

> Editorial: National Strategic Plans, a democratic denial

The Commission must be recognised as having a great talent for taking full advantage of the guerrilla war for power that the European institutions are waging. This is demonstrated every day with the delegated acts and, very recently, with the taxonomy, the latest avatar of Community policies.

The implementation of the National Strategic Plans offers us a new example. Officially, the Commission's aim is to "help" the Member States to support the implementation of the CAP, with the ulterior motive of "raising" the Union's environmental ambition.

In reality, the Commission intends to recover what it had to give up to the co-legislators during the negotiations leading to the CAP reform applicable in 2023. The Commission intends to deepen the ideological vision it promotes in its Green Deal and its "Farm to Fork" project.

Far from "helping" the Member States, the Commission is trying to put pressure on them. Worse, it is playing them off against each other. As if the decisions of the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament did not count. BCAE7 is a typical example of this, with the desire to impose plot-based rotation on everyone, even though this was amended in the trialogue. But this is not the worst thing when we see the situation of Dutch farmers in the middle of a conflict against the reduction of nitrogen emissions that the Commission is pushing for.

Unfortunately, in this context, it seems that our natural interlocutors in DG Agri are struggling to come up with a new, realistic ambition for European agriculture, in the face of the demands of DG ENVI, DG GROW or DG SANTE, depending on the case. Yet the climate emergency and the necessary return to a form of food and energy sovereignty make this necessary!

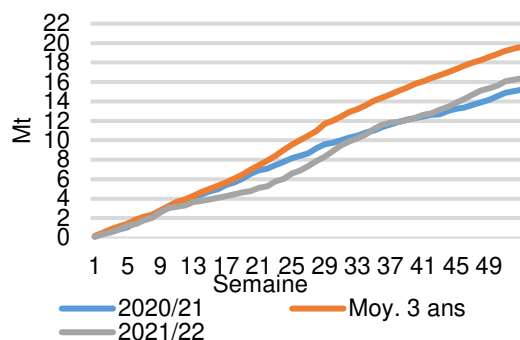
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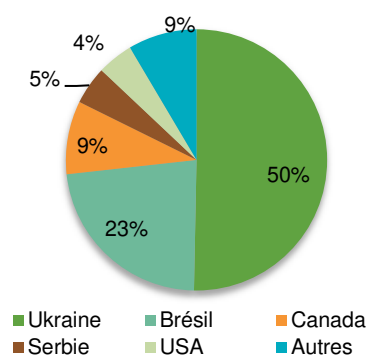
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MAIZE KEY FIGURES:

Cumulative European imports of corn from 01/07/2021 to 01/07/2022



Origin of European imports of corn from 01/07/2021 to 01/07/2022



PARLIAMENT AND COUNCIL REACH AN AGREEMENT ON AGRI-DATA: AN ADDITIONAL CONSTRAINT FOR FARMERS

In the beginning of June, the European Parliament and the Council finally found an agreement on the SAIO dossier (Statistics on Agricultural Input and Output). Trialogues started back in February and the most contentious issue was the one on farmer's pesticide use.

Initially, parliament wanted to have detailed annual area-related data collection on pesticides, biocidal products, fertilisers, veterinary medicinal products for animals and antibiotics in feeding stuff. On the other side of the spectrum, Member States wanted to water down the Commission's proposal by suggesting that data collection should happen every five years.

What was achieved? The text proposes collecting and publishing pesticide use data every year. This data will apply to all pesticides, regardless of whether they are sold or used under a standard or "emergency" authorisation.

Furthermore, the compromise text envisions a distinction between organic and non-organic farming when it comes to pesticide data. Finally, contrary to the council's initial demands, the text makes it crystal clear that the public's right to request information and the rules governing access to environmental information remain applicable in the context of the SAIO Regulation.

The text was already agreed by ministers during the AgriFish Council meeting that took place on 17 June. For the moment, there is no indicative timeline for a vote in the plenary of the European Parliament. In any case, the text will likely be voted after the summer break.

All this will further increase the administrative burden on farmers and society's distrust of them.

SUSTAINABLE USE OF PESTICIDES: COMMISSION PUBLISHES NEW RULES

The European Union is sticking with a plan to halve the use of pesticides by 2030 even as agriculture comes under pressure from shortages sparked by Russia's tactics in its war against Ukraine. The European Commission proposed to use legally binding targets to reach its plan, which stops short of an overall ban on pesticides and focuses instead on organic products and other alternatives. The new proposal for a revised SUD transforms the existing Directive into a Regulation which will be directly applicable in all Member States.

