppose glyphosate-resistant GMOs; “Clear risk” of budget delay, EP;**
- **IN BRIEF: Court ruling on wolf hunting; Romanian gov falls; Maeve Whyte steps down; GI;**
- **TIMETABLE: Week ahead;**

FARM COUNCIL PREVIEW: CAP, AGRI MARKET SITUATION & AIRBUS DISPUTE ON MENU

EU Agriculture & Fisheries Ministers will continue discussions on the CAP reform package (in public deliberation) when they gather in Luxembourg next week (Oct 14-15) - the last under the current Commission mandate. Under the chairmanship of Finnish Agriculture Minister Jari Leppä, the meeting will kick off at around 10am, with discussions on a regulation fixing fishing opportunities in the Baltic Sea for 2020. *Negotiations towards a political agreement on fishing quotas are expected to continue late into the night, while other fish-related items will be dealt with on Tuesday morning (from 10am).* Just before 11am on Monday, Ministers will turn their attention to the Communication on ‘Stepping up EU action to protect & restore the world’s forests’ (public session) [*11449/1/19 REV1], followed by an exchange of views on the EU Forestry Strategy post-2020 [*12491/19]. On behalf of the Visegrád Group (CZ, HU, PL & SK), BG, HR & SI, the Czech delegation will present a joint declaration on ‘Forests, sustainable forest management & adaptation to climate change’ [12883/19]. After lunch (from 3.40pm), Ministers return to farm policy reform (in public session) [*12693/19 & 12693/19 COR1], with delegations invited to answer the following question – *Which are the crucial elements of the CAP proposals that require further discussion?* In the early afternoon, delegations will also consider a joint statement on the CAP budget, led by France [*12894/19 & below]. In his last appearance as the EU’s Farm Chief, Commissioner Phil Hogan will update delegates on the market situation (from around 5.15pm), with Italy providing information on damage caused by the Asian stink bug to its fruit & vegetable sector [*12882/19]. From 6.30pm, Leppä will debrief his Ministerial colleagues on a conference on the ‘European Bio-economy Scene 2019’ held in Helsinki on July 8-10 (public session) [*12539/19]. Just before 7pm, Slovenia will provide feedback on the Ministerial conference ‘Strengthening the Generation & Transfer of Knowledge for the Progress of Agriculture & Rural Areas’ held in the country’s oldest recorded city of Ptuj (Aug 23) [*12866/19]. From 7pm, there will be a joint declaration on wolf management [see below for this week’s ECJ ruling], with a lengthy discussion (led by Italy & Spain) on the consequences of additional US duties on certain EU agri-food exports (not public) [*12884/19 & 12885/19]. [COMAGRI hearing with Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström on the Airbus/Boeing dispute has been cancelled on Oct 14]. Outgoing Health Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis will provide information on the state of play on African Swine Fever (ASF) from 8.15pm [*12570/19], while the Czechs will present a joint declaration from the Visegrád Group, BG, HR, RO, & SI on combatting the viral disease [*12881/19]. The final AOB point relates to food safety (state of play on major issues) [*12861/19], which will be web-streamed live, with the last agenda item on recent listeria cases in the EU. In the margins, Hogan will hold a bilateral with Belgium’s Minister for Agriculture Denis Ducarme, while Council proceedings are expected to finish up at around 9.15pm. **For further information on the agenda points listed above enter the number provided under ‘Public Register’ at the website goo.gl/ybwNtq;*

Coalition calls for stable farm budget: The CAP budget must be maintained at the current EU-27 level (in current prices) for the next programming period (2021-2027), according to a joint statement from a coalition of 17 delegations this week [*12894/19]. In a move led by France, supported by AT, BG, CY, CZ, EE, HU, EL, IE, LV, LT, LU, PL, PT, RO, SK & ES, the group of like-minded countries insist on a stable farm budget to “meet the new challenges faced by European agriculture & forestry” & “meet the expectations of EU citizens.” They also refer to the “urgent need to take action to meet the climate challenge.”

EU AUDITORS RECORD (STABLE) ERROR RATE OF 2.4% FOR CAP SPENDING IN 2018

EU spending on the CAP, Common Fisheries Policy & part of EU spending on environment/climate action in 2018 - just over €58 billion - had an overall error rate of 2.4% (same as 2017), according to the European Court of Auditors (ECA) this week. In its 2018 annual report* published on Oct 8, auditors underline that direct payments - which account for 72% of spending under the MFF heading ‘Natural Resources - “as a whole were free from material error” Authors of the 304-page report note that the Integrated Administration &

Control System (IACS), which incorporates the Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS) “has helped to bring down the level of errors in direct payments, with the LPIS making a particularly significant contribution.” The introduction in IACS of the geo-spatial aid application, which enables farmers to submit payment claims online, has “also helped to bring down the level of error in direct payments.” The EU watchdog checked 95 direct payments & found that 77 were unaffected by error. There was a higher rate of error for the budget covering rural development, market measures, fisheries, environment & climate action as a result of “complex rules & eligibility criteria.” Auditors say the main reason for errors in these chapters was the ineligibility of the beneficiary, activity, project or expenditure, provision of inaccurate information on areas or animal numbers, non-compliance with public procurement rules & administrative errors.

In a series of recommendations for expenditure related to RD, the ECA calls on the Commission to “take measures to improve the work done by certification bodies in Member States & ensure that the data provided by countries & used for the calculation of financial corrections is properly verified”. For the post-2020 period, the Commission must also take into account weaknesses identified in the current framework “in order to ensure that result indicators properly measure the effects of actions & they have a clear link to the related interventions & policy objectives.” From an agricultural perspective, DG AGRI officials underline that the error rate has been coming down over the past number of years, while the action plans implemented by national capitals to remedy the shortcomings are now working. The Commission “keeps on supporting Member States in improving their management & control systems to avoid errors in the future”, they add, keen to stress the fall in the error rate for direct payments – the largest part of the CAP budget – from 3.6% in 2012. The Commission is confident the situation is under control, but “where necessary it imposes financial corrections - the ‘clearance of accounts’ procedure - on the Member State in order to protect the EU budget & safeguard taxpayers’ interests”.

Auditors conclude that the “overall level of irregularities in EU spending has remained stable within the range observed during the two previous years.” They estimate an error rate of 2.6% in 2018 expenditure (2.4% in 2017 & 3.1% in 2016). At the same stage, they underline that challenges remain in “high-risk spending areas such as rural development & cohesion.” Commenting this week, ECA President Klaus-Heiner Lehne said “the start of a new legislative term & of a new financial programming period create a window of opportunity ... policymakers should grasp it to focus EU policies & spending on delivering results & added value.” *For more www.eca.europa.eu/;

BREXIT UPDATES: EU & UK to “intensify” talks to clinch deal; Soil Association opens helpline;

EU, UK to “intensify” Brexit discussions: The EU & UK will “intensify” discussions on a possible Brexit deal over the weekend, the Commission said in a statement following a meeting in Brussels between the EU’s Chief negotiator Michel Barnier & the UK’s Brexit Secretary Stephen Barclay earlier today. The French politician briefed EU-27 Ambassadors & the EP’s Brexit Steering Group after the meeting saying sufficient reassurances had been received from London to enter “tunnel” negotiations in an attempt to clinch a last-minute divorce deal. With less than a week to go before the crucial European Summit (Oct 17-18), the Commission stressed that the EU’s position has not changed. “There must be a legally operative solution in the Withdrawal Agreement that avoids a hard border on the island of Ireland,” it said. That solution must protect “the all-island economy & the Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement in all its dimensions, & safeguard the integrity of the Single Market.” The EU executive will “take stock” with Ambassadors & MEPs on Oct 14, ahead of the General Affairs Council the following day.

Today’s meeting came after a “detailed & constructive discussion,” between Prime Minister Boris Johnson & Ireland’s *Taoiseach* Leo Varadkar at Thornton Manor, Merseyside (Oct 10). According to a joint statement issued by the two politicians, both sides had agreed they “could see a pathway to a possible deal.” The discussion had focussed on the “challenges of customs & consent.” The apparent progress without concrete statements from Brussels, Dublin or London has fuelled intense speculation that Johnson is now prepared to talk on the basis of Northern Ireland remaining part of the customs union, which would avoid any customs checks on the island of Ireland. The former Mayor of London fuelled that idea today with a pooled television clip in which he refused to say, when asked, that Northern Ireland would definitely leave the customs union, saying “it would be wrong of me to give a running commentary on the negotiations.” He added that “under no circumstances will we see anything that damages the ability of the whole of the UK to take full advantage of Brexit.” Such a move is unlikely to find favour with Northern Ireland’s Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), which has been propping up the UK’s minority Conservative government. However, given that Johnson has lost a large part of his MPs, either through their own defection or his rather capricious sackings, the tiny right-wing & Eurosceptic party has likely lost its ability to influence Number 10 Downing Street. Johnson’s party now has 288 MPs of a total 650 & the ten DUP members are not enough to help it win any vote without other support. DUP leader Arlene Foster issued a statement reiterating the party’s position that no barriers to trade must be erected within the UK, but hinting at a readiness to compromise. “We have held steadfast to that position, while recognising the need to be flexible & look at Northern Ireland specific solutions,” she said. The politician from Dernawilt (Co. Fermanagh) said her party “will always exercise our considerable influence in ensuring we stand up for Northern Ireland.”

Soil Association opens Brexit helpline: The UK's biggest organic certification body, the Soil Association, has opened a helpline for businesses in the sector to prepare for a no deal Brexit on Oct 31. Launched on Oct 10, with a phone line, email address & online chat system - the helpline gives access to a team to answer questions & provide up-to-date information. There is also a new Brexit support page*, which will be kept up to date & live throughout the month of Oct. The service is open to all UK organic businesses, not just those certified by the Soil Association. As things stand, UK organic producers would not be able to sell into the EU after a no deal Brexit without certification from an EU-27 certification body. Liz Bowles, Associate Director of Farming, Soil Association, said that a no deal Brexit would mean "maximum uncertainty for organic food & farming, raising critical issues on the ability to trade & export". She complained of a "lack of clarity & progress from government." The hotline is funded from the government's Brexit readiness fund. The telephone number is (+44) 03334141451, email address is Brexitsupport@soilassociation.org; *See <https://www.soilassociation.org/brexitforbusiness/>

MARKET NEWS: EU pigmeat boost; Canned veg cartel; UAN: Food prices; AVEC Assembly; China ASF boosts EU pigmeat exports: China's woes with African Swine Fever (ASF) have boosted EU pigmeat exports to the point where DG AGRI now predicts they will be up by 12% for 2019 as a whole. Cereal & milk production are also expected to rise. In the 33-page '*Short-Term Outlook for EU Agricultural Markets in 2019 & 2020*', published on Oct 4, DG AGRI officials forecast that EU 2019/2020 gross cereal production will recover by 5.9% to reach 310 million tonnes, "if good weather conditions prevail until the end of the harvest." Gross oilseed output is expected to fall by 1.5% to 32.43mt in 2019/2020 on adverse weather & reduced rapeseed area. The forecast for 2019/2020 sugar production is set at 18.3mt, a rise of 3.7% on the previous year. Area is estimated to be down by 4%, but this is more than offset by higher yields, largely due to favourable weather conditions. Milk production is expected to rise by 0.8% to 167.9m litres, on "sustained demand for EU dairy products, lower supply in the main EU competitors, favourable weather conditions & price environment," authors of the report outline. Milk output is forecast to rise by a further 0.9% to 169.3ml in 2020. Beef production will fall by 1.2% to 8.146mt in 2019, but "access to new markets & an increase of volumes to existing partners" mean a 15% rise in beef exports to 288 000t. Production will fall by a further 0.9% in 2020 to 8.073mt, with exports of beef rising by 5% to 303 000t. For pigmeat, production will increase by 0.2% to 24.2mt, while exports will rise by 12% to 3mt. DG AGRI expects pigmeat production to pick up in 2020, jumping 1.4% to 24.528mt, with exports rising by a further 12% to 3.36mt. The poultry sector will see a 2.5% increase in production this year, bringing it to 15.634mt, with meat exports up 3% at 1.641mt. Production will rise by a further 1% to 15.798mt, with meat exports going up 1.5% to 1.665mt. Sheep & goat meat production is set to rise by 0.5% to 955mt in 2019, increasing by a further 0.5% in 2020 to 959mt. Exports for the sector will rise by 2% to 29mt in 2019 & a further 2% to 30mt in 2020. *See https://ec.europa.eu/info/files/report-eu-agricultural-markets-short-term-outlook-autumn-2019_en

Fines issued over canned veg cartel: The Commission issued fines of a total of € 31.65 million to Dutch company Coroos & French Groupe CECAB for breaching antitrust rules at the end of Sept (26). A third company, Bonduelle (FR) was not fined as it had told EU officials about the cartel. The three groups admitted that they were involved in a cartel for the supply of canned vegetables to retailers & food service companies in the European Economic Area (EEA) for 13 years. Competition Commissioner Margrethe Vestager said that "these cartels ultimately hurt European consumers," & the decision sent a message that "cartels are not accepted." The companies set prices & agreed on market shares & volumes, allocating customers between themselves, coordinating tender bids & exchanging information. The breach of antitrust rules lasted from Jan 19, 2000 to June 11, 2013 for Bunduelle, going on to Oct 1, 2013 for the other two companies. Coroos has to pay a fine of €13.65m, while Groupe CECAB's hefty penalty is €18m.

