

Farming ministers reaffirm need for a new approach to protecting honey bees

Today agriculture ministers agreed on the need to set a **specific goal to protect honey bees** from pesticides.

Member states considered guidance provided by the **European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)**, outlining a new approach to assessing the impact of pesticides on honey bee populations. Specifically, the European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Stella **Kyriakides**, invited ministers to consider an approach that would set the **maximum reduction in colony size at 10% across the whole of the EU**.

Ministers agreed on the need to **increase the EU's ambitions in terms of honey bee protection** while also ensuring that the measures were feasible for member states to implement. On the whole they supported the proposed approach, with some member states calling for the maximum size to be set lower than 10%. Many also stressed the importance of taking the **latest scientific advice** into account.



Today the Council made a significant step towards setting a specific protection goal for honey bees. Honey bees are not only a vital part of our ecosystems, they also help ensure a sustainable future for agriculture by pollinating crops. We are confident that today's exchange of views between ministers will lead to the introduction of EU-wide measures to protect honey bee populations from the effects of pesticides.

Maria do Céu Antunes, Portuguese Minister for Agriculture

According to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), bees pollinate 71 of the 100 crop species that provide 90% of the world's food. However, bee numbers have fallen steeply over the past two decades. The use of pesticides has been identified as a potential factor in this decline.

Background

According to EU law, pesticides can only be used in farming if a comprehensive risk assessment demonstrates that such use will not harm human or animal health or cause unacceptable levels of damage to the environment. The current risk levels are based on the Guidance Document on Terrestrial Ecotoxicology, produced by the European Commission in 2002.

In March 2019, the European Commission asked the EFSA to conduct a review of its 2013 Bee Guidance Document. In the context of this review, a majority of

member states expressed their preference for an approach to risk assessment that takes into account the natural variability of honey bee colony sizes. They also emphasised that any new targets for colony size needed to be feasible to implement.

[Visit the meeting page](#)

Media advisory – Agriculture and Fisheries Council of 28 and 29 June 2021



Indicative programme

Monday 28 June 2021

Place:

ECC Luxembourg

Chairs:

Maria do Céu Antunes, Minister for Agriculture

Ricardo Serrão Santos, Minister of the Sea of Portugal

All times are approximate and subject to change

from 08.00

Arrivals ([live streaming](#))

10.00

Beginning of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council

Adoption of the agenda

Approval of non-legislative list A items

Approval of legislative list A items ([public session](#))

Common agricultural policy (CAP) reform package for 2023-2027 ([public session](#))

+/- 14.00

Regulation on Fisheries Control ([public session](#))

+/- 14.15

Press conference in [live streaming](#)

+/- 14.35

Common Fisheries Policy (CFP): state of play and fishing opportunities for

2022

+/- 16.00

Any other business:

- Maritime Spatial Planning Directive
- European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) ([public session](#))
- Situation in the North East Atlantic

+/- 17.40

Biological control agents ([public session](#))

+/- 18.10

Setting a protection goal for honey bees ([public session](#))

+/- 19.10

Any other business:

- Food supplements on the EU market ([public session](#))
- Joint action on antimicrobial resistance and healthcare-associated infections (JAMRAI) ([public session](#))
- Fur farming ([public session](#))

+/- at the end of the meeting

Press conference in [live streaming](#)

Tuesday 29 June 2021

from 09.00

Arrivals ([live streaming](#))

10.00

EU food market situation

+/- 11.30

Any other business:

- 49th conference of EU paying agency directors
 - Regional economic accounts for agriculture (REAA) and statistics on agricultural inputs and outputs ([public session](#))
 - Fourth African Union and European Union Agriculture Ministerial Conference ([public session](#))
-

Arrangements for the press conferences

In light of the gradual relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions both in Belgium and Luxembourg, a limited number of journalists will be allowed to attend physically the meeting of Agriculture and Fisheries Council. More info [here](#).