Rules were adopted as part of the Farm to Fork Strategy and European Green Deal and they set legally binding targets at EU and national level to reduce by 50% the use and the risk of chemical pesticides and the use of the more hazardous pesticides by 2030. Member States will set their own national reduction targets within defined parameters to ensure that the EU wide targets are achieved.

Rules will also "ensure" that all farmers and other professional pesticide users practice Integrated Pest Management (IPM), in which alternative environmentally methods of pest prevention and control are considered first, before chemical pesticides may be used as a last resort measure.

The measures also include mandatory record keeping for farmers and other professional users. In addition, Member States have to establish crop-specific rules identifying the alternatives to be used instead of chemical pesticides.

The Commission announced that the new rules would take into account the historic progress and national pesticide use of each member state when it comes to setting national targets. The cost of the transition to new rules for farmers will be covered by the EU for at least five years under the Common Agricultural Policy.

The Commission is thus continuing its fight against chemical pesticides. This is an ideological battle par excellence, not always scientifically justified and never supported by an impact assessment! For the Commission, organic is the solution, forgetting that the weakening of purchasing power resulting from the Russia-Ukraine war and inflation have dramatically, and probably permanently, reduced the consumption of organic products in Europe.

RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR: CONSIDERING EUROPEAN AGRICULTURE AS A FOOD WEAPON

The war in Ukraine has demonstrated in the most violent way the fragility of the European Union and the dependence of the world's population on food and energy. What seemed to be a given for ever - food security - is no longer so. Agriculture and agro-industry are suddenly revealed as a major strategic tool. As a food weapon.

This notion of a food weapon has always been used by the United States to its exclusive benefit. It is not for nothing that they can export unlimited quantities of oilseeds or cereals to our market without any customs duties. But what are we doing at the moment? We are analysing the needs of poor countries for primary cereals. We are trying to export clearly insufficient quantities of wheat and maize from Ukraine. We are trying to convince President Putin to keep Odessa as a free city, a port that would remain open to all Ukrainian exports. These attempts are to be supported, but they do not in any way address the scale of the problems posed, nor the inevitable duration of the conflict with Russia.

In fact, it seems to us that the problem needs to be addressed in two stages: short-term measures followed by long-term structural transformation.

In the short term, the Commission has proposed a number of measures that can be described as "retail measures". For example,

the Commission has proposed the return to production of the 10% of land set aside. As this land is by nature not very productive, the impact will be minimal, even marginal. The same is true of the €500 million allocated to deal with the increase in input costs; specific aid to the pig sector; the possible granting of state aid; the reorientation of ethanol towards food; and even easier access to the Community market for imports, particularly from the US. At no time was the constitution of strategic stocks envisaged, as this would undoubtedly be seen by European officials as the expression of an expansionist agricultural policy that they do not want.

In fact, in the long term, it is the Common Agricultural Policy that needs to be rebuilt in its entirety by attempting to return to the original rules: protection of the Community market, a well-calibrated export policy and management of farmers' income by the prices they receive and not by the subsidies they receive. Renegotiating with the WTO, rediscussing free trade agreements, abandoning the artificial system of subsidies. These are the issues at stake. To this must be added the necessary recourse to new genetic techniques on which China is betting all its agricultural development for the coming decades. One can of course contest these issues, deny them, but maintaining the CAP in the current internal and external circumstances does not stand up to analysis.

MIRROR CLAUSES: COMMISSION PRESENTS ITS FEASIBILITY STUDY THIS DOES NOT MAKE US FEEL ANY BETTER

Trade reciprocity is not a new topic in Brussels, and EU producers have long been concerned about being caught between the rock of the EU's high standards and the wall of lower-quality imports. This ideology is particularly important when the topic is the use of phytosanitary products, especially those that are imported with pesticides that are banned in the EU. In that spirit, based on a proposal from the French presidency, the Commission was tasked to assess the feasibility of solving this problem when negotiating new trade agreements with third countries.

On 3 June, the European Commission has released its long-awaited report on the viability of imposing its own food production standards on potential trade partners. While trade negotiations and diplomatic efforts are mentioned as important ways for the EU to get its way on sustainable food production, it also does not rule out unilateral action

when deemed "necessary" to "regulate global environmental or ethical aspects of imported products."

The report emphasizes that any actions taken will be in "full" compliance with World Trade Organization rules, but warns that trade partners may still see this as "controversial," labelling such measures as protectionist. In a nutshell, the main conclusion of the report is that WTO compatibility should be determined on a "case-by-case basis."

Despite the presentation of the feasibility study, this much needed measure remains in a virtual state and everything indicates that it will remain so. The Czechs will certainly not move the matter forward and the Commission will continue to treat certain agricultural products in a way that imports are favoured and exports are reduced. This hinders the productive capacity of the agricultural sector.

