

# Newsletter CEPM

LES DERNIÈRES NOUVELLES DE LA PRODUCTION EUROPÉENNE DE MAÏS • THE LATEST NEWS IN EUROPEAN MAIZE PRODUCTION



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## > Editorial: Being a driving force for the future of agriculture

Lobbying is the science of opposites... Anticipating, proposing, convincing and being credible are the foundations of the profession. But when necessary, we must also know how to oppose in order to make better proposals.

The huge tractor demonstration sounded like a thunder in Brussels. Although it was entirely peaceful, the sheer size of the demonstration was a wake-up call to the highest levels of the Commission. Nothing will ever be the same again. The first measures have already been taken as a matter of urgency, and the most flagrant excesses (set-aside!) have been erased. Let's not talk about simplification, but about reducing complexity.

We can hope that the balance of power between institutions, NGOs and farmers will be restored somewhat. And the result of the European elections (a second thunder in the Brussels sky!) could strengthen the movement underway.

The stakes are crucial. It is said that the original CAP was invented in the fields by visionary farm leaders and creative European civil servants. We also remember the annual "price packages". How can we restore agriculture's rightful place in the food chain? How can we combine sustainability and new technologies? How can we manage future enlargements without penalising the existing rural fabric? How can we restore the role of the agro-industry in exporting and conquering foreign markets? Finally, how can we restore Europe's agricultural ambitions and give it real weight in the concert of productive nations?

The paralysis we've seen for too many years, between misunderstood societal trends, internal and external political upheavals, and current and future health and climate crises, must finally be overcome.

This is our mission, and we must find solutions and propose them as far upstream as possible. Dedicating a significant proportion of our intellectual resources and mobilising our networks and information relays will therefore be an absolute priority for CEPM over the next 12 months. This will of course begin with in-depth work with the European institutions, which will be renewed during the year.

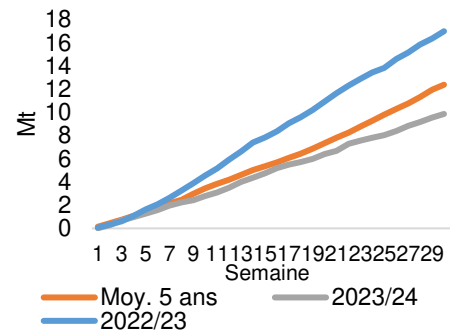
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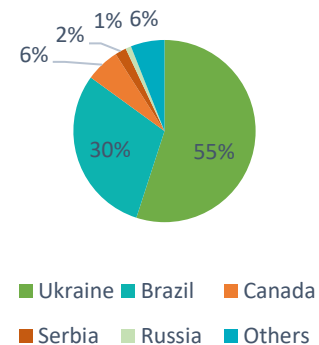
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### MAIZE KEY FIGURES:

**Cumulative European imports of corn from 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2023**



**Origin of European imports of corn from 01/07/2021 to 22/01/2024**



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## CAP: COMMISSION PROPOSES REDUCTION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN FOR FARMERS

As a response to farmers protest across the EU, on 15 March, the European Commission presented its proposal to simplify rules and reduce the administrative burden EU farmers currently face.

The proposal is a targeted review of the good agricultural and environmental conditions (GAEC) in the CAP:

- **GAEC 8 (Landscape features):** Farmers must maintain landscape features but will no longer need to have a minimum amount of land left fallow. Farmers may choose to create new landscape features for which they would receive funding via eco-schemes in strategic plans.
- **GAEC 7 (Crop rotation):** Farmers will have the option to either rotate or to diversify their crops, whenever diversification is allowed under strategic plans.
- **GAEC 6 (Soil cover):** EU countries will have flexibility to define to define “sensitive periods” under the definition of soil cover and what actions can be taken on this.

- **Compliance flexibility:** EU countries may exempt farmers to comply with rules on tillage, soil cover, and crop rotation in GAECs 5, 6, and 7. Farms under 10 hectares will be exempted from controls and penalties related to compliance.

