

**Voluntary Report** – Voluntary - Public Distribution

**Date:** July 05,2020

**Report Number:** GM2020-0042

**Report Name:** German Ag Minister on Priorities for EU Presidency

**Country:** Germany

**Post:** Berlin

**Report Category:** Agriculture in the News, Trade Policy Monitoring

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**Report Highlights:**

On July 1, Germany took over the rotating EU presidency. This report provides details on Germany's priorities for agriculture. These include animal welfare, Farm-to-Fork "F2F," biodiversity strategy, Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) negotiations, and fisheries.

On July 1, Germany took over the rotating Presidency of the Council, aka the EU presidency, from Croatia and put it under the theme: “Together for Europe’s Recovery.” On the same day, German Minister for Food and Agriculture Julia Kloeckner published her priorities for the six months of the German EU presidency:

### **Mastering the COVID-19 Pandemic and Mitigating its Impact**

Kloeckner underscored that mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic remains a challenge for the whole German Government and the EU. She stressed the importance of functioning supply chains and the free movement of workers within the EU. She called for a common market approach and cautioned against a “consumption nationalism.”

### **Animal Welfare and the Introduction of an EU-wide Animal Welfare Label**

Kloeckner wants to move the topic of animal welfare higher on the European agenda and seeks to introduce an EU-wide animal welfare label. Animal welfare is expensive and such a label would enable consumers to make an informed purchasing decision in favor of products that were produced with higher animal welfare standards. Kloeckner does not expect to finalize this during the German presidency but views it already a success that Portugal agreed to also pursue the topic during their upcoming presidency (in the first half year of 2021.)

### **F2F and Biodiversity Strategies:**

Kloeckner stressed that the goals of environment and climate protection, animal welfare, food security, and economic feasibility have to be linked and interconnected. Kloeckner views tighter environmental rules as necessary but farmers must not be crushed between environmental protection rules and economic feasibility. She mentioned new plant breeding technologies (NBTs) and digitization as means to mitigate conflicts between the goals of biodiversity and economic prosperity for farmers and called for an impact assessment on the Farm-to-Fork “F2F” strategy and what it means for farmers. Note: The fact that she mentioned NBTs with a positive connotation underscores her favourable position towards the technology but should not be seen as representative for the German Government, as other important players hold opposing views.

### **CAP Negotiations**

She announced that there will be a system change with more environment, more climate protection, more animal welfare and all pillar 1 payments will be linked to conditions. However, as these changes will only be possible with an appropriate financial provisions she pushed for a speedy approval of the agricultural EU budget.

### **Fisheries and Brexit:**

Catch quotas are traditionally negotiated in the second half of each year and it is important to strike a balance between protecting fish stocks and the economic viability of fisher families. This year, these negotiations are closely linked to Brexit negotiations as a high share of fish is caught in UK waters. She deems it important that the negotiations on catch quotas are not separated from those on a free trade agreement with the UK.

The press conference was clearly targeted towards a German audience while also providing transparency and managing expectations. Kloeckner stressed that Germany will assume the role of a moderator and not be able to dictate its opinion on the other member states. Instead it is their role to forge a solid compromise position between all.

In order to do so a multitude of meetings are planned between the Ministers as well as on the technical level and in different formats (virtual and in-person.) There will be six routine Ag/Fish Minister meetings (i.e. six are scheduled but there may be more if need be.) The first one will be an in-person meeting in Brussels on July 20. The traditional, informal Ministers' meeting will be held at the end of August in Koblenz, Germany with a field trip on the topics of wine and digitization.

### **Background:**

The colloquial term “EU presidency” technically means the presidency of the Council of the EU. The EU Council is one of three important EU institutions that are involved in the legislative process, the other two being the Commission and the EU Parliament. The presidency rotates every six months between the Member States, on January 1 and July 1. Its main tasks are 1) planning and chairing meetings in the Council and its preparatory bodies and 2) representing the Council in relations with the other EU institutions. The country that holds the presidency is expected to act as moderator/broker of interests and remain neutral on the topics themselves. When it comes to voting, it also has to vote with the majority of member states even if it goes against their own position. Germany last held the EU presidency in 2007.

In 2009, the Lisbon Treaty introduced the so-called “trio-presidency,” where three consecutive presidencies work together on common goals over an 18-months-period. The current trio presidency consists of Germany, Portugal, and Slovenia.

### **List of Previous, Current, and Upcoming EU (Trio) Presidencies<sup>1</sup>**

Romania	January-June	2019
Finland	July-December	2019
Croatia	January-June	2020
<b>Germany</b>	<b>July-December</b>	<b>2020</b>
<b>Portugal</b>	<b>January-June</b>	<b>2021</b>
<b>Slovenia</b>	<b>July-December</b>	<b>2021</b>
France	January-June	2022
Czech Republic	July-December	2022
Sweden	January-June	2023
Spain	July-December	2023
Belgium	January-June	2024
Hungary	July-December	2024

### **Attachments:**

No Attachments.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016D1316&from=EN>