Commission fertiliser position "half-hearted", Copa-Cogeca: The EU's largest farm lobby group Copa-Cogeca has attacked the Commission's position on imports of liquid nitrogen fertiliser as "half-hearted", but the EU fertiliser industry has welcomed the new measures which should apply for five years. In a statement issued on Oct 10, the farm lobby group said that the Trade Defence Instruments Committee, which met on Sept 11, had failed to deliver an opinion on proposals to establish definitive anti-dumping measures on imports of urea & ammonium nitrate (UAN) from Russia, Trinidad & Tobago & the US. The 'no opinion' allowed the Commission to adopt its own measures (or not) under its own authority. A new Regulation* imposing additional duties on imports of 22.24 €/t for UAN originating from Trinidad & Tobago, 29.48 €/t for UAN from the US, & 42.47 €/t for the majority of UAN originating from Russia entered into force on Oct 10 (immediately applicable in the EU). The decision will result in an increase in production costs for European farmers, particularly in the cereal sector, farm lobbyists say. This new protection for the European fertiliser sector, "which is already not very competitive, is particularly unfair given that the agricultural markets themselves are increasingly open in the world," they add. Industry body Fertilizers Europe said that the move showed how the modernisation of EU trade defence measures could have a positive impact. The sector welcomed the "anti-dumping measures & hopes for immediate & continued relief from the Commission investigation's findings of proven & severe injurious dumping", Jacob Hansen, Director General of Fertilizers Europe, said. *<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L:2019:258:FULL&from=FR>

Food commodity prices steady: Global food commodity prices were unchanged in Sept, compared with Aug, but 3.3% up on the Sept 2018 level, according to the UN's Food & Agriculture Organisation (FAO) last week (Oct 3). The agency's Food Price Index* showed a sharp fall in sugar prices, which was offset by rises for vegetable oils & meat. Cereal prices were almost unchanged from Aug & down 3.9% from Sept 2018. Wheat prices firmed on a good supply outlook, while maize was down because of large export availabilities. Rising rape & palm oil prices meant that vegetable oil was up 1.4% from Aug to its highest level in more than a year. Demand from India & China bolstered palm, while rapeseed oil was pushed up by a deteriorating EU production outlook. Dairy prices were down 0.6% on the month - higher quotations for milk powders more than offset by falling cheese & butter prices - with increased export availability, principally from New Zealand. Meat was up 0.8% from Aug, with beef & sheep meat firmer on solid demand, especially from China. Pigmeat prices fell on increased export supplies from Europe, despite high domestic prices in China, as a result of African Swine Fever. Sugar was down 3.9% from Aug, largely because of positive production prospects & the fact that lower international energy prices reduced demand for sugarcane for ethanol production. *See <http://www.fao.org/worldfoodsituation/foodpricesindex/en/>

AVEC assembly hears call for help on Mercosur, Ukraine challenges: The Commission must do more to help the poultry sector face the challenges of imports from Mercosur & Ukraine & the potential market loss due to Brexit – this was the key message emanating from the AVEC General Assembly '*Food for the Future*' held in Budapest (Oct 4). More than 200 participants from the poultry value chain heard from AVEC President Paul Lopez about the extra 180 000 tonnes of poultry set to come into the EU market each year under the trade deal with Mercosur, which he noted was twice what was offered at the end of 2017. He also reminded delegates that Ukrainian companies have been offered an extra 50 000t in sales to the EU in return for ending the practice of using a loophole to circumvent quotas. Lopez rejected the idea that the extra imports could be taken up by increased consumption. He also raised the uncertainty surrounding Brexit. The UK is one of Europe's biggest consumers & importers of poultry meat. He called on the Commission for funding to help the sector cope with the extra competition. More should be done to get access for EU poultry in the Chinese market, the lobbyist insisted. Lopez, from the French association Fédération des Industries Avicoles (FIA), further called for thorough controls on imports from 3rd countries & origin labelling, including in food service establishments. Hungarian Minister of Agriculture Dr. Istvan Nagy & DG SANTE Head of Unit (Food Hygiene) Eric Thévenard were guest speakers at the Assembly. The 2019 AVEC Annual Report* was launched at the event. *See www.avec-poultry.eu under '*Resources*';

EP ROUND-UP: MEPs oppose glyphosate-resistant GMOs; "Clear risk" of budget delay, EP;

MEPs oppose glyphosate-resistant GMOs: MEPs voted to reject Commission plans to allow imports of three glyphosate & glufosinate ammonium-resistant GMOs at the mini-plenary session in Brussels this week (Oct 10). The non-binding resolutions covered products consisting of or containing the Genetically Modified (GM) products maize *MZHG0JG*, maize *MON 89034* & soybean *A2704-12 (renewal)*. For the biotech maize *MZHG0JG*, there were 436 votes in favour to 208 against & 16 abstentions, 435 votes in favour, 207 against & 18 abstentions (maize *MON 89034*) & 426 votes in favour to 208 against & with 20 abstentions (soybean *A2704-12*). The maize & soybean varieties involved are tolerant to glyphosate-based & glufosinate ammonium-based herbicides. MEPs pointed out that there are a number of studies that herbicide tolerant GM crops result in higher use of weed killers. They may be exposed to repeated doses leading to higher residues.

MEPs (led by the Greens) held a debate with the Commission on the authorisation process for biotech crops on Wed evening (Oct 9), something which has regularly been criticised by the assembly before. Concerns were raised about the role of the EU as the world's second largest soy importer, with the majority of that crop entering the union being used as animal feed. Soy production is a key driver of deforestation in South America & the Commission's own analysis shows that those imports are the EU's number one contributor to global deforestation. A survey carried out across the EU had found that almost 90% of respondents think that new laws are needed to make sure that products sold in the EU do not contribute to deforestation. MEPs also reminded the Commission that every authorisation of a GM product it has made since the introduction of the current system has been without the support of a qualified majority of Member States, turning something that should be an exception into the norm. During his address in the chamber, Health Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis said the EU's GMO authorisation procedure was "established by EU law." It is "science-based & relies on a scientific assessment performed by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), independently of the Commission," he outlined. Member States hiding behind the Commission was "very disappointing & unsatisfactory," he added, pointing to previous proposals "to modify EU legislation on comitology so as to ensure more transparency," where "little progress has been made."

"Clear risk" of budget delays, EP: The EP has warned of a "clear risk" that the 2021-2027 EU investment plan "will not be successfully agreed in time with Council", calling for a contingency plan to mitigate consequences for citizens & businesses, as delays will cause funding disruption from 2021. In a resolution adopted by 426 votes to 163, with 67 abstentions (Oct 10), MEPs confirmed the position of the previous Parliament on the next Multi-annual Financial Framework (Nov 2018) - 1.3% of GNI & new EU own resources. The EP wants to step up climate protection, stressing the "urgent need for another quantum leap

in political & financial efforts” to achieve the objectives of the Paris Climate accord. The House is also seeking clarity on how political promises made by Commission President-elect Ursula von der Leyen in July will impact the long-term financial perspectives.

“Time to decide” on EU Budget (2021-2027): The Commission has called on EU leaders to provide political guidance & new impetus to negotiations in order to reach an agreement on a “fair, balanced & modern long-term EU budget for the period 2021-2027” by the year’s end. In a 6-page Communication entitled ‘*Time to decide on the Union’s Financial Framework for 2021-2027*’ published on Oct 9, the EU’s executive presented a number of key elements that heads of state & government must take on board at next week’s Summit (Oct 17-18). These include - the overall level of funding must match the Union’s shared priorities, a modern budget with the right balance between policies & a strong focus on EU added value, a more transparent approach to financing the EU Budget, introduction of new sources of revenue to support priorities & reduce the burden on national contributions & greater policy coherence, through a closer link between funding & policy priorities and stronger tools for protecting the Budget from rule of law deficiencies. Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker urged MEPs & Member States to “reach a swift agreement” so new programmes can be launched on Jan 1, 2021, saying the Community’s long-term budget was about “acting where the EU adds the most value ... it is investment in Europe-wide, world leading research, it is funding for cross-border infrastructure, support for small businesses & a safety net for our farmers.” The proposal (equal to 1.114% of the EU-27 Gross National Income) is a “forward looking, responsible & pragmatic plan on how to do more with less,” the outgoing Commission chief added.

*See https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commission-contribution-october-euco-mff-post-2020_en

IN BRIEF: Court ruling on wolf hunting; Romanian gov falls; Maeve Whyte steps down; GI;

Court allows hunting of protected species for management: The European Court of Justice (ECJ) decided on Oct 10 that hunting as a management tool for protected species such as wolves is allowed under EU law, provided that strict conditions are met. The case* involved questions put by Finland’s Supreme Administrative Court on derogations to the EU Habitats Directive after an NGO challenged a decision to give permission to hunters to kill seven wolves. The judges essentially followed an opinion by the Attorney General delivered on May 8. The European Federation for Hunting & Conservation (FACE) said the judgment comes after years of legal argument in Finland & Sweden over the hunting of wolves. Many Member States use hunting as a management tool for carnivore populations as well as to increase social acceptance. FACE President Torbjörn Larsson said that Commission guidance on the issue, currently being updated, should stress that “improving social acceptance & decreasing illegal killing can be a justification for limited & strictly controlled hunts.” He called on the EU’s executive to close infringement proceedings against wolf hunting in Sweden. FACE Secretary General Dr. David Scallan said the most important thing was that “Member States apply the Habitats Directive flexibly & pragmatically.” Executive Director of the Finnish Hunters’ Association Heli Siitari welcomed the preliminary ruling, saying it was “a positive thing for people living in the countryside & for the acceptance of wolves in general.” The European Environmental Bureau (EEB) challenged the view that Finland’s wolf population is large enough to justify hunting to manage it. Sergiy Moroz, EEB Senior Policy Officer for Biodiversity & Water, said that the Court had said that “hunting should only be allowed under very strict conditions.” “The importance of upholding the EU’s strict nature protection rules has never been greater,” he stressed. It is now up to the Finnish court to give a final verdict on the case.

*For more information go to <http://curia.europa.eu> & type **C-674/17** under ‘**Case number**’;

Romanian government collapses after no confidence vote: The Romanian government of Prime Minister Viorica Dăncilă collapsed on Oct 10 after losing a motion of no confidence in the country’s parliament amid accusations of incompetence & misuse of EU funds. Some 238 of the country’s 465 MPs plus Senators voted against the government. Dăncilă’s Social Democrats (PSD) lost their majority in Aug after their junior partner (the National Liberal Party) left the coalition. President Klaus Iohannis may ask the main opposition party of Ludovic Orban to form a new government. Orban, whose party spearheaded the no confidence vote against the Socialist government, said “we have stopped the Social Democrat Party from hurting Romania.” A Presidential election is due to be held Nov 10 - which former MEP Dăncilă is unlikely to win - with a general election scheduled for late 2020 (poss. Dec). A transitional government will take over until the next election. The centre-right National Liberal Party is expected to push for Siegfried Muresan, an MEP & vice-chair of the EPP group, to be the next Transport Commissioner.

Maeve Whyte steps down from NFU Brussels post: Irishwoman Maeve Whyte, current Director of the British Agriculture Bureau (BAB) representing all the UK farm unions, looks set to step down at the end of the year. Well-respected in agri circles, Maeve joined the NFU in London as a graduate trainee in 2001 & served as the Water Policy Adviser from 2003 until 2005. When her compatriot Betty Lee (Co. Cavan) left the organisation to work at DG AGRI, Maeve was deemed the “obvious choice” to take over the reins as Director in 2006 (then in her late 20s). Since then, she has emerged as one of the leading ladies in the Brussels lobbying sphere. Prior to working with the influential farm organisation at Copa-Cogeca HQ, she graduated with a Degree in Geography & Social Policy at University College Dublin (UCD) in 2000 & completed a Master’s in Environmental Technology at Imperial College London (2001). The illustrious young woman was awarded the title of Nuffield Scholar in 2014, completing her research project on the food waste

crisis, a topic close to her heart. Known for her straight-talking approach & sharp wit, the popular lobbyist once said in an interview with the reputable Southern Star that the most important thing to do as a woman in agriculture was "maintain a sense of humour, work hard & recognise intelligence as a superior tool." Maeve comes from a long line of market gardeners in Rush north Co. Dublin & plans to return to the seaside town with her young family before Christmas. Go n-éirí an bóthar leat a chara.

Bulgarian spirit gains GI approval: The Commission this week approved the addition of the Bulgarian spirit drink 'Ямболска гроздоваракия/Гроздоваракияот Ямбол/Yambolska grozdova rakya/Grozdova rakya of Yambol' to the Community Register of Geographical Indications (GIs). The spirit drink made from white & red grape varieties - with minimum alcohol strength of 40% vol. - is a sparkling & pale colour, with a dominant fruity aroma & a pronounced grapey aftertaste. Produced in numerous small distilleries since the 1930s, the Bulgarian speciality comes from an area that covers the Yambol province & part of the neighbouring province of Burgas, both in the south eastern part of the country. The new designation joins more than 235 spirit drinks that are already listed in the eAmbrosia database.

