

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

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Approved By:

Cynthia Guven

Prepared By:

Hilde Brans

Report Highlights:

Since January 1, 2015, Latvia is holding for the first time the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The Latvian Presidency's priorities are attuned to Commission President Juncker's political guidelines and 2015 Work Program presented in December 2014. The revision of the EU's organic farming proposal will be one of the Presidency's key priorities. The review of the EU's decision-making process on GMOs is a possible item on the agenda of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council (April) and Environment Council (June).

Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

Since January 1, 2015, Latvia is holding for the first time the rotating six-month Presidency of the Council of the European Union. From January 1, 2015 to June 30, 2015, Latvia will be responsible for organizing and chairing Council meetings and for representing the 28 EU Member States in negotiations with other EU institutions. Following the elections for a new European Parliament (EP) in May 2014 and the installation of a new European Commission in November 2014, the Latvian Presidency marks the end of a period of EU institutional change. The Latvian Presidency's priorities are attuned to Commission President Juncker's political guidelines and 2015 Work Program presented in December 2014 (see [GAIN report "European Commission 2015 Work Program"](#)).

The EU's rotating EU presidencies are divided into "trios", i.e. groups of three Member States. The objective is to ensure continuity and consistency in the Council's work over an 18-month period. Each Trio Presidency prepares an 18-month work plan setting out the Council's priorities. Latvia is working closely together with the outgoing presidency of Italy and with the next presidency of Luxembourg. The Trio Presidency Program can be downloaded from the Latvian Presidency's website at <https://eu2015.lv/the-presidency-and-eu/trio-presidency>.

Work Program - Agriculture

Organic Farming: The revision of the EU's organic farming regulation will be one of the Presidency's key priorities. The proposal for new framework legislation on organic food production is included in the Commission's "kill list" presented in December 2014 (see [GAIN report "European Commission 2015 Work Program"](#)). If the Council and EP do not come to an agreement within six months, the Commission will withdraw the proposal and replace it with a new legislative initiative. The Latvian Presidency said it would seek agreement within the Council and start negotiations with the EP as soon as possible to avoid the withdrawal of the proposal. On January 21, 2015, the Presidency presented a tentative roadmap on organic farming to the Council's Special Committee on Agriculture, indicating the way it intends to follow in order to reach a general approach at the May 2015 Agriculture and Fisheries Council. All delegations as well as the Commission representative approved the roadmap. The Commission confirmed that the conditions set out in the 2015 work program would be met if the Council and EP make further progress on this file by mid-2015. More specifically, this means that the EP AGRI Committee would need to adopt its report on the Commission proposal by mid-2015. On June 11, 2015, the Latvian Presidency will organize the 9th European Organic Congress where policy makers will discuss the EU's vision for organic farming after 2030.

Animal Cloning: In 2014, the EP stated that discussions on the animal cloning proposals would start in 2015 which automatically put these sensitive proposals on the agenda of the Latvian Presidency. When presenting their priorities to the EP Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) Committee, the Latvian Presidency said it would actively work with the Council and EP on reaching a compromise. Given the controversy surrounding this issue, negotiations will continue under the next presidency (Luxembourg).

Novel Foods: The Latvian Presidency will work with the EP and Member States in informal trilogues

aiming to achieve a first reading agreement on the Novel Foods proposal presented in December 2013.

CAP Reform: The Latvian Presidency will also focus on the simplification objectives of the reformed CAP. On February 5-6, the Presidency will organize an informal meeting to discuss the development of organic agriculture within the CAP. The discussion will focus on how organic farming and short supply chains can contribute to the sustainability of agriculture. Directors for rural development at the EU Ministries of Agriculture, representatives of the European Commission and the director of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) will participate in the meeting.

Animal and Plant Health: The Latvian Presidency will focus on making progress on the animal and plant health proposals in trilogues with the Council and EP. The aim of the Presidency is to conclude work at the Council on the plant health proposal in order to launch discussions with the EP.

Russian Embargo: The Latvian Presidency will closely monitor the developments of the Russian embargo and assess whether further political action is needed. At the January 26 Agriculture & Fisheries Council meeting, the Commission will brief the Council on the consequences of the Russian ban on EU agricultural products and on the measures put in place to help EU farmers hit by the ban.

Indirect Land Use Change (ILUC): The Latvian Presidency will continue the work of the previous presidencies on ILUC and aim to conclude a second reading agreement with the EP.

Latvian Presidency Calendar

Issues of interest to FAS/USEU and FAS in the Member States are discussed in meetings of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council and the Environment Council.

Agriculture and Fisheries Council:

- January 26, 2015 (Brussels)
 - o Work Program of the Presidency
 - o Russian ban for agriculture products
 - o Fisheries
- March 16, 2015 (Brussels)
 - o Organics proposal (orientation debate)
 - o International agricultural trade issues (state of play)
 - o Simplification and Implementation of the CAP (exchange of views)
 - o Presentation of the Commission report on COOL of certain types of meat, milk used as an ingredient in dairy products, unprocessed foods, single ingredient products and ingredients that represent more than 5% of a food (report required by the Food

Information to Consumers Regulation (FIC) 1169/2011)

- Presentation of the Commission report on the presence of trans fats in foods (report required by the Food Information to Consumers Regulation (FIC) 1169/2011)
- April 20, 2015 (Luxembourg)
 - Proposal for a regulation on adjustment rate for direct payments – CAP (general approach)
 - Proposal for a regulation on animal health (political agreement)
 - Review of the decision-making process on GMOs (information from the Commission)
 - Fisheries
- May 11, 2015 (Brussels)
 - Organics proposal (general approach)
 - Draft Council conclusions on simplification of the CAP (adoption)
 - Climate and energy framework 2030: agricultural aspects
- June 16, 2015 (Luxembourg)
 - Proposals for zootechnical legislation (progress report)
 - Proposal on veterinary medicinal products (state of play)
 - Proposal on medicated feed (state of play)
 - Proposal on protective measures against pests of plants (state of play)
 - Fisheries
 - Proposal on official controls, animal health and welfare, plant health, plant reproductive material, plant protection products (information from the Presidency) – Note: the proposal on reproductive material is included in the European Commission’s “kill list”

Environment Council

- March 26, 2015 (Brussels)
 - Commission Presentation Europe 2020 strategy mid-term review (exchange of views)

- Commission Presentation State of the Environment Report
- Climate and Energy 2030 package (information from the Commission)
- June 15, 2015 (Luxembourg)
 - Proposal on market stability for the greenhouse gas emission trading scheme (political agreement)
 - Review of the decision-making process on GMOs (information from the Commission)
 - Climate and Energy 2030 package (information from the Commission)
 - Work Program of the incoming presidency (presentation by the Luxembourg delegation)