Following the approval of new rules by the Special Committee on Agriculture in the Council, measures must now be approved in the European Parliament before they can enter into force. If approved, measures will apply retroactively to January 2024 and will be valid until the end of the current CAP in 2027.

CEPM believes that the changes are a step in the right direction, offering farmers the flexibility they need to make the transition to more sustainable agriculture. CEPM calls on the Member States to seize these opportunities and on the Commission to keep this perspective in its proposal for the future CAP.

## TOWARDS A NEW EUROPEAN BLUE DEAL

For a couple of months now, water has been under the spotlight as a topic for further consideration in the Commission’s agenda. Besides the ongoing work on the Water Framework Directive and on the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive, water has been included in the scope of the recently adopted Industrial Emissions Directive, where also the agricultural sector is concerned.

On the climate and environmental side of things, the Water Resilience Initiative, expected in December 2023, was never published. Instead, the Commission decided to take a “strategic pause” and reassess its priorities in view of publishing a more “holistic” text taking into account the impacts of water on different domains, such as agriculture and energy, the so-called “food-water-energy nexus”.

A group of 23 MEPs plus 1 member of the European Economic and Social Committee signed a joint letter addressed to Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and to Commissioner Maros Sefcovic asking for the

Commission to step up action and adopt a comprehensive policy on water, one that moves away from the current siloed approach neglecting other issues such as agriculture. They named it the new “European Blue Deal”.

Water re-use, better river basin management, soil moisture levels, water leakage in pipelines, and the intensity of irrigation are all aspects that will inevitably be considered in this context.

Any effort to adopt new rules for water resilience will have to be measured against the possible negative repercussions on the agricultural sector. Climate change requires better water management, and agriculture cannot do without it. Whatever the future proposals, recognition of the contribution of farmers to solving the problem is essential, and CEPM will ensure that this is the case.

## UKRAINE: TRADE LIBERALISATION RULES ADOPTED

Following an intense debate in the course of 3 months, the EU legislator managed to agree on a deal to extend trade liberalisation measures with Ukraine on 8 April. In a nutshell:

- **Import duties and quotas** on Ukrainian agricultural exports will be suspended for another year, until 5 June 2025.
- Should there be a **significant disruption to the EU market** or the markets of one or more EU countries due to Ukrainian imports, the Commission can take swift action and impose any measure it deems necessary.
- For **sensitive agricultural products**, including maize, tariffs will be reimposed if imports surpass the average of import volumes recorded in the second half of 2021, and all of 2022 and 2023.
- Following the adoption of the text, the Commission will discuss a permanent tariff liberalisation with Ukraine under the review process of the Association Agreement.

The text was already endorsed in the European Parliament by the Trade Committee (INTA) on 9 April and the Plenary of the European Parliament endorsed it during the 24 April session.

The final response is limited in its ability to offer additional relief for farmers and manufacturers, partly due to the exclusion of common wheat and barley from the legislation. With time running out before current temporary measures expire and Parliament goes on break, there is a pressing need for a solution. Attention now turns to renegotiating the agreement with Ukraine, aiming for better protection for our producers and adherence to their standards by Ukrainian counterparts.

Given Russia's aggression, supporting Ukrainian farmers remains crucial. Despite significant exports to Europe with the current arrangement, this solidarity shouldn't solely rely on farmers. We should collectively plan better for future measures to integrate Ukraine.

## WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE NEXT POLITICAL CYCLE

2024 is a pivotal year for political transformation. With 720 members of the European Parliament to be elected, 27 Commissioners to be (re)appointed and the selection of a new President for the European Council, anticipation is in vogue among the contenders for these offices. The landscape will not fully take shape before the end of the year, but one trend seems clear: the right will emerge victorious.

Both in the Parliament and in the College of Commissioners, the Socialists (S&D), the Greens (Greens/EFA), the Centre (Renew) and the Left (GUE/NGL) are likely to suffer significant losses in their ranks. For agriculture, a more protectionist political landscape will have different implications:

- **Trade:** with only two major agreements signed in the last five years, the appetite for new trade pacts is virtually non-existent. The resistance of certain EU countries and the protectionism of the United States and China will require in-depth reflection on the introduction of mirror clauses in trade negotiations and autonomous mirror measures applying to imports, outside these agreements.