*See [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32018D1203\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32018D1203(01)&from=EN)

TIMETABLE: Week ahead (in Brussels unless otherwise stated), all Councils in Luxembourg;

- Oct 12** European Milk Board (EMB), together with the Belgian cooperative Faircoop, hosts the 6th International Milk Conference in Libramont *inc.* presentation of 'fair & local milk' projects in countries such as BE, FR, DE, IT, LU & Switzerland as well as Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger & Senegal - www.europeanmilkboard.org/;
- Oct 13** Polish parliamentary election;
- Oct 14** Agriculture & Fisheries Council (&15) [*see above*]; Foreign Affairs Council (&15); Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström gives a keynote speech at the European Strategy & Policy Analysis System (ESPAS) Annual Conference 'Global Trends to 2030: Challenges & Choices for Europe'; Commissioner for International Cooperation & Development Neven Mimica in Rome, participates in the 46th Committee on World Food Security www.fao.org/cfs/en/ (continues until Oct 18) on 'Accelerating progress on SDG 2 to achieve all the Sustainable Development Goals' & participates in the EU-sponsored side event 'Global Network Food Crises Prevention & Response'; EU-Oz bilateral trade talks in Canberra (until 18) [*see AF77-19*]; Dispute Settlement Body on additional US tariffs on EU agri & manufactured goods (Airbus/Boeing) at the WTO in Geneva; *Hearing between Malmström & COMAGRI members on impact of same ruling on European agri-food exports has been cancelled due to Commissioner's agenda*;
- Oct 15** General Affairs Council (Art. 50) *inc.* discussions on state-of-play of Brexit with EU's chief negotiator Michel Barnier, ahead of European Council (17-18); 1st Vice-President Frans Timmermans receives Eugene Rhuggenaath, Prime Minister of Curaçao (in the Caribbean) & receives representatives of the 'Groene 10'; Malmström visits Port of Rotterdam (NL);
- Oct 16** College Meeting *inc.* Annual Report on the implementation of Free Trade Agreements & Progress Report on the Implementation of the European Agenda on Migration; Hogan receives Alan Pollard, Chief Executive of New Zealand Apples & Pears; Competition Commissioner Margrethe Vestager receives representatives of Green 10; EU Foreign Affairs Chief Federica Mogherini receives Ngo Xuan Lich, Minister for National Defence of Vietnam to sign the EU-Vietnam Framework Participation Agreement; EP Conference of Presidents (EP President & leaders of political groups) will take decision on next steps on the three CAP reform files (day earlier than previously planned) [*see AF72-19*]; EDA Congress 2019 in Vienna www.eda2019.eu/en/welcome/; World Food Day under the slogan 'Our actions are our future - healthy diets for a #ZeroHunger world' - www.fao.org/world-food-day/en/;
- Oct 17** European Council (&18) *inc.* the EU's long-term budget (2021-2027), Brexit, international aspects of climate change, priorities for the next 5 years (plus address by Commission President-elect Ursula von der Leyen) & decision on the appointment of Christine Lagarde as President of the European Central Bank; Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker receives Brigitte Bierlein, Chancellor of Austria, receives Portugal's Prime Minister António Costa & participates at the EPP Summit ahead of the European Council; Health Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis participates at the EU Health Awards Ceremony; Advocate General's opinion on the protection of the term 'Halloumi' (traditional cheese from Cyprus) **C-766/18**;
- Oct 18** Extraordinary General Assembly of the International Organisation of Vine & Wine - www.oiv.int/;
- Oct 19** Andriukaitis in Okayama City, Japan (until 20) participates in the G20 Health Ministerial - <https://g20-meeting2019.mhlw.go.jp/health/overview.html>;

Management & Regulatory Committees

- Oct 14** Committee on organic production (&15); Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food & Feed (PAFF) on Biological Safety of the Food Chain;
- Oct 17** Committee for the Common Organisation of Animal Markets: Animal products; PAFF on Seeds & Propagating Material for Agriculture & Horticulture (&18); Standing Committee on Plant Health (&18);
- ENDS**

The latest EU agriculture, environment & trade news

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- **COMAGRI GIVES NOD TO POLISH COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE WOJCIECHOWSKI**
- **TIMMERMANS PUSHES GREEN MESSAGE IN CONFIDENT DISPLAY AT EP HEARING**
- **COPA-COGECA CALLS FOR FARM-FRIENDLY CLIMATE MEASURES IN 'GREEN DEAL'**
- **BREXIT TALKS STALLED AS UK ACCUSED OF PLAYING "BLAME GAME"**
- **TRADE UPDATES: EU GIs gain greater international recognition; EU-Oz trade talks (Oct 14);**
- **IN BRIEF: Kurz in talks to form AT gov; Portugal's Costa wins; 'Weimar Triangle' on CAP;**

COMAGRI GIVES NOD TO POLISH COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE WOJCIECHOWSKI

Polish Commissioner-designate Janusz Wojciechowski received the unanimous backing of group coordinators in the AGRI Committee yesterday morning (Oct 8), following a second hearing with MEPs ahead of his country's general election on Oct 13. Speaking entirely in Polish, the Law & Justice (PiS) politician made a much more forceful & committed impression on MEPs, with several commenting on how different his performance was compared to the first outing on Oct 1 [see AF75-19]. COMAGRI Chair Norbert Lins (EPP, DE) explained that following the previous audition coordinators had failed to reach a two-thirds majority & asked for detailed responses to a series of written questions [see AF76-19]. Still not satisfied, they'd decided to hold a 'resumed' hearing. AGRI & ENVI MEPs were present, with ENVI Coordinators rejecting his appointment (votes did not count). "European agriculture must be competitive," the Commissioner-designate told MEPs. "Farmers are entrepreneurs" & needed support to preserve their competitive edge. The 64-year-old ECR politician insisted that he would stand up & defend a "stronger & adequate budget for agriculture & rural development." The Rawa Mazowiecka native (central Poland) promised to cut bureaucracy & stressed the need to enhance the position of European agriculture in global markets, something he would promote when negotiating with international trading partners. He would make sure that imported food products complied with EU standards. On climate & environmental protection, he said that "farmers will help to achieve European goals," noting that "very often they are the first victims of climatic change." He would implement "not prohibitions & bounds but rather incentives," to achieve environmental goals. Wojciechowski stressed his support for organic farming, promising to come up with an action plan on the issue. The former AGRI MEP (2004-2016) & COMAGRI Vice-Chair insisted on fairness in the CAP, recognising local differences, but he insisted that it "must be common as a policy." There had to be room for flexibility but "we need to strike the right balance." He addressed concerns over land concentration or appropriation of land in some countries. "We should stand up for the farmers who are faced with land grabbing," he said.

During the question & answer session that ensued, Italian MEP Herbert Dorfmann (EPP) wanted to know if he would continue working with the EP on the current reform proposals or whether there would be new plans in the next mandate. Wojciechowski admitted that he was a bit jealous of Dacian Cioloş, a former Commissioner, & now COMAGRI member (& leader of Renew Europe), who carried through reform from scratch. "I am in a position where this reform is already on the table," he said, pointing out that his mandate from future President Ursula von der Leyen was to carry on with the current reform process. He knew the position of the 'old' Parliament & Commissioner, but "I do not have the final position of Parliament from this term." The former member of the Governing Board of EUROSAI, the European Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions (1995 to 1999) was ready for compromises & remains "open to good proposals that may improve the CAP." However, he reminded MEPs that new ideas would have to get through Council. When asked about the transitional period & how long it would last, the former Deputy Speaker of the Polish Parliament (2001-2004) pointed out that it had to be one year continuation of the old system. "We will have a proposal of one year of transition on the table," without confirming when the regulation would be tabled. Italian Socialist Paolo De Castro raised the issue of US measures in the Airbus dispute, describing the tariffs imposed by President Donald Trump as putting farming & food in Europe "under attack". "Strategic products are going to be hit," he said [see below]. In response, Wojciechowski said he was aware of the situation. "Farmers are innocent victims of conflict," he said. He hoped a political resolution would be found but if not, the EU would have to "trigger some aid system." Europe had the experience of the Russian ban & had been "very effective in providing help for farmers." If confirmed, the Pole promised he would "fight for as many resources as possible." De Castro wanted to know if he would activate the reserve fund, complaining that the €400 million in the fund was not enough & should be at least €1.5 billion. The former Polish MP (1993-1995 & 2001-2004) said he was in favour of increasing "a possibility to react & help farmers in a crisis." For Renew Europe, German liberal MEP Ulrike Müller insisted that there should be a focus on young farmers. Wojciechowski concurred, saying the issue was "of key importance." There was a system of aid but the

results were “not satisfactory yet.” The most important problem was access to land. Green MEP Martin Häusling told Wojciechowski there had been “a lot more substance to your answers this time round.” He raised the subject of capping. “Commissioners tend to give in,” he said. “Our suspicion is that Member States won’t stand as firm on this as you hope.” Wojciechowski said he was very much in favour of protecting small farms. It was possible to see how they were being lost as you drove across Europe. “This is Europe & not Canada,” he said. The German politician also raised the question of protein subsidies & Wojciechowski noted the “vast” level of imports of soybeans from the US. “Much of this can be replaced,” by EU protein crops, he reckoned. To a question on the budget, he responded that “I would very much like to have a budget for agriculture as big as possible”, conceding that he must remain “realistic.”

Czech Ivan David, from the Identity & Democracy Group, was concerned about the opening of the European market for imports of agricultural products. “Do we accept this competition, which in some cases is unfair?”, he asked. The former member of the European Court of Auditors (ECA), Chamber I, Sustainable use of natural resources, said that there was a need to stand up for the interests of European farmers but on the other hand “we need international trade.” He noted that the EU was a massive exporter of agri-food products, but farmers “cannot be sacrificed” for trade. He promised that he would “do my best to make sure farmers are not on the losing end.” David went on to ask if he would fight for a fairer distribution of agricultural subsidies. The former President of Poland’s Supreme Audit Office (1995 to 2001) said he would pursue internal & external convergence. “We will need to equalise the payments available to farmers,” he said. There were proposals on the table. His fellow Law & Justice Party colleague Zbigniew Kuźmiuk (ECR) raised the issue of the concentration of land. “It has gone too far,” the Commissioner-designate responded. But he stressed that the EU could not interfere in Member State property laws. Kuźmiuk wondered if he could help by looking at the definition of an active farmer. The Member of the Court of Auditors agreed. “This would be one of the remedies,” he said. Ireland’s GUE/NGL MEP Luke Ming Flanagan reminded Wojciechowski that he came “from the same political stable as the British Prime Minister,” recalling Johnson’s description of climate protestors as “crusties”. Wojciechowski insisted that he was “very much attached to the idea that European agriculture should be in line with environmental requirements.” Following the hearing, the Castlerea (Co. Roscommon) man later tweeted that “anyone who is ‘too green’ for the @EPP has to be a positive.”

Austrian MEP Simone Schmiedtbauer (EPP) stressed the need to avoid an exodus from rural areas because of the effect of budget cuts on smaller farms. The Pole pointed out that the Member States had already increased financing. “Maintaining the liability over all areas should be the main task for the rural development fund,” she said. The Austrian wondered how more can be done on implementing climate goals at a time when there is less money. “I am ready to fight,” the would-be Commissioner asserted. “I am ready to stand against all other members of the Commission. You can count on me.” Juozas Olekas, a Lithuanian Socialist, said “today we have heard more concrete answer to our questions.” He was “very happy about that.” His question was about specific action to enhance rural infrastructure & what the new Commissioner would do about convergence. “I’ll do all I’ll be able to do about convergence,” Wojciechowski assured him. “I want convergence to happen as soon as possible.” Inequality between Member States should be stopped. Former Agriculture Commissioner Dacian Cioloş, now leader of Renew Europe, told the Polish politician that “this time you are much more engaging & much more concrete in your answers.” “This is what we need.”

All eyes on new AGRI Cabinet: Now that Wojciechowski is “home & dry”, all eyes now turn to the formation of his Cabinet. Maciej Golubiewski, a Polish diplomat at the European External Action Service (Brussels, Beirut), currently heading Poland’s Consulate General in New York (since Jan 2017), is emerging as the key candidate for the role of Chef de Cabinet. The former Deputy Chief of Mission at the EU delegation to Lebanon (Sept 2014-Oct 2016) & International Relations Officer on Syria (based in Brussels) is understood to be fluent in Polish, English, French, German & Russian. A French female official (from DG AGRI services) is being mooted as Deputy Chef de Cabinet. Magdalena Majerczyk, agri advisor for the ECR group, is understood to be a “dead cert” for a senior Cabinet position (possibly working on relations with the EU institutions). The EP official, with nearly two decades of experience in the House, has been a key figure in the run-up to the hearings. The ‘previous’ Head of Private Office in the Luxembourg-based European Court of Auditors (ECA) is Kinga Wiśniewska-Danek (daughter of ECR MEP Jadwiga Wiśniewska), while his personal assistant for the last 15 years is Anna Chuchla. Both are hotly tipped to join him in Brussels - though it’s unsure which jobs they will get. An “Austrian or a German” is being floated as a possibility, with some other prominent names also circulating at the time of going to press. More clarity on the final line-up is expected in the coming days.

Hearing on US tariffs planned for Oct 14: AGRI MEPs will gather for an extraordinary meeting with outgoing Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström on Monday afternoon (Oct 14) from 4pm to discuss the potential impact of US punitive tariffs (worth \$7.5 billion or €6.9bn) on European agri & industrial goods following last week’s decision by the WTO in the long-running Airbus/Boeing dispute [see AF76-19]. The Dispute Settlement Body will convene from 9am in Geneva on the same day, where members are expected to formally endorse the decision. In tandem, Agriculture Ministers are expected to discuss the ruling when they meet for the Council in Luxembourg on Monday – the last under Hogan’s tenure as the bloc’s Farm chief.

