

# European Union beef sector

## Main features, challenges and prospects

### SUMMARY

In 2020, there were over 76 million cattle in the European Union (EU) and beef production reached 6.8 million tonnes – output that makes the EU the world's third largest producer, after the United States and Brazil. The sector is diverse in terms of herd size, farm structure and geographical distribution of farms between EU regions.

Beef is an important element of most European diets, and it is the third most widely consumed meat in the world. EU beef, together with other EU food products, is known for its quality, and widely exported to third countries. To facilitate trade, the EU negotiates bilateral free trade agreements with those countries.

While offering a wide range of opportunities, the opening of global markets can also have a negative impact on the EU beef industry: beef produced outside the EU is more competitive, which threatens to weaken EU internal production.

In recent years, threats other than the opening of new markets have been putting pressure on EU beef producers. These include the declining consumption of red meat, citizens' concerns about environmental impact, climate change and animal welfare, and low farm incomes.

The EU's common agricultural policy offers a wide range of instruments to support farmers and address market changes. These instruments include export refunds, public intervention, and private storage aid. Farmers should also now be able to exert greater leverage over big retailers with the protection provided by the 2019 Unfair Trading Practices Directive.



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- Opportunities and challenges
- European Parliament



## Facts and figures

### EU beef and veal production and consumption

The EU [cattle sector](#) is composed of the beef and dairy sectors. The former refers to the production and processing of beef and veal (depending of the animal's age at slaughter, more or less than one year old, respectively), while the latter covers the production and processing of cow milk. These sectors are closely interlinked: a substantial share of dairy cows are slaughtered to produce meat and, as two thirds of the EU cow herd is of dairy type, changes in the herd structure have an impact on beef supply.

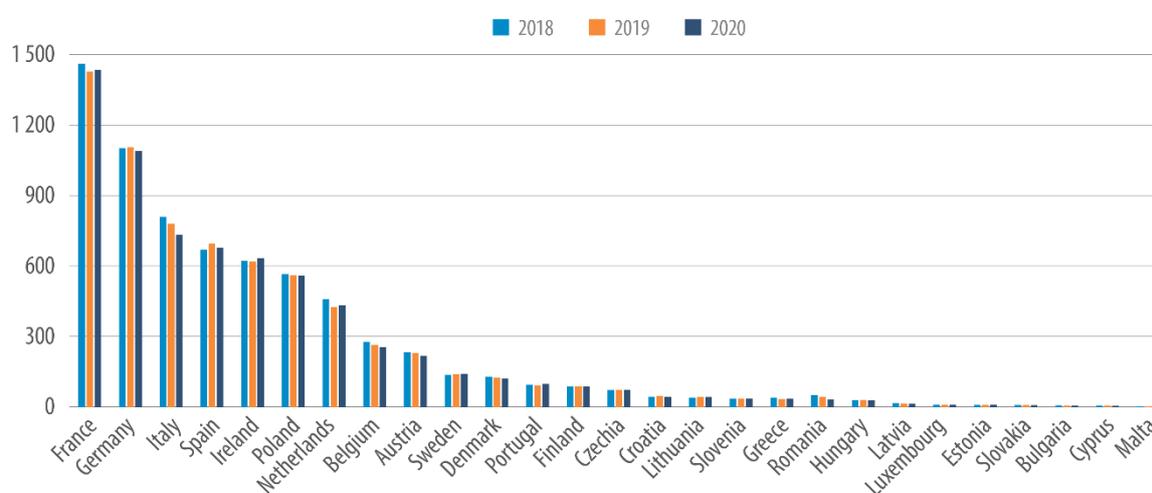
The beef sector is heterogeneous in terms of distribution, farm size, farm structure and production, economic profitability, and income. Differences – owing to natural conditions, the economic situation and historical developments – exist between western and eastern, and northern and southern regions.

In 2020, with a cattle herd of more than 76 million animals, EU beef farmers produced [6.8 million](#) tonnes of bovine meat (beef and veal carcasses), 1.2% less than the previous year. Three Member States alone produce half of the EU's beef: France (21.2%), Germany (17.8%) and Italy (11.1%). EU beef production is expected to continue [falling](#) in 2022, after the 0.3% decrease already seen in 2021. The decline has been caused predominantly by adjustments in the beef and dairy sectors (mainly in Ireland, Germany, France and Belgium), and despite the rise in production seen in Spain and Italy.

In 2021, EU annual beef consumption fell by 0.3%, to 10.3 kg per capita. The trend is expected to continue in 2022, with a 0.9% drop predicted, in part owing to higher meat and food prices.

