

**Voluntary Report** – Voluntary - Public Distribution

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**Report Name:** French President Macron names new Minister of Agriculture

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**Report Highlights:**

On July 6, Julien Denormandie was named France's new Minister of Agriculture as a part of a wider cabinet reshuffle. Minister Denormandie will be the fourth Minister of Agriculture since May 2017, the start of the Macron Administration. Although he studied agriculture, Minister Denormandie has not worked in the sector or voiced any public opinion on major agricultural issues such as biotechnology, the Common Agricultural Policy or agricultural trade.

On July 6, 2020, Mr. Julien Denormandie, 40, was named the French Minister of Agriculture and Food in the new cabinet of Prime Minister Jean Castex. He is the fourth Minister of Agriculture under President Macron and was previously the Minister for Housing. At the Ministry of Agriculture, Denormandie replaces Didier Guillaume who was in the position since November 2018.

The Green Party (EELV) victory in important municipal elections on June 28 was a blow to the current Macron Administration. In part because of the elections, President Macron dismissed the former prime Minister Edouard Philippe (despite his popularity among most of the French electorate) and named Jean Castex as new Prime Minister.

Minister Denormandie is a close contact of President Macron, having been his Deputy Chief of Staff when President Macron was French Minister for Economy (2014-2016) and his Deputy General Secretary during the 2017 presidential campaign. As Deputy General Secretary of En Marche Denormandie played an important role in the President's victory in May 2017. He began in the Administration as a junior Secretary of State in charge of housing and became the Minister for Housing in 2018. As Minister for Housing, he was generally perceived as a hard-working technocrat and open to common sense solutions to housing challenges.

Minister Denormandie has a Masters' degree in Agricultural Science and Agronomy from ParisAgroTech, the leading agricultural college in France and a MBA from the National College for Rural Engineering and Forestry (ENGREF) in Paris. Although he has an agricultural academic background, Denormandie has never expressed any public opinion on major agricultural issues such as biotechnology, Common Agricultural Policy or agricultural trade. Politically, Ag Minister Denormandie is in a weaker position than that of the new Minister for Environment, Barbara Pompili who ranks second in the new cabinet, while Minister Denormandie ranks fifteenth. Given the success of the greens and these cabinet changes, it is likely France will continue its push against the use of technology in agriculture and therefore need continued protection for its farmers.

As Minister of Agriculture, Denormandie will have to tackle major issues facing French farmers. The COVID-19 crisis highlighted the weaknesses of some French agricultural sectors that are heavily dependent on exports such as wine and spirits. In addition, President Macron has been calling for greater French food sovereignty since the crises began. However, the demand from NGOs and some consumers for greener agriculture led the government of France to increase environmental constraints on French farmers, reducing their economic competitiveness in an open EU market. He will have to find ways to support French farmers who face low prices, high production costs and fewer technical options to fight pests. Finally, Minister Denormandie will need to advocate for the French position on CAP funding at the EU level and mediate between the EU and French farmers as the EU Commission's farm to fork strategy is wildly unpopular among French farmers.



**Attachments:**

No Attachments.