TIMMERMANS PUSHES GREEN MESSAGE IN CONFIDENT DISPLAY AT EP HEARING

Commission Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans came out fighting for a greener EU at his hearing before MEPs yesterday evening (Oct 8). In his confident pitch for the job of piloting the 'European Green Deal, the Dutch Socialist politician clashed with right-wing MEPs, who questioned the Commission's new climate & environment focussed direction, in a polished performance that delivered a strong message, largely well-received by euro-deputies. During the course of the 3-hour audition, the graduate in French language & literature spoke largely in English, but also in French, Italian & his native Dutch. *[Though not required at this meeting, the notable linguist is also fluent in Russian]*. Referring to what needs to be done on environment & climate, he told COMENVI (with associated ITRE & TRAN Committees) that "this is not going to be easy." "We are faced with a challenge that is truly existential." *ECON, AGRI & REGI MEPs were also invited to attend the confirmation hearing.* "The Green Deal can help solve problems & improve life," the Labour Party (Partij van de Arbeid) politician said, promising a new climate law within 100 days to enshrine in legislation the EU's 2050 climate neutrality objective. The action already taken by the EU to tackle climate change had not harmed the European economy. As soon as possible, he would "put forward legislative proposals that will help us to reduce emissions by at least 50%, or even better, by 55%," by 2030. "We will present a robust & ambitious biodiversity strategy for 2030," the former Dutch Foreign Minister (2012-2014) elaborated. "As with climate, we should lead on this worldwide." One way to do that was in the food sector, something which would be set out in the forthcoming sustainable 'Farm to Fork Strategy'.

Dutch MEP Esther de Lange (EPP) raised the question of the effect on communities of closing coalmines. "We have got to look after our own sectors," she said. Timmermans pointed out that his forebears had been miners. "Sometimes it's very difficult for that transition to be a smooth process," he said. "We have got our duty to help those regions to a new economy." Swedish Socialist Jytte Guteland called for "specific immediate action" to eliminate the rise in temperatures to 1.5°. The would-be Executive Vice-President said that argument would be more convincing "if we can back it up with science & research." Studies were currently being undertaken. "I will be extremely surprised if the outcome will be anything other than 55% by 2030. For Renew Europe, Finland's Nils Torvalds, asked if there was sufficient flexibility in legislation to make it happen. "Many Directives will have to be renewed," Timmermans responded, adding that "industry has woken up to this." Italian Lega euro-deputy Silvia Sardone (ID group) accused the Commission of "hanging from the lips of Greta Thunberg." "Consider there are people around who don't have a roof over their heads," she said. "This is a huge marketing exercise." The new European Green Deal was "completely unobtainable & ideological." Timmermans's answer, in Italian, was direct. "How weak do your arguments have to be if you resort to attacking a 16-year-old girl?," he said, to applause from MEPs. The eloquent orator reminded the 36-year-old politician from Milan that renewal energy had become cheaper than conventional. She responded with "how weak does the Commission have to be when you have the hide behind the skirt of a 16-year-old girl?" "Do you really think that the bottles on Italian beaches float in from the Far East?," the Dutchman asked, responding to Sardone's insistence that other parts of the world were responsible for pollution. He would take that message to Italy, "to your constituents." The ECR's Alexandr Vondra said, with a hint of sarcasm, "welcome to the revolution." "I'm concerned that the European Green Deal will cost us more than our societies are able to sustain," the Czech politician & former Defence Minister (2010-2012) went on. "On this we disagree," said Timmermans. "We should make a convincing argument ... that they should green their tax system," he stated.

Sinkevičius makes climate pledge at EP hearing: Lithuania's Commissioner-designate Virginijus Sinkevičius (Environment & Oceans) pledged to address biodiversity loss, deliver on the zero pollution ambition & work on a new circular economy action plan during his 5-year mandate. At his confirmation hearing before the Environment, Public Health & Food Safety and Fisheries Committees (Oct 3), the former Minister of Economy & Innovation (2017-present) said his key priority, if confirmed, would be "to make the Green Deal a reality on the ground." Under the leadership of Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans, the 28-year-old politician from the Lithuanian Farmers & Greens Union, pledged to represent Europe at the Convention for Biological Diversity in China next year. *Having completed a Bachelor of Economic & Social Studies in Aberystwyth University (2009-2012), with a Master of Arts in European Studies from Maastricht University, Sinkevičius has been Deputy Leader of the agrarian political party since 2016.*

Switching between Lithuanian & English, he vowed to deliver "new standards for biodiversity," in trade, industry, agriculture & the economy and called on MEPs to "help in mainstreaming biodiversity across EU & national policies." He also plans to extend circular economy policies to new sectors such as textiles, food & the information & communications technology sector. Sinkevičius said the 'Farm to Fork' initiative "has to be a very good tool to halt deforestation." "Forests have to be protected & maintained," he continued, while "we have to know what the supply chain is ... it must be a deforestation-free supply chain." "We need to listen" to climate protests, he stated, adding that the recent marches across the globe showed his generation was ready to take action. On fisheries, the former member of the Lithuanian Parliament (Seimas) pledged to fully implement the Common Fisheries Policy & its upcoming evaluation, insisting that the EU must remain a global leader for sustainable fisheries & ocean governance. The hearing was co-chaired by Chair of the Environment Committee Pascal Canfin (Renew Europe, FR) & his colleague Chris Davies (Renew Europe, UK) in charge of Fisheries. COMAGRI was an associated Committee.

COPA-COGECA CALLS FOR FARM-FRIENDLY CLIMATE MEASURES IN 'GREEN DEAL'

Farm organisation Copa-Cogeca wrote to Executive Vice-President designate Frans Timmermans ahead of his EP hearing on Oct 8 with a list of proposals on climate mitigation in the sector. They want to see the costs borne by all parts of the food chain in a system which takes into account industry's contribution through carbon sequestration, helps to change energy use & recognises the need to be open to new technology.

In a four-page letter* (dated Oct 7), Secretary-General Pekka Pesonen reminds the Dutch politician that "farmers are the first to feel the impact of climate change & must cope with the increasing cost of adaptation & mitigation." In moving to a carbon neutral economy, it is "fundamental to design sustainable policies & programmes that accompany our farmers & their cooperatives towards this transition & recognize the importance of existing tools." The lobby organisation wants to see carbon sequestration "taken into account when implementing the legislative instruments on climate," with a carbon market or crediting schemes. There's a call for a farm energy programme to reduce on-farm consumption of fossil fuels & increase substitution by renewables. The umbrella group also stresses that the European Green Deal should include a new forestry strategy. Pesonen calls on farmers' behalf for the use of "cutting-edge technologies such as new plant breeding techniques, artificial intelligence (AI) & digital technologies." A chapter on climate change should be included in all trade agreements, while Copa-Cogeca advises considering carbon border taxes "with care" because they may increase input costs. Farmers need "environmental legislation that recognises their efforts & gives them enough flexibility to use natural resources more efficiently, while ensuring food security," the Vice-President designate is told. Producers also want the EU to make sure that "plant & animal genes & genetic natural traits which can be found in nature or obtained through mutagenesis are not patentable." On plans for a circular economy & the 'Farm to Fork' Strategy for sustainable food, Pesonen notes the success of the EU in finding alternatives to fossil-based materials & calls for the updated Bio-economy Strategy to be "a key component of the European Green Deal." Hailing from a family farm in Juva in Savo County (Eastern Finland), the former State Secretary (Jan 2005-April 2007) also reminds the Dutch politician that the cost of implementing a new policy must be "borne by all, from farmers and processors to retailers & consumers," with the most vulnerable protected from unintended consequences.

BREXIT TALKS STALLED AS UK ACCUSED OF PLAYING "BLAME GAME"

Any further substantive negotiations on a Brexit deal are unlikely following a telephone call between UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson & Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel on Oct 8 & the British government's decision to release its apparently slanged version. A 'Downing Street source', understood to be Johnson's controversial advisor Dominic Cummings, briefed journalists that the call with Merkel "showed the EU has adopted a new position." The German leader thinks the bloc "has a veto on us leaving the EU," the 'source' said. Merkel had told her British counterpart that the UK could not leave the EU "without leaving Northern Ireland behind in a customs union & in full alignment forever." She had also said that "Ireland must at least have a veto on Northern Ireland leaving." The 'source' said that the telephone exchange meant a "deal is essentially impossible not just now but ever," adding that "it also made clear they are willing to torpedo the Good Friday Agreement." German officials refused to comment on what was supposed to be a private call, while political commentators noted that the remarks sounded very unlike anything that would have been said by the country's usually measured & diplomatic leader. Council President Donald Tusk told Johnson over Twitter yesterday (Oct 8) that "what's at stake is not winning some stupid blame game." "At stake is the future of Europe & the UK as well as the security & interests of our people," he went on. "You don't want a deal, you don't want an extension, you don't want to revoke, quo vadis?" Ireland's *Tánaiste* Simon Coveney responded to Tusk with "hard to disagree - reflects the frustration across EU & the enormity of what's at stake for us all." "We remain open to finalize a fair Brexit deal but need a UK Govt willing to work with EU to get it done," the Corkman said.

EP President David Sassoli came out of a meeting with Johnson at Downing Street yesterday afternoon (Oct 8), saying the UK proposals [see AF75-19] were "not immediately operable" & a "long way from something to which the Parliament could agree." The EP would not agree to proposals that undermine the Good Friday Agreement, he said. "There are two alternatives to a deal at this juncture: Extension or no deal," the Italian Socialist MEP went on. Sassoli also met House of Commons Speaker John Bercow & told the British parliamentarian that the EP would support a UK request for an Article 50 extension, "in order to have time for a general election or a referendum." The former journalist, originally from Florence, said that Bercow & he had "fully agreed on the important role that our parliaments play in the Brexit process." There was "a common awareness that a disorderly exit of the UK from the EU would be against the interests of British & European citizens." With talks in trouble & no sign of Brussels accepting Johnson's blueprint, the focus is on whether the UK Premier will actually do what he is legally obliged to do under the 'Benn Act', that is write to EU leaders requesting an extension of the Article 50 deadline. Parliament is due to reassemble on Oct 14, for a Queen's Speech, outlining a new government programme. EU heads of state & government gather in Brussels on Oct 17-18. With no signs of a breakthrough, there are suggestions that Johnson might not even turn up. The embattled leader has until Oct 19, under the 'Benn Act', to get a deal or send a request to the EU-27 for an extension.

NFU anger at UK tariff plans: The England & Wales National Farmers Union (NFU) has reacted angrily to a UK government update* on tariffs after a no deal Brexit which threatens to remove protection for key sectors including cereals, eggs, fruit & vegetables & some dairy. NFU President Minette Batters said Prime Minister Boris Johnson had “missed a real opportunity to back British farmers.” “We will see, from day one, farm businesses facing new, high tariffs on much of the 60% of our exports that go into the EU,” she noted, “while tariffs on goods coming into the UK will be set far, far lower & in many cases won’t be applied at all.” “British egg farmers, cereal farmers, our horticultural growers & many of our dairy farmers will have zero protection,” she complained. The UK was “in danger of opening up the country to imported food which would be illegal to be produced here.” “Border tariffs have very little impact on retail food prices,” Batters explained, but they could “have a massive impact on the viability of farm businesses & our ability to produce high quality, great British food.” The Wiltshire farmer & co-founder of the ‘Ladies in Beef’ campaign preferred “offering some limited tariff protection & managing volumes through a system of import quotas,” creating “the right balance between protecting the interests of domestic producers & keeping retail food prices under control.”

*See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/temporary-tariff-regime-updated>

TRADE UPDATES: EU GIs gain greater international recognition; EU-Oz trade talks (Oct 14):

EU GIs gain greater international recognition: The Council this week (Oct 7) adopted a legal package setting the legal basis for the EU’s accession to the Geneva Act of the Lisbon Agreement, relating to the protection of Geographical Indications (GIs). The so-called Lisbon Agreement - first adopted in 1958 - is a special pact under Article 19 of the Paris Convention for the Protection of Intellectual Property. The treaty - administered by the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO)* - currently comprises 28 members *inc.* Algeria, Burkina Faso, Congo, Cuba, Gabon, Georgia, Iran, Israel, Peru & Togo, as well as seven EU Member States (FR, HU, BG, CZ, SK, PT & IT). In May 2015, the Agreement was revised through the ‘Geneva Act’. The amendment - which followed talks since 2008 - widened the scope of the treaty to cover all GIs & allowed the membership of intergovernmental organisations, notably the EU [see AF35-15]. The move sought to grant greater legal certainty to GIs in the 28 member countries & allow members to secure protection for appellations of origins (AO) through a single registration. *At the time, the US, Argentina, Australia & Japan slammed the plan, saying it failed to adequately protect common food names & existing intellectual property rights.*

Commenting earlier in the week, EU Farm Commissioner Phil Hogan said it was a “step forward to better protect our geographical indications at a multilateral level ... they mirror the EU’s valuable geographical diversity, authenticity & know-how, in terms of agricultural products, food & drinks.” This membership “will add on to the protection already granted through international bilateral agreements,” the incoming Trade chief added. Once the bloc joins the international registration system, “it will enable the rapid, high-level & indefinite protection of all types of European GIs *inc.* food, wine, handicrafts in all current & future parties belonging to the Geneva Act,” DG AGRI officials outline. The relevant acts will now be published in the EU’s Official Journal & will enter into force 20 days after publication. The bloc will officially join the Geneva Act three months later. *See www.wipo.int;

EU-Oz resume bilateral trade talks: EU-Australia chief negotiators will gather in Canberra next week (Oct 14-18) for the 5th round of bilateral trade talks, where both sides are expected to exchange market access offers on the full range of tariff lines, with the exception of sensitive products such as beef, sheepmeat, sugar, rice & dairy. *Some, but not all of the dairy lines, will be put on the table, it seems.* The Australian Chief Negotiator is Alison Burrows (First Assistant Secretary at the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade), while Helena König, DG TRADE Deputy Director-General since May 2018, heads up the EU’s negotiating team.