Press conferences will remain accessible also in video conference. In order to participate and ask questions, EU accredited journalists should register

using [this link](#).

Those who already registered for previous press briefings or press conferences of Agriculture and Fisheries Council do not need to do it again.

– **Deadline for registration: Monday, 28 June 2021, 15.00**

Further instructions will be sent to all registered participants shortly after the deadline.

[Videos and photos from the event](#)

[Visit the meeting page](#)

[Non-performing loans: provisional agreement on selling credit to third parties](#)

EU ambassadors today confirmed a provisional agreement reached between the Council presidency and the Parliament on a new directive harmonising rules for credit servicers and credit purchasers of non-performing loans issued by credit institutions.

The aim of the new rules is to **support the development of the secondary market** for non-performing loans in the EU in order to allow banks to clean their balance sheets of 'bad loans', while ensuring that the sale does not affect the rights of borrowers.



Efficient lending opportunities for our businesses and households are important for economic recovery in Europe. Making sure that credit institutions clean their balance sheets of non-performing loans will ensure better access to funding for citizens and entrepreneurs.

João Leão, Portugal's Minister for Finance

A bank loan is generally considered non-performing when more than **90 days** pass without the borrower paying the agreed instalments or interests, or when it becomes unlikely that the borrower will reimburse it. Efficient management of non-performing loans is particularly important in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis to **reduce risks in banks' balance sheets and enable banks to**

focus on lending to businesses and citizens, thus supporting economic recovery in the EU.

The directive standardises the rules for credit servicers and credit purchasers across the EU and **facilitates the sales of non-performing loans**, including across national borders, while ensuring that borrowers' rights are not hampered in the process. A designated authority in the home member state will authorise and supervise credit servicers, in close cooperation with the authorities of other member states.

The Council presidency and the Parliament's negotiators have reached a provisional agreement on the following main issues discussed during the negotiations:

- authorising credit servicing activities, to ensure borrowers are treated fairly and diligently
- forbearance measures, to take into account the rights and interests of consumers before starting enforcement proceedings

Next steps

The Parliament and the Council are expected to adopt the directive after legal-linguistic revision. After it is signed and published in the Official Journal of the EU, the text will be transposed into national law within 24 months of the date of entry into force.

[Motor insurance directive: Coreper endorses provisional agreement](#)



The Council's Permanent Representatives Committee (Coreper) today gave its support to the political agreement reached between the Council and the European Parliament's negotiators during the trilogue on 22 June 2021 on the amendment to the motor insurance directive that will **strengthen the protection of injured parties** in motor vehicle accidents and **improve the rights of policyholders**.

The provisionally agreed text amends the **scope of the directive**, following ECJ rulings, including new definitions of 'vehicle' and 'use of vehicle'. It also provides member states with new possibilities for national derogations from the insurance obligation. The use of a vehicle in motorsport events and activities will be excluded from the directive, provided that there is alternative insurance.

Moreover, bodies will be created in each member state to ensure that, if the insurance undertaking of a vehicle responsible for an accident is **insolvent**,

injured parties can be compensated in their member state of residence; the body in that member state will then seek reimbursement from the body in the insolvent insurer's home member state.

Likewise, the co-legislators agreed on the establishment of an EU-harmonised **claims history statement** and on new rules to avoid discrimination in the treatment of policyholders on the basis of their nationality or previous member state of residence.

The revised text also includes:

- reinforced rules regarding checks on insurance
- increased harmonised minimum protection amounts for personal injury and material damage across the EU
- targeted amendments to the framework for dispatched vehicles and provisions on accidents involving a trailer towed by a vehicle, independent motor insurance price comparison tools, information centres and information for injured parties.

Next steps

After legal-linguistic revision, the Parliament and the Council are expected to adopt the directive in the autumn. Once it has been signed and published in the Official Journal of the EU, the text will be transposed into national law within 24 months from the date of entry into force.

