



Ref. COMM(26)01764  
14/07/2026

## Joint Statement

# The EU Competitiveness agenda and Competitiveness Fund 2028–2034 must put Agriculture and the agri-food chain at their core

Agriculture and Food have always been at the heart of the European project, a pillar of our economy, our security and our way of life. It is a strategic sector of the economy, be it at EU or national level.

Taken together, the entire agrifood value chain generates more than €1 trillion in gross value added to the EU economy, surpassing the economic footprint of other EU industries.

Every day, Europe's farmers and agri-food actors provide citizens with safe, high-quality and nutritious food, alongside feed, fuel and fibre. In doing so, they strengthen Europe's resilience, sustainability and stability in an increasingly uncertain geopolitical environment.

The signing organisations consider the European Competitiveness Fund (ECF) a major opportunity to mobilise investments in agriculture, food and the whole agri-food chain - including its processing and manufacturing activities - within the future Multiannual Financial Framework enabling deployment of key strategic investments for infrastructure, services and skills focusing on strategic actions and reducing the investment gap of the sector.

Achieving this potential requires a coherent framework that goes beyond agricultural policy alone. Agriculture and the agri-food chain have a unique capacity to contribute to all ECF priorities: clean transition and decarbonisation, digital transformation, health, biotechnology, agriculture and bioeconomy, as well as security, defence and space.

This recognition must be **reflected in the design and implementation of the ECF through dedicated sufficient resources, appropriate governance** and effective participation of agricultural and agri-food chain actors.

For this reason, **we are strongly concerned by the approach reflected in the draft ITRE report**, which would replace the European Commission's proposed window on "Health, Biotech, Agriculture and Bioeconomy" with a broader "Sustainable Prosperity" approach, potentially limiting agriculture and food sectors' direct access to ECF support.



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EU Transparency Register Number | Copa 44856881231-49 | Cogeca 09586631237-74

At a time when the EU is seeking to strengthen its strategic autonomy, food security and industrial capacity, **reducing the place of agriculture and food sectors within the ECF would send the wrong political signal and undermine one of Europe's key strategic sectors.**

The agri-food chain is not only a beneficiary of competitiveness policies; it is an essential contributor to them. **Excluding agriculture and food from a clear and dedicated place within the ECF would limit the Fund's ability to deliver on its own objectives.**

The **Council's recent Partial General Approach confirms the Commission's original approach with a dedicated Window "Health, Biotech, Agriculture and Bioeconomy".**

Similarly, the **AGRI Committee Opinion and the more than 100 cross-party amendments tabled to the draft ITRE report aim to improve the Commission proposal and the draft ITRE Report** by recognising the sector's full potential to contribute to the ECF's strategic objectives – from growth, competitiveness, security – and ensuring that agriculture and food are properly integrated into the Fund.

We ask the European Parliament to support the above approach: **Investing in the EU's agriculture and food sectors across the whole agri food chain means investing in Europe's security, resilience, growth, and its future.**

Europe needs to ensure that agriculture and food sectors receive the recognition they require to continue contributing to Europe's competitiveness and the future of the European project.

**-END-**

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**Animal Health Europe** – The voice of the animal medicines industry

**AVEC** – The voice of Europe's poultry meat sector

**CEETAR** - European Organisation of Agricultural, Rural and Forestry Contractors

**CEEV** - Comité Européen des Entreprises Vins

**CEFS** - European Association of Sugar Manufacturers

**CEJA** - European Council of Young Farmers (CEJA)

**CELCAA** - European Liaison Committee for Agricultural and Agri-Food Trade

**CEMA** - European Agricultural Machinery Association

**CEPM** - European Confederation of Maize Production

**CIBC-IMV-IBC** - International Butchers Confederation

**CIBE** – International Confederation of European Beet Growers



**CLITRAVI** – Liaison Centre for the Meat Processing Industry in the European Union

**Coceral** – European association of trade in cereals, oilseeds, rice, pulses, olive oil, oils and fats, animal feed and agrosupply

**Copa Cogeca** - The United Voice of Farmers and their Cooperatives in the European Union

**COTANCE** - The Confederation of National Associations of Tanners and Dressers of the European Community

**CropLife Europe** - European organisation that represents the crop protection sector

**EDA** - European Dairy Association

**EFFAB** - European Forum of Farm Animal Breeders

**ELO** - European Landowners' Organization

**ERA** - European Rabbit Association

**ESA** - European Spice Association

**Euro Foie Gras** - European Federation of Foie Gras

**EUROMAISIERES** - European maize milling sector

**EuroMalt** - Trade association of the malting industry in Europe

**EUROMONTANA** - European association of mountain areas

**EuropaBio** – European Association for Bioindustries

**European Flour Millers**

**Euroseeds** - The voice of the European seed sector

**EUWEP** - European Union of Wholesale in Eggs, Egg-Products, Poultry and Game

**FEAP** - Federation of European Aquaculture Producers

**FEDIOL** - EU vegetable oil and proteinmeal industry association

**FEFAC** - European Feed Manufacturers' Federation

**FEFANA** - EU Specialty Feed Ingredients Industry

**FESASS** - Fédération Européenne pour la Santé Animale et la Sécurité Sanitaire

**Food Drink Europe** - Food and drink is the biggest manufacturing industry in Europe

**PFP** - Primary Food Processors, association for the European primary food processing industry

**Rural Youth Europe**

**Spirits Europe** - Representative body for producers of spirit drinks



**Starch Europe** - European Starch Industry

**UECBV** - European Livestock and Meat Trades Union

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