Based on rumours* circulating at the time of going to press, DG AGRI Director for International Affairs John Clarke is being touted as a possible contender to take over as DG TRADE Director in charge of Asia & Latin America (Directorate C). The post - left vacant since König’s promotion last summer - would cover the Far East, South & East Asia, Australia & New Zealand as well as Latin America. The senior EU official, well-known for his polished negotiating skills & eloquent turn of phrase, has close ties with incoming Trade Commissioner Phil Hogan. Clarke was an instrumental player on the DG AGRI side in getting recent deals with Mercosur, Mexico & Japan over the line. As one commentator put it, the veteran *Fine Gael* politician will be looking for a “legacy” & he knows the experienced Yorkshireman would “deliver on key trade accords with Australia, New Zealand & Mercosur (final steps).” *Based on pure speculation in agri circles, nothing has been confirmed at this stage;

IN BRIEF: Kurz in talks to form AT gov; Portugal’s Costa wins; ‘Weimar Triangle’ on CAP;

Kurz in talks to form new Austrian government: Sebastian Kurz, who served as Austrian Chancellor until May 28, has been in talks to form a new government following his party’s victory in the recent general election on Sept 29. Kurz’s Austrian People’s Party (Österreichische Volkspartei - ÖVP) gained 71, up 9, of the 183 seats in the National Council (Nationalrat), winning but falling short of the required majority. The Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ) won 40 seats, down 12, while the right-wing Freedom Party FPÖ got 31 seats, down 20. The Green Party won 26 seats, having had none before, while the liberal NEOS party

won 15 seats, up 5. Born & raised in Meidling, 12th district of Vienna, Kurz met SPÖ & FPÖ parties yesterday (Oct 8) & was set to meet the Greens & NEOS earlier today (Oct 9). Brigitte Bierlein, an independent politician & lawyer, has fulfilled the role of Chancellor since June 3, following Kurz' resignation over the 'Ibiza' affair [see AF40-19] on May 28.

Portugal's Costa wins election: Portugal faces lengthy coalition negotiations following the victory of the ruling Socialist Party (PS), led by António Costa, in parliamentary elections for the Assembleia da República over the weekend (Oct 6). Costa's party gained 20 seats, giving it a total of 106 of the 230 in the legislature - ten short of a majority. The Social Democratic Party (PSD), which are on the centre-right were down 12 at 77 seats. The Left Bloc held an unchanged 19 seats. The Democratic Unity Coalition (CDU), which allies Communists & Greens, held 12 seats down five. Costa had ruled as Prime Minister since the previous election in 2015 at the head of a coalition including Communists & the Left Bloc. The Portuguese government announced on Oct 8 that the President of the Republic, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, had nominated Costa as Prime Minister, after consultations with the political parties. Once official results have been published, the Assembleia da República will meet & a new government will be sworn in & present its programme, it said. Council President Donald Tusk wrote to the new Premier on Oct 7, congratulating him "warmly" & expressing the "trust that over the next legislature & under your leadership, Portugal will continue to enjoy political stability, social cohesion & economic prosperity." The Polish politician "looked forward" to welcoming the election winner to the crucial EU Summit later this month (Oct 17-18).

PL, DE & FR Farm Ministers call for strong CAP: Agriculture Ministers from Poland, Germany & France have agreed that the CAP must remain a key EU policy & be properly funded to fulfil its role in tackling climate change. Gathering in Warsaw (Oct 7), Ministers in the so-called 'Weimar Triangle' - a loose grouping of the three countries - stressed that the CAP "is & shall remain an important EU policy." In a 3-page joint declaration signed by Ministers Jan Krzysztof Ardanowski (PL), Didier Guillaume (FR) & Julia Klöckner (DE), they described the framework as "an important instrument for implementing the goals of a Europe undergoing unification, guaranteeing food sovereignty & contributing to the economic viability of farms & rural areas." It must remain a market-oriented policy & meet the expectations of European society, they agreed. The three politicians also note that European agriculture is increasingly open to international markets because of trade liberalisation & insist that "it is necessary that imports respect the level of standards required by European consumers." There's praise for the role of the CAP in maintaining the attractiveness of rural areas, generating economic development & the modernisation of the agri-food sector. It also plays a key role in fostering innovation, supporting less favoured areas & encouraging young farmers into the industry. The trio also agreed that the CAP contributes to tackling climate change, by "accompanying the transition towards more sustainable production systems in a harmonized framework at the European level." They say that increasing ambitions on environment, climate & animal welfare, "should go hand in hand with providing appropriate funds for their implementation." There's a call to develop cooperation on research & innovation & a commitment to encourage cooperation on science & research under Horizon 2020 & the next Horizon Europe programme. On the forthcoming Brexit deadline (Oct 31), they express their commitment to an orderly UK withdrawal, but say they are prepared for no deal. They call on the EU's executive to be "as reactive as possible in case of market disturbances." Ardanowski & his two counterparts stress the importance of small-holders & insist the CAP should provide effective instruments to protect & develop them. The three advocate "multi-functional development of small farms or family farms as a key element of rural vitality." The last time the Weimar Triangle's 'agri component' met was in Le Mans - around two hours from Paris - in Oct 2016, where they called for financial support to combat the spread of African Swine Fever [see AF77-16].

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- **POLISH COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE PROVIDES WRITTEN RESPONSES TO EP'S COMAGRI**
- **FUTURE EU BUDGET CHIEF HAHN WANTS MFF TALKS WRAPPED UP BY CHRISTMAS**
- **WASHINGTON READIES PUNITIVE TARIFFS ON EU EXPORTS IN AIRBUS/BOEING DISPUTE**
- **IN BRIEF: O'Flaherty swaps agri-trade for high tech; EFSA consultation; 2nd Reference centre; GI;**
- **TIMETABLE: Week ahead;**

POLISH COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE PROVIDES WRITTEN RESPONSES TO EP'S COMAGRI

Poland's candidate for the new Commission, Janusz Wojciechowski, has provided an extensive list of written responses to the EP's Committee on Agriculture & Rural Development, ahead of a special meeting of the Agri Coordinators tomorrow afternoon (Oct 7). The move follows his lacklustre 3-hour confirmation hearing on Oct 1, where he came across as ill-prepared, vague & lacking on technical knowledge. In a 16-page document (in English) forwarded to COMAGRI members late on Friday evening (Oct 4) - all other linguistic versions are due by noon on Oct 7 - the former Vice-President of the Agri Committee (2004-2016) has sought to clarify a number of issues related to the European Green Deal, CAP reform (capping, redistributive payment, internal convergence, Strategic Plans & small-holders), innovation, sustainable farming systems, pesticide use & the Multi-annual Financial Framework (2021-2027).

In specific terms, Wojciechowski underlines that the European Green Deal & "in particular the Farm to Fork Strategy will provide the framework for a long-term vision for rural areas, of which agriculture will play an important part." It will "address key issues related to farming methods & how we can produce food safely & sustainably," he adds. The former member of the European Court of Auditors (since 2016) & ex-MEP (2004-2016) states that organic farming can play an important role in the context of the European Green Deal "in order to address climate change & reach the objective of zero pollution", with the right-wing Law & Justice (PiS) pledging to submit to MEPs a "European Action Plan to promote organic farming." On New Breeding Techniques, he was non-committal, saying the dossier fell under the remit of his (future) colleague Stella Kyriakides. In response to a question on the target of 50% reduction of pesticide use by 2025, he said the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive - under Commissioner-designate Kyriakides' remit - "provides a strong framework for Member States & farmers to reduce their dependency on pesticides." Integrated Pest Management is a "valuable tool" to achieve this, he adds.

When asked about his position concerning capping & the redistributive payment, he is sanguine that "compulsory capping clearly benefits family farms" - an issue, he says, that is close to his heart. Direct support must be targeted at genuine farmers "or in other words those who mainly depend on farming to earn their living," he outlines, in order to "improve the public perception of the CAP & its performance." Wojciechowski supports the move towards "full internal convergence ... in due time," saying he was aware that "differences in the level of basic payment per hectare between farmers in the same Member State persist." Commenting more broadly on CAP reform, the former High Court Judge (1991-1993) expresses his conviction that the Commission's proposals "provide a good basis for discussions on the future of Europe's agricultural policy." He stands ready "to consider adapting the proposal where there is consensus between the co-legislators," while underlining that the blueprint was "not a 'carte blanche' for Member States" as there are "carefully designed safeguards within a strong framework of common rules at EU level." He was clear that there would be "much stronger links between the CAP & delivering on the objectives & targets of EU legislation on the environment & climate" - on climate change, energy, water, air quality, biodiversity & pesticides.

On innovation, the 64-year-old politician states that "farmers need to take ownership of new technologies, new business models & new forms of cooperation." He highlights the role of the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity & Sustainability (EIP-AGRI) as an "effective instrument" in fostering innovation in areas related to water & soil management, pest/disease control, food quality, competitiveness of value chains & energy efficiency. The digitalisation of agriculture (internet of things, precision farming) is also key, as it has the "potential to foster the sustainability of the sector & of the whole value chain, from production to consumption." If confirmed, the former President of the Polish Supreme Audit Office (1995-2001) made a promise to include an event related to research & agricultural innovation every time he visits a Member State.

On animal welfare, he expressed concerns about "critical areas of implementation of current animal welfare rules in the EU," citing in particular the "widespread use of the derogation to mutilation in pigs & tail-docking ... which needs to be addressed." He sees a direct correlation between the level of animal welfare & the need for the systematic use of antibiotics in farm animals & looks ahead to the entry into force of new

rules on the use of veterinary medicines at the beginning of 2022. Warsaw's Commission-hopeful also vowed to work closely with his fellow Commissioners-designate for Health & Trade to "ensure a level playing field for EU farmers in the multilateral context." In his last response, he pledged to "defend a strong budget for agriculture," & described the draft on the future financial perspectives (2021-2027) as a "good basis for discussion." The proposal, which includes a "moderate cut for the CAP," he says, "strikes a fair & reasonable balance between the need for ensuring adequate funding for new priorities & for the more traditional policies such as CAP & Cohesion."

In terms of the next steps, Agri Coordinators will convene a meeting tomorrow afternoon (Oct 7) from 3-3.30pm to evaluate the additional written responses. Depending on the quality of the answers & if Coordinators, representing a two-thirds majority of Committee membership, give the green light, then the assessment letter would be approved. If they are still not satisfied with the replies, they may request a (shorter) second hearing (1½ hours) scheduled to take place on Tuesday morning (Oct 8) - starting at either 9am or 11am. Any move to call a 'resumed' hearing - a couple of days ahead of Poland's parliamentary elections (Oct 13) - would have to be approved by the EP's Conference of Presidents. *The 'normal' COMAGRI would continue tomorrow afternoon (from 4.30pm) with MEPs to discuss opinions on Ukraine & the US beef TRQ, while there is an exchange of views planned with officials from DGs AGRI, COMP & TRADE on the long-term prospects for the beef sector (pending availability due to rescheduling).*

FUTURE EU BUDGET CHIEF HAHN WANTS MFF TALKS WRAPPED UP BY CHRISTMAS

Commissioner-designate for Budget & Administration, Johannes Hahn, is pushing for an agreement on the Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) by the end of this year. During his audition on Oct 3 before the EP's Budgets & Budgetary Control Committees (Legal Affairs C'ttee was associated), the 61-year-old Austrian politician said he "would spare no effort to facilitate a timely agreement & avoid any damaging delays in the launch of the new 2021-2027 MFF programmes." Returning to the chamber for a third time as Commissioner-designate, the Austrian People's Party politician (EPP) said the EU budget was a "policy cast in numbers," describing it as a "key enabler & one of the most visible tools to illustrate the Community principles of subsidiarity & solidarity to its citizens." It was "vital to deploy financial resources ... to help turn political guidelines into results," he added, underlining the negative impact of a long-term budget any smaller than the one proposed by the EU's executive. The MFF proposal from the outgoing Commission was a "solid basis to work on," he added, underlining the need to identify some "targeted adjustments to ensure that funds reach communities that are most in need." Switching deftly between English & German, the outgoing Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy & Enlargement (since 2014) insisted that "under no circumstances ... should the MFF plans end up lower than the Commission," which he describes as "unimaginable." Following some "movement among the more hard-line countries," he vowed to "find allies," pledging to go to the "different capitals that want a low budget," if confirmed.