By 2031, the growing world population, together with higher incomes in some developing countries, should see an annual increase in [global meat consumption](#) by 1.4%. This means that an additional 3.4 million tonnes of meat (poultry and beef) will need to be imported globally to fill the gap between domestic consumption and production.

Figure 1 – EU production of bovine meat in 2018-2020 (thousand tonnes)

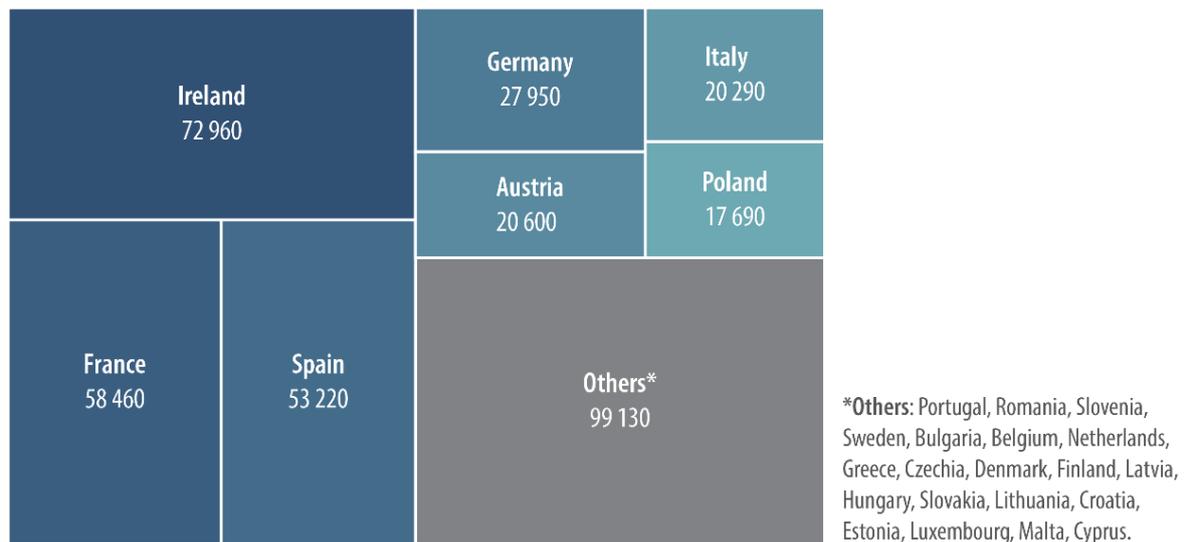


Data source: [Eurostat](#).

## Farm distribution

In 2016, there were [10 300 000](#) farms in the EU (not counting those in the United Kingdom, which as of 1 February 2020 withdrew from the EU and became a third country). Of these, 370 300 were farms specialised in cattle rearing and fattening. Over 57 % of the specialist farms (212 590) are located in just four EU Member States (Ireland, France, Spain and Germany), while the remaining 43 % are distributed across the other Member States.

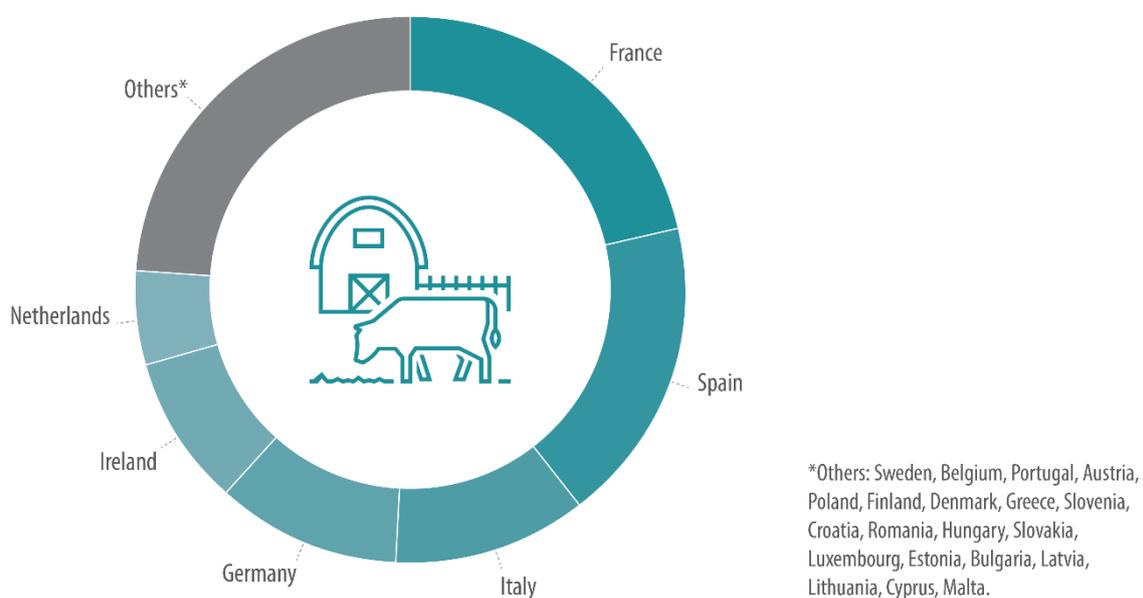
Figure 2 – Farms with specialist cattle-rearing and fattening: Distribution across EU Member States, 2016