NGTs: DIFFICULT NEGOTIATIONS AHEAD?

On 29 April, the European Commission launched a public consultation on the issue of New Genomic Techniques. A new legislative proposal is currently being developed and is expected for the second quarter of 2023. The main aim of the proposal is to separate NGTs from the rules currently applicable to Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs).

Everything indicates that it will not be an easy task for the Commission to convince some Member States, some parliamentarians and even the public about the need for new legislation. German Environment Minister Steffi Lemke already stated that she would like to see NGTs under the cover of the GMO legislation. In addition, the previous public consultation received over 70 000 responses, the great majority from EU citizens stating their opposition to the idea of a new proposal.

This is, of course, a result of a campaign organised by NGOs.

Still, the Commission is going ahead with its plans. Along with the public consultation, an impact assessment is being carried out, the results of which are expected to be presented in the fourth quarter of 2022. According to a Commission official, several issues were already looked at, including that of environmental sustainability of NGTs.

In our view, a new framework is necessary to face the challenges of an increased competition, especially from countries that are developing their own NGTs frameworks or already have one in place. By doing so, these countries allow for innovation, for underpinning R&D and the commercial development of their economy.

RED3, CO2 EMISSIONS FROM CARS, REPOWEREU...: GUIDELINES ARE EMERGING

The energy crisis that was brewing in 2021 erupted with the war in Ukraine that started on 24 February. The war revealed the EU's extreme dependence on Russian and third country fossil fuels, and the wishful thinking to date of providing Europeans with clean, secure and affordable energy. As a result, energy independence seems to be taking precedence over the objectives of the 55 package. The RePowerEU plan presented in March, and then in May 2022, is accelerating action.

However, not everything is allowed. The contribution of agriculture and biomass to energy sovereignty remains under the constraint of sustainability and the Farm-to-Fork and biodiversity strategies. For example, the RePowerEU plan does not focus on biofuels. Agriculture could perhaps benefit from the high expectations for the development of hydrogen or solar energy, with agrivoltaism. It could also benefit from the doubling of the 2030 biomethane target to 35 billion m³ compared to the requirements of the Fit for 55 package. However, the EU will have to overcome its aversion to the use of agricultural biomass, which it hides behind sustainability criteria, and make room for intermediate crops, including maize.

In this context, the ITRE Committee is expected to vote in mid-July on its report on the revision of the RED2 Directive. This is one of the last reports to be adopted by the Parliament on this issue. CEPM is making the case to parliamentarians for the multiple roles of maize, especially for energy. Given the strong sensitivity to food issues that divides MEPs, ITRE may prefer to maintain the status quo on the G1 biofuel ceiling compared to the Commission's text, while taking palm and soya out of the market more quickly. The Council also opted at the end of June for the status quo on the G1 biofuel cap. This is not the European mutualisation of the 7% cap that CEPM wanted, but it would still be better than the ambition of the EnviCom and the Greens to halve the cap.

CEPM also welcomes the Council's position in favour of technological neutrality in the regulation on CO₂ emissions from cars. A first step has been taken to allow the continued sale after 2035 of cars using low-carbon fuels such as bioethanol. The Commission is to report and make proposals by 2026. The CEPM will work to ensure that this is favourable to bioethanol.

Meetings of the CEPM and its member organisations 3rd Quarter 2022

- ✓ **CEPM:**
 - **4 Oct 2022 afternoon:** Management Council, Paris
- ✓ **France:**
 - **26 Oct 2022:** Sorghum ID Management Council, Paris
- ✓ **Portugal:**
 - **13 Sep 2022 :** Maize Day
- ✓ **Poland:**
 - **6 Sep 2022:** Conference, PR Długie Stare
 - **10 Sep 2022:** Maize Day, PODR Szepietowo
 - **13-16 Sep 2022:** Study trip, France
 - **23-25 Sep 2022:** Stand à AGRO-SHOW, Bednary

Civil Dialogue Groups Provisional calendar 2nd quarter 2022

- **01-07-2022:** Arable crops - Rice
- **07-09-2022:** Arable crops – COP & Seeds
- **14-09-2022:** Arable Crops - Dried Fodder and Energy Crops
- **23-09-2022:** Arable crops - Sugar
- **07-10-2022:** Direct payments and greening
- **10-10-2022:** International aspects of agriculture
- **13-10-2022:** Arable crops - Starch
- **19-10-2022:** Environment and climate change
- **24-10-2022:** CAP
- **05-12-2022:** Arable crops - Rice