The move to earmark 25% of the budget for climate change was "already ambitious, but not the end of the road," Hahn stated, adding that Community funding was vital for digitalisation, innovation, research & education and the move towards the "green transition." The long-term financial perspectives "should not be seen in isolation," he added, but rather as a "crucial catalyst for public & private investments" to address climate change, foster innovation & encourage projects with a common European interest. The former Austrian Minister for Science & Research (2007-2010) said he was committed to the extension of 'own resources' *inc.* the plastic bag levy, expansion of the ETS trading scheme to aviation & maritime transport and a cross-border carbon tax as floated by President-elect Ursula von der Leyen. Holding responsibility for Administration, Hahn committed to greater equality in the institutions. The ex-Commissioner for Regional Policy (2010-2014) pledged to deliver a "digital focused" agenda, with the Commission "leading by example." When asked about contingency measures in the event of no agreement on the financial perspectives, he promised to do his "utmost to have an agreement in good time ... to have a result by the end of the winter." It was "not appropriate to talk about deadlines right now as it would vent pressure on the negotiators," he outlined. Any contingency plans "would distract people from the central aim to get the MFF signed, sealed & delivered" & should only be used as a "last resort."

The Commission-hopeful also underlined the importance of the 'Just Transition Fund,' aimed at supporting regions to move away from CO₂ intensive industries & energy sources to more climate-friendly alternatives. Investment in technological upgrades towards a low-carbon economy & retraining is key to "accelerate the whole process & act as a catalyst to drive investment forward," Hahn added. Chairs of the Budget Committee Johan Van Overtveldt (ECR, BE) & Budgetary Control Monika Hohlmeier (EPP, DE) steered discussions during the 3-hour hearing. *A read-out of Lithuania's Commissioner-designate Virginijus Sinkevičius' hearing on Oct 3 as well as Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans (Oct 8) will follow in the next edition;*

WASHINGTON READIES PUNITIVE TARIFFS ON EU EXPORTS IN AIRBUS/BOEING DISPUTE

The World Trade Organisation's arbitration panel authorised the US administration to introduce annual retaliatory tariffs up to a value of almost \$7.5 billion on a range of European imports *inc.* wine, whiskey, olives, dairy products, cashmere sweaters, luxury goods & aircraft parts (Oct 2)*, in the 15-year

Airbus/Boeing legal battle over subsidies. The decision marks the largest award of its kind in the trade bloc's history. If Washington goes ahead with the punitive duties (from Oct 18) - 10% rate on large civil aircraft & 25% on agricultural & other products - it will further aggravate EU-US trade relations, which have become increasingly strained over the past few months. On the basis of the 16-page final product list subjected to additional *ad valorem* duties, agricultural goods are targeted but in a very complicated way. The bulk of the tariffs are applicable to imports from Airbus's founding countries - the UK, FR, DE & ES - *inc.* single-malt Irish & Scotch Whiskies, olive oil, cheese, frozen pigmeat, but food exports from all other EU countries are also targeted. Irish exports to the US such as Kerrygold butter, Bailey's Cream Liqueur, cheese, yoghurt & pork look set for hefty levies, with some commentators suggesting that the move serves as a "warning shot" from President Donald Trump to future Trade Commissioner Phil Hogan. Early next year, the Geneva-based trade body is expected to give Brussels the green light to impose its own tariffs on US imports in retaliation for subsidies that led to lost sales for Airbus.

Commenting on the litigation case, EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström said it would be "short-sighted & counterproductive" for Washington to slap on tariffs on EU goods, underlining that Brussels would be allowed to do the same in a parallel case over illegal subsidies granted to Boeing. The "mutual imposition of countermeasures ... would only inflict damage on businesses & citizens on both sides of the Atlantic & harm global trade and the broader aviation industry at a sensitive time," the outgoing Trade chief stated. Both sides could still reach a settlement & avoid the introduction of any additional levies, but no serious negotiations have taken place until now. If Washington decides "to impose WTO authorised countermeasures, it will be pushing the EU into a situation where we will have no other option than to do the same," the Swedish liberal politician explained. The EU's largest farm lobby Copa-Cogeca called on both parties to avoid any escalation in the long-running dispute & for their commitment to negotiate trade aspects in an orderly manner. The umbrella organisation supports Commission efforts to find mutually beneficial solutions for this "non-agricultural matter." In reaction to the announcement, Secretary General Pekka Pesonen regretted that the "agricultural sector was once again paying the bill for a political decision on trade that has nothing to do with it." "Farmers on both sides of the Atlantic need stability & trust in order to make long-term investments to remain competitive & attractive," he added. FoodDrinkEurope echoed this stance, with Director General Mella Frewen urging both parties to "engage in a constructive dialogue to swiftly resolve the aircraft disputes & avoid further escalation of trade tensions ... all efforts should focus on a positive trade agenda, which aims to strengthen our long-standing transatlantic trade relations." Agriculture Ministers are expected to discuss the ruling when they meet in Luxembourg next week (Oct 14-15).

*For more details see www.wto.org;

IN BRIEF: O'Flaherty swaps agri-trade for high tech; EFSA consultation; 2nd EU reference centre; GI;

O'Flaherty swaps agri-trade for high tech: Lorcan O'Flaherty, current Head of International Trade at the consultancy firm Hume Brophy, takes up his new post as Head of Public Policy & Government Relations at Google (EU HQ) in Dublin tomorrow (Oct 7). Now in his early thirties, the down-to-earth & perspicacious O'Flaherty moved to Brussels in Jan 2010 & quickly emerged as a mover & shaker in the agri & international trade circle. Before climbing the ranks at one of the European capital's top consultancies Hume Brophy - from Account Manager in Oct 2013 to Director in Dec 2017 - he cut his teeth at the Permanent Representation during Ireland's Presidency, working directly with Dermot Ryan (the then SCA spokesperson) on the 2013 CAP reform. Prior to the 11-month stint at the Rep, he was the Regulatory Affairs Manager at FoodDrinkEurope (April 2010-Aug 2012). He graduated with an LLB in Law & European Studies from the University of Limerick in 2008 *inc.* a memorable spell working in Paris & completed a Master's (Human Rights in Criminal Justice) in 2010. The proud Mountmellick man, with West of Ireland lineage, was recently enlisted in the 2019 Directory of the 'Top EU Public Affairs Consultants' - as was his boss Jill Craig (Managing Director at HB). Well-connected to key decision-makers, O'Flaherty is highly regarded by the soon-to-be Trade Commissioner Phil Hogan & his team. Described as a "class act" & a "pure gent" by those who know him, Lorcan will be missed in the Brussels' agri circle.

EFSA launches public consultation on aflatoxins: The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) this week launched a public consultation on the draft scientific opinion on the risks to public health related to the presence of aflatoxins in food. Aflatoxins are mycotoxins produced by two species of *Aspergillus*, a fungus found especially in areas with hot & humid climates. They are known to be genotoxic (capable of damaging DNA) & carcinogenic. Scientists on the Panel on Contaminants in the Food Chain (CONTAM) state that the dietary exposure of the European population to aflatoxins - through contaminated grains & derived products as well as milk - raises a possible health concern. Interested parties must submit their written comments by Nov 15. *See www.efsa.europa.eu/en/consultations/call/public-consultation-draft-scientific-opinion-risks

2nd EU Reference Centre on poultry welfare: The Commission has this week designated a second European Union Reference Centre for the welfare of poultry & other small farmed animals, which aims at improving the enforcement of EU legislation applicable to those animals, such as laying hens, chickens for meat production & other small farmed animals, *inc.* their transport & killing operation. Following a public selection process, the 2nd Centre comprises a consortium formed by the Agence Nationale de Sécurité

Sanitaire de l'Alimentation (FR), the Institut de Recerca i Tecnologia Agroalimentàries (ES), Aarhus Universitet - Institut for Husdyrvidenskab (DK) & Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale della Lombardia e dell'Emilia Romagna (IT). Once up & running in 2020, the centre will provide technical support & coordinate assistance to EU countries in carrying out official controls in animal welfare & contribute to the dissemination of good practices. The consortium will also carry out scientific studies & deliver training courses. Knowledge transfer on research results & information on technical innovations are central planks of the consortium's work.

EU Health Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis welcomed the designation, stating that it "confirms the Commission's consistent & long-term policy to support strong enforcement on animal welfare." Following the designation of the first centre on the welfare of pigs in March 2018, a second one on poultry & other small-farmed animals "was essential since these animals are subject to intensive production methods," the EU Health chief added. Meanwhile, the 6th meeting of the EU Platform on Animal Welfare* will meet first thing in the morning (Oct 7) (web-streamed live). Launched in June 2017, the Platform allows Member States & stakeholders to share information & good practices. Kicking off the meeting at 9.30am with DG SANTE chief Anne Bucher in the chair, the agenda includes presentations on the main results of the Commission's subgroups on animal transport & the welfare of pigs as well as the 'voluntary initiatives' created by members. DG SANTE officials will also present the achievements of the Platform since its establishment over 2 years ago & the activities of the 1st EU Reference Centre on animal welfare. Commenting ahead of the gathering - the last under his tenure - Andriukaitis said "in light of climate change, environmental challenges & ethical concerns, I am convinced that the implementation & enforcement of animal welfare legislation are bound to remain a key issue for the incoming Commission."

*For more https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/welfare/eu-platform-animal-welfare/meetings_en

Romanian smoked meat gets GI marker: The Commission gave the green light to the inclusion of the Romanian speciality '*Cârnați de Pleșcoi*' as a Geographical Indication (GI) in the Community Register this week. Originally, the Pleșcoi smoked sausage was made from meat (sheep & beef) & sheep's fat, chopped with bacon & seasoned with garlic, red hot pepper, thyme, basil & salt and smoked with beech wood. Over the years, the original recipe has changed somewhat, with goat meat occasionally replacing sheep meat. Since 2008, the '*Cârnați de Pleșcoi*' annual festival takes place to celebrate the delicacy, which has been consumed on Romanian territory since the 13th century. The smoked meat will join around 1 450 agricultural products already protected in the DOOR portal.

TIMETABLE: Week ahead (in Brussels unless otherwise stated), all Councils in Luxembourg;

- Oct 6** Portuguese general election;
- Oct 7** Justice & Home Affairs Council (&8) *inc.* EU action against corruption, application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights & state of play on migration; Special Committee on Agriculture (SCA) ahead of the Farm Council (Oct 14-15) - draft transitional regulation is not expected to be tabled ahead of meeting; Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker meets Council President Donald Tusk & NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg for a working dinner; Health Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis participates at the 6th meeting of the EU Platform on Animal Welfare; Andriukaitis also receives Hussein Kassim, Chair of the academic research project '*The European Commission: Where now? Where next?*'; Farm Commissioner Phil Hogan receives Juan Manuel Moreno Bonilla, President of the Andalusian Government; Agriculture Ministers Didier Guillaume (FR) & Julia Klöckner (DE) join their Polish counterpart Jan Krzysztof Ardanowski for a meeting of the Weimar Triangle to sign a "common declaration" in Warsaw; Commissioner for Internal Market & Industry Elżbieta Bieńkowska delivers the opening speech at the 17th European Week of Regions & Cities - <https://europa.eu/regions-and-cities/> at the EP (runs until Oct 10); EP President David Sassoli embarks on first European tour *inc.* meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron (7), German Chancellor Angela Merkel (8) & UK Premier Boris Johnson (8) on the MFF, Brexit & global challenges;
- Oct 8** Vice-President Jyrki Katainen in Sofia (BG) until Oct 8 - participates in an event on competitiveness, jobs & education, hosted by Education Bulgaria 2030, meets Deputy Premier Tomislav Donchev & Environment Minister Neno Dimov; Climate Action Commissioner Miguel Arias Cañete in San José (Costa Rica) until Oct 10, participates in the preCOP25 on Climate Change, delivers a speech at the high-level plenary, attends the Political Dialogue '*How to increase the ambition and accelerate climate action?*' & the EUROCLIMA+ side event; Andriukaitis in Vilnius (LT) meets Ministers Aurelijus Veryga (Health), Andrius Palionis (Agriculture) & Viktoras Pranckietis, Speaker of the Seimas (Lithuanian Parliament); Environment Commissioner Karmenu Vella receives Kimmo Tiilikainen, Finland's State Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture & Forestry; Hogan receives a delegation of elected members & officials from the Southern Regional Assembly & the Northern Western Regional Assembly of Ireland & attends a reception to launch Galway 2020 European Capital of Culture www.galway2020.ie; Hogan also speaks at event on '*Financing the Bio-economy – From bottleneck to breakthrough*' at the Dutch Embassy to Belgium (from 2pm); Innovation & Science

- Commissioner Carlos Moedas delivers a keynote address on 'evidence-informed policy making' with a particular focus on the activities developed with the Science Advice Mechanism & Group of Chief Scientific Advisors workshop at the EP;
- Oct 9** College meeting *inc.* Contribution to the European Summit (Oct 17-18) on the next Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027; Eurogroup; Juncker receives Martin Schulz, former EP President & addresses the mini-plenary on preparations ahead of the European Council (Oct 17-18); 1st Vice-President Frans Timmermans meets Bill Gates, Co-chair and Trustee of Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; Cañete in San José, Costa Rica, attends the Political Dialogues '*Looking for high-level elements for an agreement on Article 6*' and '*Damage & Losses*'; Andriukaitis receives representatives of the Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries, Energy & Natural Resources (CAPERN) of the National Assembly of Québec, receives Anders Olauson, Honorary President of the European Patients Forum & delivers a speech at the dinner on the occasion of the visit of high-ranking representatives of German Health Insurance Funds;
- Oct 10** ECOFIN; Juncker receives President-elect Ursula von der Leyen; Katainen in Geneva (Switzerland), participates in a working lunch with Klaus Martin Schwab, Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum (WEF) & meets Roberto Azevêdo, Director-General of the World Trade Organisation (WTO); Hogan participates in a roundtable organised by the Commission with farm associations & environmental NGOs; Arilevante international exhibition 2019 in Bari (IT) www.agrilevante.eu/en/ (until Oct 13); ECJ ruling on conservation of natural habitats – wolf hunting (**C-674/17**);
- Oct 11** Juncker receives Moussa Faki, Chairperson of the African Union Commission & receives the Heads of the Representations of the Commission in the Member States for a working lunch; Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström in Göteborg (SE) (until Oct 12) - gives a lecture on trade policies & challenges in light of the next Commission at Brännpunkt Europa, University of Gothenburg; Vella receives Viorel Stefan, Member of the European Court of Auditors (ECA) from Romania;
- Oct 12** Malmström in Göteborg speaks at the seminar '*Europe 20 years ahead*' organised by the Centre for European Research & the Centre for European Studies at the city's University;

Management & Regulatory Committees

- Oct 9** Rural Development Committee;
- Oct 10** Committee for the Common Organisation of Agricultural Markets; Horizontal questions;
- Oct 11** Appeal Committee *inc.* exchange of views & vote on Genetically Modified maize stack *Bt11xMIR162xMIR604x1507x5307xGA21 and GM maize combining two, three, four or five of the single events Bt11, MIR162, MIR604, 1507, 5307 & GA21*; Standing Committee on Plant Health; Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food & Feed (PAFF) Controls & Import Conditions dedicated to the potential implications of the UK's withdrawal from the EU - inclusion on the list of 3rd countries, BSE status etc.