Data source: [Eurostat](#).

The geographical distribution of farms does not necessarily correspond to the [standard output \(SO\)](#). As it can be seen in Figure 3, more than 50 % of the total SO in specialist farms (€ 15 894 282 460) is produced in just three EU Member States: France, Spain and Italy. The SO of specialist cattle-rearing and -fattening farms represents less than the 5 % of the SO of all farms.

Figure 3 – Farms with specialist cattle-rearing and -fattening: Standard output, 2016



Data source: [Eurostat](#).

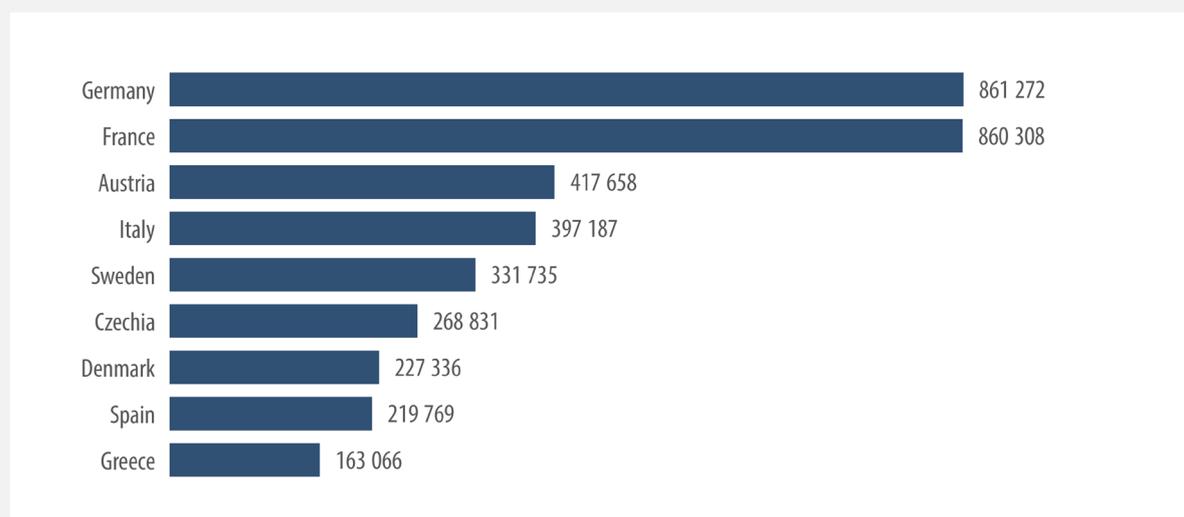
## Organic production

According to the [European Commission](#), 5 % of the cattle herd is organic, and bovine animals (with sheep) are the most popular species reared by organic methods. On average, the EU organic herd grew by 4 % per year between 2013 and 2016.

In 2020, the organic bovine herd reached 4.6 million animals. The [highest proportion](#) of organic bovine population is registered in Greece (30.3 %); for dairy cows, Austria had the highest share (22.0 %), followed by Greece (21.8 %) and Sweden (18.8 %). However, in terms of numbers, Germany and France have 861 000 and 860 000 head of organically reared cattle, respectively. Of the Member States that joined the EU as of 2004, Czechia has the highest number of organic cattle, with 250 000 head.

In 2018, the EU [imported](#) 666 tonnes of organic bovine meat, which represents 0.02 % of the total organic agri-food imports.

Figure 4 – Organic livestock: bovine animals (by head of cattle, 2020)



Data source: [Eurostat](#).

## EU beef sector and global demand

In the first quarter of [2022](#), EU meat **exports** increased by 6 %, with a projection for the end of the year of a final average increase of 4 %.