- **Environment and climate:** The message is clear: fewer environmental rules for the time being. However, climate ambitions cannot waver and, although we can expect a strategic pause on new legislation, the EU has a lot to do in this area, particularly for agriculture, which remains the biggest emitter. Water is another area to keep an eye on.
- **CAP:** simplification is the order of the day. As indicated in the last newsletter, the derogations recently adopted for farmers' demonstrations will remain in place until at least 2027. Considerable thought will need to be given to Ukraine's inclusion in the EU (at least the single market) and to how the CAP budget will be managed. The conclusions of the strategic dialogue on agriculture are also awaited.

A myriad of other considerations concerning the future of the EU could be presented in the context of the current geopolitical context. In any event, the protection of European agriculture will be an important aspect of our European way of life.

## NGTs: STATE-OF-PLAY

Contrary to initial expectations, approval of a regulatory framework for NGTs at EU level has proved anything but easy. Very few measures have been taken:

- The European Parliament adopted its report on 7 February. MEPs proposed two categories of NGT: NGT 1 for genetically modified plants similar to conventional plants, exempt from GMO legislation, and NGT 2 for plants that have undergone complex modifications, subject to stricter rules. They insist on mandatory labelling of all NGT plant products, in contrast to the Commission's limited labelling of NGT 1 seeds.

- At the Council, the Belgian Presidency confirmed that there was not enough time to conclude negotiations with Parliament before the elections. Among other things, the Member States are still divided over traceability, labelling and the issue of patents.

Parliament's vote is a step in the right direction. In fact, it confirmed its vote again at the plenary session on 26 April. However, developments within the Council must be approached with caution, particularly if the Member States adopt a stricter vision of patentability, which would end up posing real problems for investment and innovation.

### Meetings of the CEPM and its member organisations 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2024

- ✓ **CEPM :**
  - **15 May 2024** : General Assembly + Board of Directors & Conference on the role of maize in Europe, Paris – France
- ✓ **France:**
  - **3 April 2024:** General Assembly /Sorghum ID Administration Council, Paris – France
- ✓ **Romania:**
  - **23-24 May 2024:** “The National Football Championship of Farmers”, Bucarest <https://campionatulfermierilor.ro/>
  - **28-30 May 2024:** Regional workshops on technical solutions to help farmers regain their competitiveness under EU regulations
  - **6 June 2024** : “Wheat Day Baragan”, a demonstration platform showcasing the latest technologies in wheat growing

### Civil Dialogue Groups 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2024

- **Civil Dialogue Group on Agricultural Markets:** Wine: 14.05.2024 / Sugar: 06.06.2024 / Silage and energy crops: 13.06.2024 / Rice : 21.06.2024
- **Joint meeting on the CAP Strategic Plans and Horizontal Matters on Environment and Climate Change:** 11.06.2024
- **Civil Dialogue Group on Quality and Promotion:** 25.06.2024
- **Civil Dialogue Group on International Aspects of Agriculture:** 11.04.2024
- **Civil Dialogue Group on Organic Farming:** 16.05.2024

## CEPM Members



GERMANY	<i>Deutsches Maiskomitee (DMK)</i>
BULGARIA	<i>National Grain Producers Association (NGPA) et Conseil des Organisations Agricoles</i>
SPAIN	<i>Asociacion General de Productores de Maíz de España (AGPME)</i>
FRANCE	<i>Association Générale des Producteurs de Maïs (AGPM)</i>
HUNGARY	<i>Vetőmag Szövetség Szakmaközi Szervezet és TermékTanács (VSZT)</i>
ITALY	<i>Associazione Italiana Maiscoltori (AMI)</i>
POLAND	<i>Polski Związek Producentów Kukurydzy (PZPK)</i>
PORTUGAL	<i>ANPROMIS</i>
ROUMANIA	<i>Association Roumaine des Producteurs de Maïs (APPR)</i>
SLOVAKIA	<i>Zväz pestovateľov a spracovateľov kukurice (ZPSK)</i>