ENDS

The latest EU agriculture, environment & trade news

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- **POLISH FARM COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE FACES FURTHER QUIZZING BY MEPs**
- **WOJCIECHOWSKI STRESSES CONSENSUS & LONG-TERM VISION AT LACKLUSTRE HEARING**
- **EP's INTA COMMITTEE ENDORSES IRELAND'S HOGAN AS NEW EU TRADE CHIEF**
- **STELLAR PERFORMANCE BY HEALTH COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE KYRIAKIDES (CY)**
- **UK'S BORIS JOHNSON PUTS FORWARD 'PROTOCOL' FOR IRISH BORDER**

POLISH FARM COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE FACES FURTHER QUIZZING BY MEPs

Poland's candidate for the new Commission, Janusz Wojciechowski, faces more quizzing & a possible second 'resumed' hearing after failing to convince COMAGRI MEPs at his confirmation audition on Oct 1. His own ECR political group was the only one to back the Law & Justice (PiS) politician, while the biggest political group (EPP) complained that he failed to grasp the tough policy issues & too many of his responses were vague. Following the 3-hour grilling session with AGRI MEPs yesterday afternoon (from 2.30-5.30pm), Chairman Norbert Lins (EPP), after meeting Coordinators (in camera), wrote to Parliament President David Sassoli (dated Oct 2), requesting that the Commissioner-designate answer a series of additional written questions. The single-page letter, which is copied to Antonio Tajani (EPP, IT), Chair of the Conference of Committee Chairs & ENVI Committee Chair Pascal Canfin (Renew Europe, FR), is accompanied by three pages with seven detailed questions.

In specific terms, MEPs would like to know how the Polish politician would integrate the "long-term vision" for agriculture - to which he referred at the hearing - into the ongoing CAP reform process. They want him to explain how he sees the role of organic farming & new breeding techniques in the 'European Green Deal' - the flagship project of the incoming Commission College (2019-2024). Committee members also want concrete examples of where he sees potential for innovation & what he's going to do about land grabbing. The former member of the European Court of Auditors (since 2016) & ex-MEP (2004-2016) is asked how he proposes to ensure more equitable direct aid under the CAP framework & whether he could support "full convergence of payments per hectare within Member States in the next programming period." Wojciechowski is asked to comment on which initiatives he would take to ensure farmers take action to tackle antimicrobial resistance & animal welfare concerns "related to intensive livestock farming." The Committee wants to know how the Polish politician would improve the current CAP reform proposal & what the timeframe would be, with reference to his stance on the re-nationalisation of the policy. There are detailed questions on how he would incentivise farming to perform on biodiversity, climate & environment & how he would direct funding to small-holders. COMAGRI members would like to know if he will push a target of 50% pesticide reduction by 2025. There is also a call for the former Vice-Chair of the EP's Committee on Agriculture & Rural Development (2004-2016) to explain how future farm policy & the so-called 'Farm to Fork Strategy' would be inter-linked. The final question is on whether he agrees with the reduction in CAP expenditure planned for the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2021-27, with MEPs keen to get his view on the forthcoming transitional regulation. Sassoli is requested to send the list of supplementary questions to Commission President-elect Ursula von der Leyen, to be forwarded to Wojciechowski.

Written replies are expected by Friday afternoon (in English), with the translated responses due by Monday (Oct 7). A special sitting of the Agri Coordinators will convene on Monday to analyse the answers. Depending on the quality of the responses & if a two-thirds majority give the green light, the Coordinators will approve the assessment letter. If they are not satisfied, they may request a (shorter) second hearing (1½ hours). Possible dates are being floated at the time of going to press (Oct 14 or 15), with some suggesting it may even take place earlier. Such a move to call a 'resumed' hearing would have to be approved by the Parliament hierarchy *inc.* the Conference of Presidents, which would have the final say. Once hearings with the relevant Committees are over, the Conference of Presidents will decide on Oct 17 whether it has enough information to declare the process closed. If it has, the plenary in Strasbourg will vote on the Commission College as a whole on Oct 23.

WOJCIECHOWSKI STRESSES CONSENSUS & LONG-TERM VISION AT LACKLUSTRE HEARING

Poland's Commissioner-designate Janusz Wojciechowski struggled in his hearing with COMAGRI on Oct 1 in the face of MEPs who complained that his answers were non-committal & lacked clarity, with one, German Green MEP Martin Häusling accusing him of a "business as usual" approach, with answers that sounded like they were scripted by outgoing Farm Commissioner Phil Hogan. During his introduction before the EP's Committee on Agriculture & Rural Development on Tuesday afternoon (2.30-5.30pm), the Pole reminded the

hearing that he had been an MEP for 12 years, as well as Vice-President of the Agri Committee (2004-2016). He had spent the last three years at the European Court of Auditors (ECA), with responsibility for agriculture.

Answering in English to a barrage of questions from MEPs calling for change to reform plans & critical of the effect of trade deals on Europe's food & farming sector, Wojciechowski came across as ill-prepared, failing to deliver clear & precise answers, with sources pointing to his lack of engagement with DG AGRI officials over the past number of weeks. MEPs challenged his apparent view that CAP reform must be on the basis of the (current) Commission proposals, even if he conceded that it could be changed, in light of the reservations voiced by the Luxembourg-based ECA [see AF87-18].

The right-wing Law & Justice (PiS) politician started by highlighting the rate at which European farms were going out of business. The 64-year-old explained that between 2005 & 2015, the EU lost more than four million holdings. They were going at the rate of over a thousand a day. One reason he had decided to be a candidate was that "this is a chance to create a long-term vision for European agriculture." The CAP had been a success story in the EU. "We have food security," he said, but there were many weaknesses in the policy. The problems of the CAP affected not just farmers but also society, with relevance to food safety & food security. "Agriculture is also very important for the planet," he underlined, citing climate change, biodiversity & animal welfare as some of the key issues involved. It was very important to have a true picture of the current situation & his first action, if confirmed, would be to present a report on the position of European agriculture. Referring to the flagship 'European Green Deal', the Commission-hopeful said he was convinced that green agriculture was the best solution for the industry's future. Environmental farming was a big opportunity, especially for small & family farms. He promised to "strongly support all actions which will be helpful for small & medium sized farming," while he would be open for dialogue with the EP, farmers, farm organisations & NGOs.

Italian MEP Herbert Dorfmann (EPP) noted that the ECA had been "very critical of the reform proposals." He also raised the issue of "huge land purchases going on by external actors." Wojciechowski said he would implement a CAP reform based on Hogan's proposals, but "this is a chance to change the proposal." "I'm open for further discussion," he said. What the Commission had produced was "only the initial proposals", while the plan was "not the Bible." Dorfmann (from South Tyrol) asked whether he thought that the system of historic payments should be given up. The Commissioner-designate said he agreed that this was "a question which we should discuss." Italian Socialist Paolo De Castro said the world faced a global emergency on climate & the EU needed a shared approach, yet the reform plans actually "delegate to the Member States." In response, the former High Court Judge (1991-1993) said there needed to be a discussion on how much decision-making would be at European level, with common objectives & indicators. De Castro underscored it was vital to have amendments to the current texts. German liberal Ulrike Müller (Renew Europe) raised the question of the transitional arrangements (valid for one year & due to be tabled in the coming weeks). Wojciechowski explained that the idea was to continue the current CAP with a new budget. "We will be ready to start the new CAP from Jan 1, 2022," he said. The transition regulation was necessary & the CAP should not be interrupted. Speaking on behalf of the Green/EFA group, Germany's Martin Häusling accused him of giving "answers I thought Hogan had written down for you," & complained of a lack of responses on biodiversity loss or greenhouse gases. Complaining that it was "very difficult to present everything in a two minute answer," the former President of the Polish Supreme Audit Office (1995-2001) said "of course Mr. Häusling I will present my approach ... my proposals to support farming, which are environmentally-friendly & protect biodiversity." Czech ID euro-deputy Ivan David wanted to know whether the Polish candidate would support "trade negotiations which allow huge amounts of imports of agricultural products." The Commissioner-designate said he understood that the farming community was concerned. "Farmers should not be the victim of international trade agreements," he said. The EU should require the same standards of countries that sold it farm products as it insists on from its own farmers. A fellow Pole, Zbigniew Kuźmiuk (ECR) complained that although the EU was the top exporter of processed food it had a deficit in unprocessed food products. Wojciechowski said that was an argument that European agriculture needed more support to ensure food security for its citizens. Ireland's Luke Ming Flanagan (GUE/NGL) raised the issue of beef imports & trade deals. "We have about 300 000 tonnes of beef being brought into Europe every year," he said, while Brexit would mean the loss of a market for over 250 000t. Would there be any extra support? "Surely we should take care of our own market first, & look after others later?," the Co. Roscommon politician said. In response, Wojciechowski confirmed that he planned to visit Ireland & ask farmers there what they needed. Another Irish leftist MEP, Matt Carthy (*Sinn Féin*), referred the Commissioner-designate back to his suggestion that he'd start with an analysis of the state of farming & why so many farms were being lost. "It's because farms aren't viable," Carthy said. "Farmers aren't making a profit &, therefore, they're being forced off their farms." He wanted to know what the Pole would do to "ensure the redistribution of farm payments & to tackle the dominance of a small number of corporate interests in the agricultural sector?" Wojciechowski's answer was a commitment to be open to listening to farmers, while "capping might be one solution." The Carrickmacross man wasn't satisfied. "I don't know what that was, Commissioner-designate, but it wasn't an answer to my question," he said. "I have a feeling that you're going to be back with us again before this is finally over." This week's audition came after the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) said at the end of last week (Sept 27) that it had concluded an

investigation into possible abuse of expenses by Wojciechowski by deciding no action should be taken against the former MEP. OLAF did recommend that the EP should recover just over €11 240 from the Commissioner-designate & look into its rules on travel expenses & subsistence allowances.

EP's INTA COMMITTEE ENDORSES IRELAND'S HOGAN AS NEW EU TRADE CHIEF

MEPs have agreed to the appointment of Ireland's Phil Hogan to the post of Trade Commissioner in the new College, after a polished performance at his confirmation hearing on Monday evening (Sept 30), despite the opposition of the far-right Identity & Democracy (ID) & Green/EFA political groups. The International Trade Committee hearing, to which members of the Foreign Affairs & Development Committees were invited, focussed on the need for fair & sustainable trade, with MEPs pressing to make sure that sustainability was enshrined in all future agreements & that European farmers must not lose out. During the three-hour grilling session, he faced a series of questions on trade relations with the US & China, the recent pact with the Latin American Mercosur bloc & the impact of climate change.

GUE/NGL Trade Coordinator Helmut Scholz argued initially, at a meeting directly after the hearing (from 9.30pm), that more questions should be put to the Irish politician along, possibly, with another hearing, but did not get the support of any other group. With the choice narrowed to approval of the appointment, or outright rejection, a further meeting to write the Committee's letter in response to the hearing took place on Oct 1. The GUE/NGL group insisted on the inclusion of references to issues in trade accords, inc. clauses on Trade & Sustainable Development, Human Rights & Democracy as well as action to adapt trade policy to the requirements of the Paris Agreement on climate change. In the end a two-thirds majority was achieved in the Trade Committee with the thumbs up from the S&D, ECR, Renew Europe & GUE/NGL groups, while ID & the Greens voted against. The largest group in the EP - the European People's Party (EPP) of which Fine Gael is a member – said the trade portfolio would be in a "safe pair of hands."