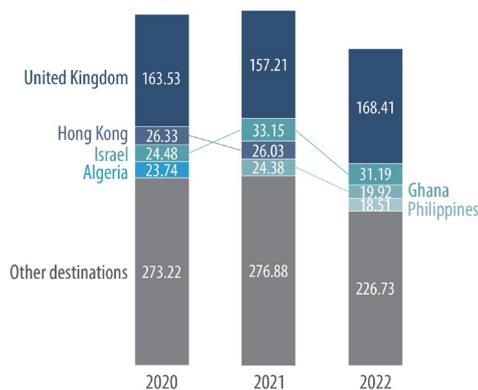
EU **imports** are expected to rise by 15 % by the end of 2022. This recovery is projected thanks to the re-opening of food services in many EU countries, improving global supply (in particular from Brazil), and the increase of in-quota imports from Argentina.

### Exports

Most EU-produced beef [remains](#) within the EU. The EU is largely self-sufficient in beef, with only 8 to 10 % of EU production destined for export. Up to March 2022, [global](#) bovine meat exports were dominated by the United States (US), Brazil, Australia, New Zealand and Argentina (Figure 5 below).

The EU's main [trading partners](#) are the United Kingdom (UK), Israel, Ghana, the Philippines and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Figure 5 – EU exports: Beef and veal (million tonnes)



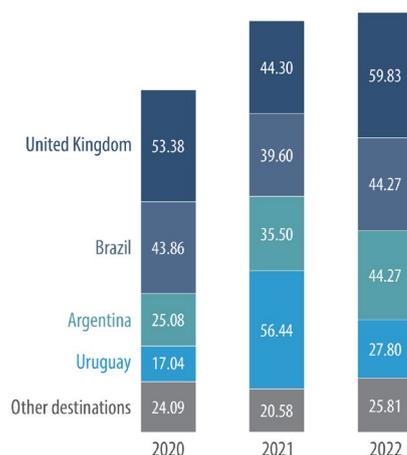
Data source: [European Commission](#), data up to March 2022.

In 2021, the total amount of exported beef (excluding fats) was a little over 1 million tonnes in carcass weight equivalent (CWE) – a decrease of 9.8 % compared with the previous year. Of this, 33.5 % (over 344 000 tonnes) was exported to the UK; the drop in exports in 2021 was caused mainly by reduced exports to the UK.

The value of exported beef (excluding fats) for 2021 stood at €3.8 billion, 38.6 % of which (around €1.5 billion) was represented by the UK. While the volume of beef decreased by 9.8 %, its value grew by 2.9 % compared with the previous year. The increase came from Israel (+1.4 %), Japan (+1.4 %), Bosnia-Herzegovina (+0.7 %) and Norway (+0.6 %).

## Imports

Figure 6 – EU imports: Beef and veal (million tonnes)



Data source: [European Commission](#), data up to March 2022.

In 2021, the EU [imported](#) 308 882 tonnes of beef in CWE, a decrease of 10.3 % since the previous year. In carcass weight, the first trading partner is the UK, which accounts for 28.3 % of the beef, immediately followed by South American countries, accounting all together for 57.1 % of beef imports into the EU: Brazil (26.4 %), Argentina (16.9 %), and Uruguay (13.8 %) (Figure 6).

In terms of value, in 2021, the EU imported around €1.8 billion worth of beef, which represents a 2.1 % decrease since the previous year. Brazil and Argentina alone account for almost 44 % of the value of imported beef; the UK is the third trade partner, followed by Uruguay, the US and Australia.

[Global import demand](#) in 2021 was dominated by China/Hong Kong, the US, Singapore and Japan, followed by South Korea and Russia.

## Projections

The Commission's December 2021 [EU agricultural outlook](#) for markets, income and environment 2021-2031 predicts that EU gross beef production will continue its downward trend during that period, with an expected decrease of 8 %. Nevertheless, the decrease in slaughtered animals will be compensated for partially by the increase in slaughter weight, obtained thanks to advanced

technologies. EU beef consumption is also expected to drop from the current 10.6 kg to 9.7 kg per capita by 2031.

Both concerns over long-distance transport and the lower demand from trade partners such as Turkey should result in a decline in the export of live animals, while EU meat exports will possibly increase slightly (+0.6 % per year). The main destination will continue to be the UK, together with other niche markets for high-value beef cuts, thanks to recent free trade agreements (FTAs). Exports to the UK decline, depending on future trade agreements between the UK and Australia and/or the US.

The joint [agricultural outlook](#) 2021-2030 by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), confirms the trend forecast by the Commission. According to the outlook, EU production is expected to decline by 5 %, if considering only meat produced by dairy cows, which are responsible for around two-thirds of beef supply. Indeed, the outlook forecasts a reduction in suckler cowherds in the EU because of their low profitability.

