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# Germany

**Post:** Berlin

# Green Party Plan To End Soybean Imports

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Oilseeds and Products
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**Report Highlights:**
The German Green Party has developed a proposal to replace imported soybeans with domestically produced protein crops. The Greens are advancing the proposal using a clear EU parliamentary strategy and ties to sweeping environmental themes. However, agronomic and economic challenges remain. If successfully implemented, the 'Protein Strategy for Agriculture' could jeopardize roughly $500 million in U.S. soybean sales to Germany.

**General Information:**

On October 25, 2010 the Green Party faction in the German Bundestag held a round table discussion in Berlin titled "Protein Strategy for Agriculture – Improving Self Sufficiency in Protein Feed." The event served as a venue for the Green Party to get expert input on the topic but also as a vehicle to spread the green point of view in light of the upcoming discussion on the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) post 2013.

Friedrich Ostendorff, a member of the Bundestag committee for agriculture for the Green Party, and Baerbel Hoehn, vice chairperson of the Green Party faction and former minister of agriculture and the environment in the State of North Rhine-Westphalia, led the event, which was also attended by representatives of the German oilseed crushing and animal feeding industries.

MPs Ostendorff and Hoehn opened by criticizing the increase in domestic large scale animal production, the low level of plant protein production in Germany, and German dependency on imported soybeans. In their opinion, European demand for animal feed results in environmental problems in soybean producing countries, such as the conversion of bio-diverse rainforests into, 'pesticide contaminated monocultures.' Ostendorff disapproved of Germany turning in to a net-exporter of meat and opined that, 'Germany is not a suitable place to produce chicken for the whole world.' In addition, he requested that the German domestic meat consumption be reduced. It was emphasized that any protein strategy for Germany must be biotech (GMO) free.

Martin Haeusling, member of Green Party (Gruene/EFA) in the European Parliament (EP) and member of the EP Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI) was a featured speaker. He reported that the AGRI committee is currently preparing a report titled, "The EU Protein Deficit" and that he is the appointed rapporteur. He announced that the report will be presented to the EP on November 15, several days before Agricultural Commissioner Ciolos is expected to present his ideas for the CAP post 2013 to the EP AGRI committee. The report is due to be voted on in the AGRI committee on January 25/26 and in the EP plenary during the March session.

Haeusling's main speaking points were:

- Eighty percent of the protein required for EU animal production has to be imported. This is land grabbing with knives and forks.
- European soybean imports should be replaced with domestic protein products.
- The zero tolerance policy for unapproved GMO-events must be maintained.
- Those who use or trade biotech products need to pay for the costs for maintaining separate commodity trade channels.
- Imported biotech soybeans should be taxed (despite a Kennedy Round zero duty commitment) to give domestic protein crop production a competitive advantage. (Haeusling also believes the Blair-House Agreement, limiting CAP support for soybean production, is a historic cause of EU

protein import dependency.)

- To be more sustainable, animal production should be limited to 2 Grossvieheinheiten (GV) per hectare and pasture feeding should be encouraged. (GV is a comparative German measure of livestock units. 1 GV equals 500 kg, one dairy cow, 8.33 hogs, 100 broilers or 320 laying hens.)
- The BSE-related animal protein feeding ban should be maintained.
- Research and support for legume production and mixed crops systems should be increased.

The event also included technical presentations on the production of indigenous protein plants as well presentations showing how German protein (feed) self sufficiency could be increased. These included:

- Opportunities and limitations to growing indigenous pulses (Dr. Christian Schueler, University of Kassel-Witzenhausen)
- Opportunities and limitations for soybean production in Germany (Prof. Dr. Dieter Trautz, Osnabrueck College)
- Research in plant breeding: no demand - no research? (Prof. Dr. Peter Wehling, Julius Kuehn Research Institute Quedlinburg)
- Industry requirements for plant breeding and propagation of protein plants (Uwe Brede, Hessian State Domain Niederbeisheim)
- Domestic animal feed as a marketing advantage? ( Peter Gerber, FrieslandCampina Cologne (Dairy processor)

Agricultural Counselor Comment: Our sense is that the German Greens, who are polling around 20 percent, will push to require protein crop production as a rotation crop, including as a condition for receiving decoupled CAP payments (so called cross compliance). We were impressed by the professionalism and thought the Greens have mustered on this issue, both with regard to the policy process in Brussels and the assembled technical research supporting increasing domestic protein crop production However, we believe there remain a number of economic and and agronomic challenges to establishing large-scale soybean or pulse production in Germany. These include a lack of soybean varieties developed for the German climate, the variability of pulse crop yields, the exclusion of biotech crops, and strong economic competition for land from other profitable crops, such as wheat. End comment.