Kicking off the audition on Sept 30, the German Socialist MEP Bernd Lange, as INTA Chair, said that "we're living in challenging times," citing the 'crisis' in the multi-lateral trading system, Brexit, differences with the US over Boeing & ongoing WTO reform. Even so, the EU had managed to establish "good bilateral trade agreements." The meeting was largely held in English, despite the availability of 23 languages of translation, making it possible, as the Chair pointed out, to pose questions to the Irish Commissioner 'as *Gaeilge*'.

The outgoing Agriculture Commissioner reminded the Committee that he was no stranger to international trade having worked closely with his colleague Cecilia Malmström. The *Fine Gael* politician stressed that the "EU can & must provide real opportunities for substantial growth," while at the same time "offering European businesses a level playing field & protection from unfair trading practices." He undertook to build "on the transparent way" trade policy had been done during the previous Parliament. The Tullaroan man identified a series of priorities including strengthening the WTO as the rules-based system, continuing to build partnerships, opening markets & making trade "a reality for EU businesses of all sizes." There was also a need to ensure that the right tools were available to keep trade fair. On the rules-based system, the former Minister for the Environment, Community & Local Government (2011-2014) insisted that the world trade bloc was at the core of multilateralism although it was facing its biggest challenge yet. If confirmed he would do his "utmost to prevent the collapse of the WTO dispute settlement system," & "reinvigorate the negotiating function" of the international body. The rulebook on trade needs to be updated particularly to deal with what he called the "rampant use of subsidies by China & others," & "forced technology transfers." The 59-year-old stressed the importance of the international role of the US which had supported the global system. Some of Washington's concerns about the system were "ones that we share, though we firmly believe that changes are best achieved within rules." The relationship with Beijing was "also important & vital," he said. "Our companies need to be able to compete in a level playing field," something which was "not the case today." There was a need for "effective reciprocity." Referring briefly to Brexit, Hogan told the Committee that the EU's executive had "prepared exhaustively for a no deal scenario." Africa was also a priority, with the Africa-Europe Alliance pointing the way forward, while he promised to continue ongoing trade negotiations with Australia & New Zealand. The veteran public representative ended his opening gambit by telling Committee members that "trade must not only be fair & open, but also sustainable," while he stands "ready to make full use of the instruments available."

During the question & answer session that followed, Luxembourg's Christophe Hansen (EPP) focused initially on trade relations between the EU & US which he described as "the most deeply integrated economic regions in the world." "The policy of the current US administration is jeopardising stability," he said & asked Hogan how he was going to "reset the transatlantic relationship?" The Kilkenny man said that "during moments of heightened tension we must not lose sight of the bigger picture." He was ready to engage politically with Washington to resolve differences & the way to do that was to focus on the "mutual positives." Hansen came back with a question on the 15-year EU/US Airbus battle - with the US targeting those EU countries that are home to suppliers of Airbus (the UK, FR, DE & ES), in an attempt to break the unity of the bloc. *In a ruling issued earlier today (Oct 2), WTO gave Washington the green light to impose tariffs on \$7.5 billion (€6.8bn) of EU imports ranging from aircraft to cheese/butter and sweaters to Irish & Scotch Whiskies from Oct 18. The tariffs would be set at a 10% rate on aircraft & 25% on agricultural & other items.* Hogan

said that Malmström had put forward a possible solution to ensure that Airbus comes into full compliance with WTO rules. It didn't make sense for the US to retaliate, particularly as they might have a problem with an upcoming judgment on the US aircraft manufacturer Boeing. "Europe has to stand up for itself as well," he said.

For the S&D group, Belgium's Kathleen Van Brempt asked about chapters on Trade & Sustainable Development (TSD) in trade accords & insisted that current rules were not working, citing a row with South Korea over workers' rights. Hogan explained that the case was the first time which the EU had used dispute settlement measures to bring a trading partner into line. "We should build on this," he said. Van Brempt wanted to see "pre-ratification conditions" to give the Parliament leverage in the Mercosur & other trade pacts & asked for the Commissioner-designate's support. Hogan responded by noting that Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro had changed his position after getting elected & decided to sign up to the Paris agreement. "All of us are appalled at what we see in the Amazon," he outlined. "The final ratification stage is where you have leverage," he told MEPs, sounding unconvinced by the idea of pre-ratification. Furthermore, Hogan pledged to use existing & future trade agreements to advance the EU's climate & sustainable development goals. Signing trade deals with countries across the globe offered the EU leverage in making sure other jurisdictions respected environmental protection. Renew Europe's Karin Karlsbro (SE) wanted to know if & when a deal on digital trade could be completed. In response, Hogan expressed concern over the effect of subsidies on the market in the digital area, notably by state-owned Chinese businesses. The EU had an open market & "sometimes it's abused," he said. He referred to the use of trade defence measures. "We need these instruments & we need to be able to enforce them as well." The Swedish liberal euro-deputy also wanted to know how he planned to "further improve the involvement of civil society." The would-be Trade Commissioner said he was "very happy to engage with civil society & stakeholders." "We are open to whatever discussions are necessary to communicate the benefits of trade," he said.

For the Green/EFA group, Finnish MEP Heidi Hautala called for "zero tolerance to child labour" & also raised the issue of deforestation. She suggested mandatory due diligence for supply chains. Hogan pointed out that the Committee could put forward proposals & gave the regulation on conflict minerals, which enters into force in 2021 as an example. "We made a lot of progress," he said. "Trade can play a part." German ID member Markus Buchheit raised the impact of trade deals on farmers. "When we look at Mercosur there are concerns," he said. "How are you going to deal with that?" The outgoing EU Farm chief said he understood the industry's concerns, while international trade accords had produced "a positive outcome for agriculture overall." In the bilateral deal with the Latin American trade bloc, he believed the limited volume of Tariff Rate Quotas (TRQs) meant the outcome was balanced. Belgium's Geert Bourgeois (ECR) said he believed in free & fair trade but "we need to protect ourselves against unfair dumping." Would Hogan take timely measures "to protect whole sectors & the jobs therein? The Commissioner-designate said that responses needed to be faster. "What we're looking at very intensively ... is how we can get earlier resolution," he said. He focused on a row over Colombian measures on Belgian frozen fries. Bourgeois suggested it was a job for the new Chief Trade Enforcement Officer. Germany's (Die Linke) Helmut Scholz (GUE/NGL) also raised the question of due diligence in the supply chain. "If this Committee decides to prioritise this initiative on due diligence ... I'd be very happy to engage with you on what the scope of that particular proposal should be," Hogan said.

STELLAR PERFORMANCE BY HEALTH COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE KYRIAKIDES

Cypriot Health Commissioner-designate Stella Kyriakides focussed on an all-encompassing approach to health at her confirmation hearing with MEPs yesterday evening (Oct 1). Challenged by members of the Environment, Public Health & Food Safety Committee from 6.30-9.30pm, the Cypriot lawmaker promised action on endocrine disruptors & pledged that more would be done to protect bees from damage by pesticides. The vocal advocate for cancer awareness back in her native Cyprus repeatedly told the meeting she would do more to tackle cancer. The Democratic Rally (EPP) politician & former clinical psychologist began the hearing by stressing her commitment to make a mark in patient care in Europe & as a breast cancer survivor herself expressed her dedication to contribute to the fight against the disease. Speaking almost entirely in English in a meeting at which most MEPs spoke in their native languages, Kyriakides opened by saying that health issues were of the utmost importance for European citizens & that the EU had some of the world's highest standards in animal & plant health. Collective health in society depended on individual health & also on having a healthy planet. "Health is an area where the EU should strive for more," she said. The 63-year-old would be "thrilled to lead our work on the new Farm to Fork Strategy on sustainable food," telling MEPs that they would be key partners. It would involve addressing risks like endocrine disruptors & "reducing our dependence on pesticides." "We also need to come down on issues such as food fraud," she added.

During the question & answer session that ensued, Swedish Socialist MEP Jytte Guteland stressed that exposure to even low doses of endocrine disruptors could lead to a range of diseases. "It's not possible for humans to avoid these substances," she said calling for "proper horizontal measures," "instead of hiding behind the Commission's very weak strategy." Kyriakides pointed out that endocrine disruptors were expressly mentioned in her mission letter. "It shows we're going to do more," she said. The materials were going to be "an important part of the work of the Commission." French MEP Pascal Canfin, who briefly

relinquished the Chair of the meeting to speak on behalf of Renew Europe, called on Kyriakides to support reductions in pesticide use. The Commission-hopeful pointed out that there was already strong legislation on pesticides but it "was not properly implemented." She hoped that changes in the general food law would be helpful in that direction. "I can commit to decreasing the dependence we have on pesticides," the former President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (Oct 2017-Jan 2018) said. If appointed as the next EU Health chief, the Cypriot politician would also invest in funding for low-risk alternatives. "Citizens are very concerned," she said. "We need to respect them." Canfin raised the impact on bees & called for a commitment from Kyriakides to follow the EFSA proposal. She responded by saying that "there will be no lowering of the bar on bee protection, or other pollinators." The EU's exec had banned three neonicotinoids in 2013, but there had been differences in the application of EFSA's guidance on bees. "We need to find a consensus," Kyriakides added. Michèle Rivasi of the Green/EFA group said that the Committee had "a lot of arguments with your predecessor on pesticides, particularly endocrine disrupters & glyphosate." "Pesticides should not be used if they have a chronic effect on bees," the French MEP said. In response, Kyriakides said she could hear the frustration. "I can commit to trying to build a consensus so we can become more effective (&) apply the legislation," she promised. Rivasi complained that the would-be Commissioner was not being bold enough. "Make it a political issue, not a technical one," she said. Fellow Green MEP from Luxembourg Tilly Metz raised the issue of GMOs. She wanted to know if the Commissioner-designate would "commit to respecting democracy & to listening, as you said, carefully to Parliament & the Member States on this issue," & "stop saying 'yes' to GMOs when there's no qualified majority in favour." "Decisions need to be based on science," Kyriakides insisted. "EFSA authorises only safe GMOs." Commenting after the 3-hour grilling, Peter Liese MEP, EPP Group Spokesperson for COMENVI said he had "no doubt that Stella Kyriakides will be an excellent Health Commissioner." "Aside from working in the domain of health, she also has practical experience as a clinical psychologist. Her professional aptitude is undisputed, as she impressively demonstrated today," the German euro-deputy from Olsberg concluded. All the main EP political groups – with the exception of Identity & Democracy (ID) - backed the Cypriot candidate, while the (Associated) COMAGRI also gave her the green light.

UK'S BORIS JOHNSON PUTS FORWARD 'PROTOCOL' FOR IRISH BORDER

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson wrote to Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker earlier today (Oct 2), with a new 'protocol' on the Irish border - supposedly designed to replace the 'backstop' in the original Withdrawal Agreement. Widely leaked ahead of its publication, the new UK plan to replace the "bridge to nowhere" appears to have zero chance of being acceptable to the EU or its Member States. In the 4-page correspondence* issued after his speech to the Conservative Party conference, Johnson proposes "the potential creation of an all-island regulatory zone on the island of Ireland, covering all goods including agri-food". The Northern Ireland Executive & Assembly would have to endorse the arrangements before they come into force & every four years afterwards. "If consent is not secured, the arrangements would lapse," the Conservative leader continues. Northern Ireland would be "fully part of the UK customs territory" under this arrangement. In a letter apparently meant more for public consumption in the UK than to impress the EU, the New York born politician tells Juncker that "there is now very little time in which to negotiate a new Agreement between the UK & the EU under Article 50." With just four weeks to go ahead of the Brexit deadline (Oct 31), Johnson says "our proposal removes the so called 'backstop' in the previous Withdrawal Agreement." "A new way forward must be found." A 7-page explanatory note* accompanying the letter says that all goods moving between the Republic & Northern Ireland would have to be "notified using a declaration". An actual proposal has not yet been released. However, Ireland's broadcaster RTÉ (Raidió Teilifís Éireann) has reported that the plan envisages a series of 'customs clearance centres' five to ten miles either side of the border, creating an exclusion zone which would cut off the north western part of the Republic of Ireland from the rest of the country. In a statement responding to the letter, Juncker said that the Commission, which has received a legal text, would examine it "objectively." Following a phone call with Johnson today, Juncker noted that there were "still some problematic points that will need further work in the coming days, notably with regards to the governance of the backstop." "The delicate balance struck by the Good Friday Agreement must be preserved." *An Taoiseach* Leo Varadkar, who spoke with the embattled UK Premier by telephone this evening, said the proposals "do not fully meet the agreed objectives of the backstop." But he vowed to study them in more detail & consult with the EU institutions & other national capitals, ahead of further talks with Johnson next week. *Tánaiste* Simon Coveney said that "it doesn't seem like the basis for agreement, that's for sure." Meanwhile, Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn said he "cannot see" Johnson's proposals getting support, while Scottish National Party leader Nicola Sturgeon said that it was "hard to escape (the) conclusion that they're designed to fail." LibDem leader Jo Swinson said on Tuesday (Oct 1) that it was "increasingly clear Boris Johnson isn't serious about getting a deal," while her colleague Tom Brake (MP) described the offer, as leaked, as "nothing short of derisory." Speaking on the final day of the Tory Party conference in Manchester (Sept 29-Oct 2), Johnson insisted that "what people want, what leavers want, what remainers want, what the whole world wants, is to be calmly & sensibly done with the subject & to move on." "We are coming out of the EU on Oct 31 come what may," he assured the party faithful.*See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-proposals-for-a-new-protocol-on-irelandnorthern-ireland>

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