## Trade negotiations: Potential impact on the EU beef sector

Economic and trade globalisation have an [impact](#) on the cattle industry, particularly in remote regions and for small farms that do not benefit equally from the opening of markets. The paradox for beef farmers consists of having to look for opportunities on the global market, while at the same time being weakened by intense competition on that same market. The EU is currently negotiating several [FTAs](#), including with the [biggest players](#) and competitors in world beef markets (Mercosur and Australia).

### United States

The [US](#) is one of the EU's largest trade and investment [partners](#); until 2021, it was also the largest importer of EU goods. Despite this, there is no EU-US FTA. Negotiations on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership ([TTIP](#)), launched in 2013 under the administration of former US President Barack Obama, were suspended during the Trump administration at the end of 2016.

On 25 July 2018, President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker and US President Donald Trump agreed a joint statement that envisaged [cooperation](#) to bring a period of escalating trade tensions to an end and to focus on efforts to strengthen EU-US trade relations. However, this cannot be compared to a typical trade agreement, such as the TTIP, since cooperation focuses on a limited range of areas where results can realistically be achieved, without touching upon sensitive areas. This is why the agenda for the negotiations includes neither agriculture (a sensitive area for the EU) nor public procurement (sensitive for the US).

A 2019 [Council decision](#) declared that the negotiating directives for the TTIP have become obsolete. In 2021, beef represented 1.7 % of all EU agricultural product [imports](#) from the US, worth €156 million.

### WTO: EU-US dispute over hormone-treated beef

In 1989, the EU banned imports of meat and meat products treated with growth-promoting hormones, which are approved for use in the US. As a response to the EU's ban, the US imposed higher tariffs on some EU food products. The dispute was brought before the World Trade Organization (WTO) for resolution. The EU argued that, according to scientific data, hormone-treated beef posed possible risks for human health. The US counter-claimed that the EU did not conduct an adequate risk assessment, and that there was a consensus among scientists supporting the safety of hormone-treated meat.

After a series of WTO dispute consultations, settlement panels, arbitration proceedings and appeals, the WTO ruled in 2008 that the EU could maintain its ban and the US continue its trade sanctions. In 2009, the EU and the US signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU), in which the EU granted market access to US hormone-free beef and the US did not raise their import duties. The MoU was revised in 2014, resulting in a 45 000-tonne quota of hormone-free beef permitted to enter EU markets from qualifying suppliers, including the US.

Following the joint statement by Juncker and Trump, in 2018, the European Commission [recommended](#) that the Council open negotiations to settle this longstanding dispute. Finally, in 2019, the Commission reached an [agreement](#) with the US and other supplying countries, allocating 35 000 tonnes out of the 45 000 tonnes of the quota to the US (over a seven-year period), and the remaining amount to all other suppliers.

## Mercosur

According to a 2020 [study](#), Mercosur supplies 73 % of total EU beef imports, representing the EU's largest supplier of beef.

Since 2012, and owing to the quota limitation, the value of EU beef imports from Mercosur has not seen substantial changes, remaining at around €1.3 billion. This accounts for almost 17 % of the value of beef exports by Mercosur. Despite the quota, Uruguay and Brazil have managed to export larger volumes, paying the standard most-favoured-nation duty (12.80 % plus €303.40 per 100 kg), and converting the duty into a 43 % [ad valorem](#).

On 28 June 2019, the EU and the Mercosur states reached a political [agreement](#), according to which 99 000 tonnes of beef (55 % fresh and 45 % frozen) will be allowed to enter the EU market with a [7.5 % duty](#). This amount represents 1.2 % of total European beef consumption (8 million tonnes annually). There will be a gradual phasing-in period to allow European beef producers to adjust to the new market reality.

## Australia and Japan

Negotiations on a trade agreement between the EU and Australia were [launched](#) in June 2018.

In 2020, Australia was the EU's 19th largest trading partner, while the EU was Australia's third trading partner. In 2021, EU imports of Australian bovine meat (fresh, chilled and frozen) represented 5 % of [agri-food imports](#) from Australia, with a total value of €90 million. Up to June 2021, [11 rounds](#) of negotiations had taken place.

On 1 February 2019, the [EU-Japan](#) Economic Partnership Agreement, for which negotiations had started in 2013, entered into force. Japan is the EU's fourth biggest agricultural export market. Whereas Japan used to impose high tariffs on beef imports (38.5 %), the agreement cut these, making European red meat more affordable in Japan.