[Farming ministers confirm CAP reform deal](#)

EU farming ministers have accepted the provisional deal struck with the European Parliament last Friday on the key elements of the **common agricultural policy (CAP) reform**, thus bringing the proposal a step closer to becoming part of EU law.

The agreement paves the way for a **fairer, greener and more performance-based CAP** that seeks to provide a sustainable future for European farmers. The new CAP bolsters environmental measures, and also includes provisions to ensure more targeted support for smaller farms and help young farmers enter the profession.



'Today we have agreed the most ambitious CAP to date. This is a good deal for farmers and for Europe, which will strengthen the

European agri-food system, making it more sustainable and fairer for everyone. The agreement provides for a modernised CAP that supports the transition to greener and more climate-friendly farming, increases respect for social and labour rights, and ensures that farmers remain competitive without leaving anyone behind.

Maria do Céu Antunes, Portuguese Minister for Agriculture

What happens next?

Work will now take place at inter-institutional level on the remaining technical details of the proposed reform, following which it will be formally approved by both the European Parliament and the Council. The new CAP will cover the period 2023-2027; a transitional arrangement agreed in 2020 will continue to apply until then (see below).

Member states will have until 31 December 2021 to submit their **draft national strategic plans** for approval by the Commission.

A new social dimension

The post-2020 CAP places greater emphasis on the **social dimension** of farming. Under the new agreement, farmers and other beneficiaries receiving direct payments will be subject to an administrative penalty if they do not provide adequate employment conditions as set out in the relevant EU legislation. It is the **first time that EU agriculture legislation has included a social dimension** and marks a historic step forward in the way the CAP takes conditions for farm workers into account.

An environmentally ambitious CAP

The new CAP sets out a number of measures aimed at encouraging farmers to adopt '**greener**' farming practices. These include:

- enhanced conditionality standards that farmers need to meet in order to receive CAP support, including the **preservation of carbon-rich soils** through protection of wetlands and peatlands, and minimum shares of arable land to be dedicated to landscape features to protect biodiversity
- **eco-schemes** to support and/or incentivise farmers to observe agricultural practices that benefit the climate and the environment
- an increased share of rural development funding to be spent on **green interventions**
- **tracking of climate and biodiversity expenditure**, in line with the aims of the European Green Deal

Support for smaller farms

The CAP reform package also includes measures aimed at **redistributing funds in favour of small and medium-sized farms**. Under the agreement, member states will be required to redirect 10% of direct payments to benefit such farms (in principle through redistributive payments, unless they can prove that they can achieve the same effect via other comparable instruments).

Focus on performance

The reform also includes a shift from a focus on compliance to a **performance-based CAP** that will give member states the freedom to implement tailor-made interventions on the basis of strategic planning and specific shared objectives, in line with their needs.

Background

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) accounts for around a third of the EU's budget. Its aim is to:

- provide affordable, safe food for EU citizens
- ensure a fair standard of living for farmers
- preserve natural resources and respect the environment

On 1 June 2018, the European Commission presented **three legislative proposals** aimed at making the CAP fit for the future:

The main aspects of the proposals were:

- more **targeted direct payments** and **rural development interventions**, both subject to strategic planning
- a new **'green' architecture** based on environmental conditions to be met by farmers and additional voluntary measures under both pillars
- a **performance-based approach** (the 'new delivery model') whereby member states would have to report their achievements each year

In October 2020, under the German presidency, the Council agreed its negotiating position, or **'general approach'**, on the reform of the CAP. This included increasing the environmental ambition of the CAP, in line with the aims of the European Green Deal.

CAP transitional regulation (2021-2022)

In late 2020 the CAP transitional regulation was adopted, the aim of which was to **ensure continuity of CAP legal and financial support** to farmers and other beneficiaries before the new reformed rules came into effect in 2023. The regulation ensured that payments would not be interrupted, while also providing time for member states to prepare their national CAP strategic plans.

[Visit the meeting page](#)