



# FOOD E-NEWS

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*The EuroCommerce Team*

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# EU INSTITUTIONS

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## ***Towards a strong and sustainable EU algae sector***

On 15 November, the Commission adopted the [Communication “Towards a strong and sustainable EU Algae Sector”](#); to unlock the potential of algae which the Commission recognises as a “largely untapped resource” with a limited carbon and environmental footprint to produce products including food and feed. The initiative proposes 23 actions to help the industry grow into a sustainable sector and focuses on improving business environment, increasing social awareness and acceptance of algae and minimising research gaps. The EU is currently one of the biggest importers of seaweed globally. However, with these actions it is expected that European producers could meet almost 1/3 of this demand in the next years.

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# SUSTAINABILITY

## ***Joint letter on New Genomic Techniques sent to the Commission***

Following the results of the public consultation of the European Commission in July 2022, 27 business associations including FoodDrinkEurope and Copa-Cogeca signed [a letter](#) highlighting the need for a *differentiated, proportionate and workable* regulatory framework for plants resulting from NGTs. The signatories consider a mandatory risk assessment step for all plants obtained by targeted mutagenesis, cisgenesis and intragenesis as disproportionate and unworkable, specifically for SMEs. They state that if such conditions are implemented, it is likely that NGTs will not deliver on the goals of the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies. The letter also mentions that specific trade-related challenges might arise in case the EU does not align with the policies that are applicable in other countries and this can adversely affect the competitiveness of the EU Agri-Food value chain. Lastly, they note that any sustainability assessment should be science-based and non-discriminatory in view of the breeding tools that have been used.

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### ***WRAP's survey: Reducing Household Food Waste Through Changes to the Retail Environment***

In 2021 and 2022, WRAP, a climate action NGO, conducted a [survey](#) of UK retailers. A range of own-brand and branded food products was assessed to understand changes in the retail environment since the previous surveys and how these could influence household food waste. According to the survey, it is evident that actions are being taken by retailers on how food is labelled to help people avoid food waste happening at home. However, more needs to be done to help curb the impact the UK's food waste is having on climate change. WRAP's retail Survey assessed actions against [best practice guidance](#) developed in association with the Food Standards Agency and Defra. It is estimated that these changes could reduce household food waste by at least 35,000 tonnes per year. Focus was given to **date label** application, the **use of 'open life'** (best within x days of opening), **storage advice** as well as **freezing and defreezing advice**. In relation to date labels, it is shown that the amount of produce without a date label decreased. Regarding 'open life' which indicates how long the retailer or brand estimates the food should be consumed once the pack has been opened, although significant improvements have been made to some hard cheeses, it seems that more work should be done on that aspect. WRAP found general storage advice to be in good terms of where best to store items. Freezing and defrosting advice has seen many improvements with the use of the snowflake icon. This has resulted in more consumers using their freezers more effectively. The full survey is available [here](#).

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### ***Study on the resilience of EU fisheries to climate change***

CINEA and DG MARE published a study, which assessed the resilience of EU fisheries to climate change in the framework of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and looked into ways of reducing the greenhouse gas emissions from the sector. The study found that EU commercial fisheries can be resilient to climate shocks if they are managed according to sound scientific advice and in line with the principles of maximum sustainable yield. As such, it is important to take into account ecosystem-based assessments to better anticipate the changing conditions of stocks. The study also found that many technologies to reduce energy use already exist, but their uptake has some barriers that need to be addressed. Full study available [here](#).

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## **NUTRITION & HEALTH**

The Global Status Report on physical activity 2022, published by the World Health Organisation, highlights that, if no urgent action is taken, almost 500 million people will develop heart disease, obesity, diabetes or cancer due to physical inactivity between 2020 and 2030. Regular physical activity promotes both mental and physical health. Yet 81% of adolescents and 27.5% of adults currently do not meet WHO's recommended levels of physical activity and this affects not only individuals over their life course, but also places a financial burden on health services and society as a whole. [Full report here.](#)

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## FOOD SAFETY / EFSA

### ***EFSA's updated assessment of sulfur dioxide and sulfites***

According to EFSA's updated assessment of sulfur dioxide and sulfites, dietary intakes of sulfites could be a safety concern for high consumers of foodstuffs that contain the additives. Nevertheless, gaps in toxicity data meant that the extent of certain adverse health effects could not be confirmed. The information provided by industry and available in the open literature were insufficient to establish an Acceptable Daily Intake (ADI) level. The margins of exposure (MOEs) calculated show that estimated intakes for these high consumers potentially exceed what would be considered safe, by up to 12.5% for children and up to 60% for adults.

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## AGRICULTURE

### ***Sales of antibiotics for animal use have almost halved***

Sales of antibiotics used for animal use have almost halved between 2011-2021, according to the European Surveillance of Veterinary Antimicrobial Consumption (ESVAC) report published by the European Medicines Agency. In the last three years, the EU Member States managed to achieve approximately one-third of the target of 50% reduction by 2030 set out in the Farm to Fork Strategy. Nevertheless, the report adds as a warning that the pace of the decline of antibiotics is not steady, therefore efforts to sustain this descending trend must be maintained and reinforced.

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### ***Commission unilaterally extended glyphosate licence (without Member States' approval)***

In the beginning of December 2022, the European Commission extended the EU authorisation for the use of herbicide glyphosate until 15 December 2023. After the Member States failed to reach a majority decision at the Council's votes in October and November and given also the soon-to-be expired authorisation of herbicide glyphosate, the Commission decided to unilaterally extend the approval period for an additional year. In November 2022, 5 MEPs sent a joint letter to the Commission, EFSA and ECHA asking for more evidence on glyphosate before extending its approval. EFSA and ECHA announced that they are assessing whether glyphosate should be reapproved or not, and final results are expected only after July 2023.

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### ***Sustainable Use of Plant Protection Products Regulation (SUR): Updates***

EU Member States are still not convinced about the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Regulation (SUR) and its objectives, especially the reduction of use of pesticides by 50% by 2030. They believe that the impact assessment, completed before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, does not reflect today's reality and this will put EU food production and competitiveness in jeopardy. EU ambassadors have asked the Commission for additional analysis on its proposal. Environment Commissioner Sinkevičius warned that the delay will slow down the progress of the Green Deal Strategy and undermine the efforts to boost biodiversity globally. On 30 November, Commissioner Kyriakides held an exchange of views with MEPs. As she said, the Commission acknowledges the sensitivity of the areas of pesticides and their targets, but highlighted that cooperation is key and negotiations must continue. A non-paper has been put forward. Commissioner Kyriakides underlined that the SUR proposal is accompanied by rules to speed up the approval of biologically active substances for pesticides, innovation funding on crop protection included in Horizon Europe and a proposal on NGTs.

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## PUBLICATIONS

- [JRC Food Fraud Reports – October & November 2022](#)
- FAO's publication on "[Microplastics in Food Commodities – A food safety review on human exposure through dietary sources](#)"
- [EFSA's overview of the Maximum Residues Levels \(MRL\) reviews](#) (ongoing and upcoming) – EFSA is publishing a detailed progress report, to be updated on a quarterly basis
- [Key Figures on the European food chain 2022](#) – Eurostat

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## EVENTS

- **7 December:** "New CAP unpacked: True Cost for Farmers, nature and taxpayers" organised by BirdLife Europe, EEB & NABU. Hybrid event – recording [here](#).
- **8-9 December:** [EU Agricultural Outlook Conference](#) - More information and recordings available [here](#).



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