## New Zealand

The EU is New Zealand's third biggest trade partner, for a value of €7.8 billion in 2021.

After four years of negotiations, on 30 June 2022, the EU and New Zealand concluded an [FTA](#), which is expected to increase trade by 30 %, with savings for businesses of €140 million in duties.

As regards beef, the EU grants New Zealand 10 000 tonnes in CWE of high-quality grass-fed beef, at a tariff rate of 7.5 %, phased in over a seven-year period. The agreed amount equals 0.15 % of total EU beef consumption.

## EU policy framework

### Direct income support

Direct payments – covered until the end of 2022 by [Regulation \(EU\) No 1307/2013](#) and as of 2023 by [Regulation \(EU\) No 2021/2115](#) – are the backbone of the common agricultural policy (CAP), taking the largest share of its budget (more than 70 %). They provide a safety net for farmers by ensuring basic [income support](#), calculated per hectare and decoupled from the amounts produced, as well as other schemes for sustainable farming methods, young farmers, small farmers, etc. Direct payments are crucial for specialised dairy and cattle farmers. Beef farmers are more reliant on CAP direct payments regarding their incomes than dairy farmers: it has been [estimated](#) that, on average, dairy farmers' income is reliant on CAP payments for about 70 %, and beef farmers' for more than 100 %. Without these direct payments, these beef farmers would experience negative income.

Under the CAP, Member States may also grant voluntary coupled support to specific sectors that experience difficulties and are particularly important for economic, social or environmental reasons. The beef and veal sector is the biggest beneficiary of voluntary coupled support, reaching almost 39 % of the amounts provided. In 2022, the sector's [monetary allocation](#) for the EU reached €1 627 million in claims (4.3 % of the annual national ceiling for all direct payments). In the same year, 22 Member States decided to grant coupled support for beef and veal.

### Market measures

The beef and veal sector is eligible for market support mechanisms under the common market organisation (CMO) established by [Regulation \(EU\) No 1308/2013](#) (the 'CMO Regulation'), which provides a safety net in cases of serious market disturbances, crises and fluctuations. The aim of these measures is to offer financial support and stabilise the market by removing supplies that are surplus to demand when prices weaken.

The CMO Regulation was amended with the adoption of the post-2022 CAP legislation. With the entry into force of Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 and [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/2117](#), as of 2023, the CAP strategic plans will incorporate the national operational programmes, which would give Member States the possibility of developing strategies and schemes for specific sectors in need of support, including the beef sector. This involves a change in terms of strategic planning of interventions, while the CMO rules on public intervention, private storage and exceptional measures will remain largely unchanged.

### Public intervention

To support beef prices, the European Commission may launch public intervention throughout the year, when the average price for carcasses of male bovine animals falls below 85 % of the reference threshold (€2 224/tonne) over a representative period. Since 2013, the Commission has discretionary power to trigger a public intervention of this kind, as opposed to an automatic trigger when the reference threshold is reached.

### Aid for private storage

The European Commission may grant private operators [support](#) for the storage of fresh and chilled meat, taking account of: average market prices, reference thresholds and production costs for the products concerned; and/or the need to respond in a timely way to a particularly difficult market situation or economic developments with a significant negative impact on the margins in the sector.

In [response](#) to the coronavirus crisis in 2020, the Commission did indeed announce exceptional measures in the form of granting private storage aid for dairy and meat products. The scheme allowed the temporary removal of products from the market for two to [six months](#), leading to a reduction of available amount on the market, and rebalancing the market in the long term.

## Collective negotiation

Producer organisations in the beef and veal sectors may negotiate contracts for the supply of live cattle under certain conditions laid down in Article 170 CMO Regulation. The quantity of beef and veal production covered by such negotiations must not exceed 15 % of the total national production of each product. The producer organisation must also notify the Member State's competent authority of the quantity covered by the negotiations.

## Export refunds

Export refunds are [defined](#) by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as 'variable export subsidies given to traders to cover the difference between the internal European Union price of a commodity and its world market price'. The beef and veal sector is eligible for export refund. Conditions for the allocation of quantities that may be exported with an export refund are laid down in Article 197 CMO Regulation, and non-discrimination and equality should apply while fixing those refunds.

## Import tariff quotas

The European Commission may adopt measures to set and administer [tariff rate quotas](#) for the import of agricultural products. Tariff rate quotas guarantee that a pre-determined amount can be imported at an advantageous duty rate, thereby maintaining the price of an imported product at an affordable level.

