



Welcome to the latest edition of Brussels in Brief. The BAB team is here, we are in Brussels and we want to work with you and your members. You can find [here](#) a who's who of the team. Please feel free to contact us.

MEPs overwhelmingly vote to ban cages for farmed animals

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on 10 June urging the Commission to ban cages for farmed animals by 2027. The resolution, passed by an overwhelming majority (558 votes in favour to 37 against), came in response to a citizens' initiative, 'End the Cage Age', which attracted over 1.4 million signatures. MEPs also stipulated that adequate support for farmers transitioning away from cages needed to form part of the package and called for the same standard to apply to imports.

The vote adds pressure on the Commission, which is expected to officially respond to the petition on 30 June and raises questions about how the EU executive will design such a policy move without causing economic damage to farmers or falling foul of global trade rules.

Following the vote, Copa-Cogeca's Secretary General Pekka Pesonen said: "This parliamentary resolution shows the limits of the initiative. Farmers are ready to make more investments but not at the cost of their survival...The European Commission will have to demonstrate how we will avoid double standards in our imports...and how we will keep food prices stable." Copa-Cogeca supported the Parliament's call for a comprehensive and evidence-based impact assessment with scientific and solid agronomic foundations, saying this must occur before a phasing-out date is set.

EU prepares to launch carbon border adjustment mechanism (CBAM)

The Commission is due to publish its CBAM proposal on 14 July as part of the "Fit for 55" climate package. Leaked drafts of the proposal show it will include the setting up of a "CBAM authority", with the measure being phased in from 2023 and a full implementation from 2026. The CBAM would apply to steel, iron, cement, fertilisers, aluminium and

electricity, according to the documents, with both direct and indirect emissions being included. Importers will need to provide data for imported goods, including “a unique identifier assigned by the CBAM authority,” the type and quantity, country of origin and what calculation has been used. Importers would be required to buy digital certificates, with each one representing a tonne of carbon dioxide emissions embedded in their imported goods. The price of the certificates will be linked to the cost of permits in the EU carbon market and based on the average price of auctions of EU carbon permits each week. The leaked draft is already attracting significant reaction amongst industry participants and it’s quite possible that the proposal will be tweaked prior to adoption by the Commission in July. Major exporting countries such as Brazil, Australia and China are already mobilising against the proposal.

MEPs call for legally binding biodiversity and forestry targets

The European Parliament approved a report on the EU’s 2030 Biodiversity Strategy last week calling for legally binding measures to protect nature and biodiversity. The MEPs, who voted 515 in favour and 90 against the report, repeated their call to ensure that at least 30% of the EU’s land and sea be protected by 2030, of which at least one-third – including all remaining primary and old-growth forests in the EU – should be given even stricter protection. The Parliament’s report adds pressure on the European Commission to propose concrete measures, including legally binding targets.



Swiss reject tax hike to cut carbon emissions and pesticide ban

Swiss voters on Sunday rejected proposals to further reduce CO2 emissions by 2030 and to ban pesticides (both synthetic and organic). The proposed “carbon dioxide law” included an increase in taxes on fuels and the introduction of a tax on airline tickets from Switzerland. It was defeated in a referendum by 51.59% of the electorate.

Voters also rejected two attempts to ban pesticides. One proposal named “For clean drinking water” called for an end to support payments to farms using any pesticides but the use of pesticides would still be allowed. The second proposal named “Against pesticides” called for a total ban on all synthetic pesticides for all users. This included a ban on all imports of foodstuff produced using such pesticides.

BAB continuing lobbying for reciprocal trade of seed potatoes

The BAB team has been working alongside European contacts to pull together organisations, representing potato farmers and traders across the EU and the UK, who

support urgent action to ensure the reciprocal trade of seed potatoes. Disappointingly, but predictably, calls from across the sector to find a workable solution to the impasse were rejected by the Commission in the SCOPAFF meeting last week. The COM maintain its political position emphasising that it cannot allow a different approach for the UK without dynamic alignment on plant health rules in the UK. We will continue to work with European contacts to find a model that would be acceptable to both sides to allow reciprocal trade to continue, but doubtless the solution is wrapped up in the bigger discussion on the TCA and NIP.



EU extends steel safeguards another three years

The EU will extend the safeguard measures on imports of steel products for another three years, maintaining the product scope unchanged and allowing for a 3% annual liberalisation of the tariff-rate quotas, according to an official notification sent to the WTO and released 11 June. EU countries will vote on the proposal this week as the extension has to be in place before 30 June, when the current quotas expire. The vote will not be uncontroversial. The EU imposed the safeguards in 2018 to avert a glut of steel caused by Chinese overcapacity and exacerbated by U.S. tariffs, which deflected steel onto the EU market. The proposed extension would mean the EU's safeguards will be in place for longer than three years, meaning that WTO members will be legally allowed to retaliate. U.S. President Joe Biden and EU leaders Charles Michel and Ursula von der Leyen agreed on a working group to overcome their dispute on steel and aluminum duties "as soon as possible," von der Leyen said today, 15 June.

€23 Million bill for those behind the 2017 Fipronil scandal

Called Belgium's biggest ever food-fraud trial, last week saw the sentencing of those behind the scandal in 2017 when Fipronil, used for flea control, was discovered in hen's eggs intended for human consumption. A company based in Zandhoven were traced as the source of the problem, having used the non-authorized insecticide Fipronil to "treat" mites in hen houses.

Hundreds of poultry farms in Belgium and the Netherlands were closed down, hens culled and eggs destroyed. The investigation revealed that potentially contaminated eggs has been delivered to 15 countries, including the UK prompting high alert for farming unions and government that Fipronil had not been used here and domestic production was not contaminated. Alongside suspended sentences and fines, the

defendants have been ordered to pay €23 million – to the federal food safety agency, the Flemish waste management company and a number of private claimants.

Irish Farmers' Association (IFA) holds 'Day of Action'

Members of IFA protested in 31 towns across Ireland on 11 June to draw attention to the way incoming policies, such as the new CAP and Ireland's 2050 Climate Action Bill, could affect farmers' incomes. The Climate Bill sets a target for Ireland to be climate neutral by 2050 and halve all carbon emissions by 2030.

The IFA has also warned that the direction the new CAP is going in could be ruinous for the rural economy in Ireland. Protesters turned out in their tractors and adhered to COVID guidelines. IFA President Tim Cullinan said "Farmers want to work with the government on climate action, but there has to be real engagement. Setting targets without any regard for the consequences won't work."



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