## Promotion of EU agricultural products

[Regulation \(EU\) No 1144/2014](#) lays down rules for programmes to enhance the competitiveness of EU agricultural products, both within the EU internal market and in third-country markets. For 2022, the European Commission allocated €185.9 million to promotional activities for EU agri-food products.

The Commission defines priorities, identifies potential third-country markets, and implements EU-level strategy through annual work programmes. The [2022 work programme](#) is concentrated on the objectives of the European Green Deal, such as EU organic products, fruit and vegetables, sustainable agriculture and animal welfare.

[Promotion](#) programmes are divided into two categories: simple and multi programmes. The former is a promotion programme submitted by one or more proposing organisations from one Member State, while the latter is a programme submitted by at least two organisations from at least two Member States or one or more EU organisations.

For 2022, a total number of 157 project proposals were submitted to the latest 'promotion of agricultural products' calls. The latest available (2018) Commission [interim report](#) on the implementation of the new promotion policy shows that few programmes benefitted the bovine meat sector. In 2017, five simple programmes for beef with a €6.2 million budget were approved, representing 6.9 % of the total budget. Moreover, a programme for bovine, sheep and goat meat was approved, with a budget of €1 million (1.1 % of the total budget). In 2018, a single promotion programme and a multi programme for bovine meat were chosen, with grants worth €433 507 and almost €4 million, respectively. Furthermore, a €3 million programme was approved for bovine and pork meat.

## Animal welfare legislation

Major welfare problems in cattle kept for beef production may be linked to inadequate farming methods. These could lead to animal health issues, such as respiratory diseases (because of overstocking, inadequate ventilation and mixing of animals) and digestive disorders (as a consequence of intensive-concentrate feeding and/or lack of fibre in the diet). [Directive 2008/119/EC](#) lays down minimum standards for the protection of calves (i.e. bovine animals up to six months old) intended for human consumption.

Additional legislation on animal welfare includes:

- [Council Regulation \(EC\) No 1/2005](#) of 22 December 2004 on the protection of animals during transport and related operations;
- [Council Regulation \(EC\) No 1099/2009](#) of 24 September 2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing.

In the ['farm to fork' strategy](#), adopted in May 2020 by the Commission as part of the [European Green Deal](#), animal welfare is directly linked to the sustainability agenda, and the Commission committed to submitting legislative proposals to revise EU animal welfare legislation by the end of 2023.

## Unfair Trading Practices Directive

Like other agri-food sectors, the bovine meat supply chain faces the challenge of [unfair trading practices](#). The [role of retailers](#) has recently expanded, as they have taken control of the butchering and packaging of meat products and have thus become a significant actor in dealing with final consumers. Farmers can find themselves disadvantaged, for instance, when dealing with slaughterhouses that impose conditions on the delivery and quality of the animals. In these situations, individual farmers have little negotiation capacity, particularly when slaughterhouses use an intermediary to classify the carcasses, for example. Moreover, the 'fear-factor' (the weaker party's fear of losing a client if lodging a complaint) puts farmers under pressure from big retailers and meat processors.

To fight these practices, in April 2019, the European Parliament and the Council adopted [Directive \(EU\) 2019/633](#) on unfair trading practices in business-to-business relationships in the agricultural and food supply chain. The directive bans 16 unfair trading practices, distinguishing between 'black practices' (prohibited, whatever the circumstances) and 'grey practices' (allowed under specific conditions). Member States had until 1 May 2021 to transpose the directive into their national legislation. An October 2021 [report](#) from the Commission on the state of the transposition and implementation of the directive shows that 16 of the 27 Member States had notified complete transposition to the Commission by 31 July 2021.

## Opportunities and challenges

While the EU beef sector struggles for competitiveness on the world market, that same market also presents the industry with opportunities. The sector could benefit from the international reputation of EU food production, as high consumer expectations and strict EU standards offer opportunities for entering high-value markets for premium meat. To compete with exporting countries, EU producers would have to turn to high-quality and premium-meat products (with labels of [designated origins](#), or other benefits for consumers).

In a September 2018 policy briefing, [Farm Europe](#) think-tank summarised the challenges facing the EU beef sector, concluding that EU support measures for the sector have proved ineffective. The think tank claims that the Commission's proposals could have negative consequences that would add to existing difficulties, arguing that the role of the new CAP should be to accompany and encourage the sector's development towards a more sustainable model. Farm Europe also sees a need for a redrafted sectoral strategy, and recommends, among other things: a focus on better organisation and segmentation of the market; restructuring the sector, with increased coordination

between actors; improving commercialisation through effective communication and promotion systems and quality assurance labels; and increased research and innovation.

As a [2014 study](#) requested by the European Commission Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development shows, for EU beef farmers, the cost for compliance with legislation represents [0.5-3 %](#) of their production costs. According to the study, this is an important factor that has negative impact on the competitiveness of EU bovine meat. Since WTO rules do not include animal welfare, EU products – which comply with high animal welfare standards – [compete](#) with meat imports from third countries for which there is no guarantee that they have respected the same standards as those imposed on EU producers.

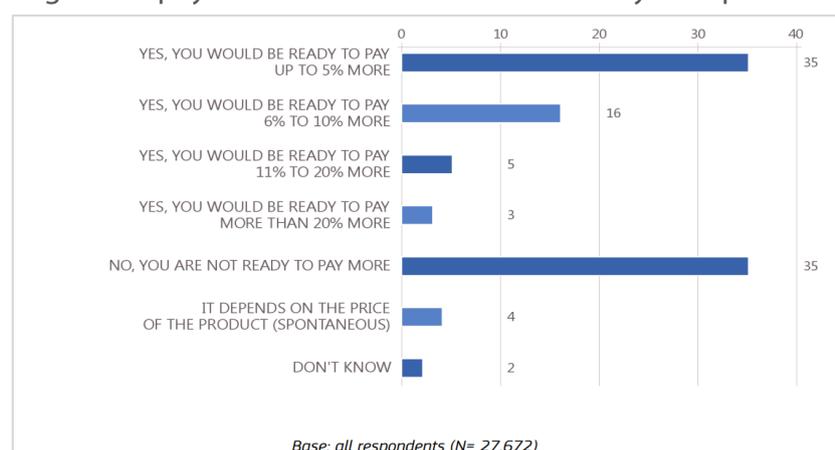
The [competitiveness](#) of EU beef is also related to farm structure. Unequal distribution of farms and differences in size and geographical location can make them vulnerable in today's markets: the smaller the farm, the more vulnerable it becomes. With fewer reserves for investment and innovation, they may face economic hardship. Changes in the flow of dairy cattle for slaughter affect the market, as well.

[Sustainability](#) also plays a crucial role in the EU beef market. While, on the one hand, innovations in management practices and technology may lead to an efficient and more environmentally-friendly meat production, on the other, they may oblige farmers and producers to further investments.

Agriculture accounts for [10.3 %](#) of total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (2019 data). About [80 %](#) of agricultural GHG emissions is produced by methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) from enteric fermentation and nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O) emissions from soils. CH<sub>4</sub> from both manure management and other sources each account for 10 % of the total. According to the European Environment Agency (EEA), between 2005 and 2019, agricultural emissions remained stable on average, even if Croatia, Greece and Malta decreased their emissions by more than 10%. An average decline of 2 % is expected by 2030. A reduction in EU livestock would [directly reduce](#) agricultural GHG emissions. At the same time, according to the [European Livestock Voice](#) multi-stakeholder group, the livestock sector is a substantial [contributor](#) to the European economy, providing direct jobs for 4 million people and indirect support for 30 million people, mostly in rural areas. The group claims that there is no direct link between livestock production and [EU subsidies](#), as these are linked to the use of farmland.

A drop in EU beef consumption per capita is, among other things, a consequence of consumer preferences and concerns over the environment and climate change. According to a [Eurobarometer](#) survey on attitudes of Europeans towards animal welfare, conducted between November and December 2015, consumers expressed concern about the way farmed animals are treated. Overall, 59 % of respondents said they would be prepared to pay more for animal welfare-friendly food products (35 % were ready to pay up to 5 % more), while 35 % were not willing to pay more (Figure 7).

Figure 7 – Willingness to pay more for animal welfare-friendly food products (% – EU)



Source: [Eurobarometer survey](#), November-December 2015.

## European Parliament

While in recent years, Parliament's activities with regard to cattle farming have focused more on the milk and dairy sectors, Parliament has also acted on the beef sector. In 2017, to inform Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) more effectively in their work, the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI) requested a [study](#) outlining the challenges and opportunities in both the EU milk and meat sectors. On several occasions, MEPs have highlighted the sector's vulnerability in world markets and its sensitivity regarding third countries in trade negotiations. Members have expressed their views in [reports](#), [opinions](#), recommendations on the proposed negotiating mandate for trade (for example with [Australia](#) and [New Zealand](#)), and parliamentary questions. In June 2021, [MEPs](#) endorsed the EU citizens' [call](#) for gradual end to caged farming, asking for animal products imported into the EU to be produced in full compliance with relevant EU legislation, including the use of cage-free farming systems.

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