



Monday, 18 April, 2016

EU agri-food trade continues to increase

EU agri-food exports in February 2016 were worth €10.2 billion, which is well above export values in January 2016 and even slightly above exports in February 2015, according to the [latest monthly statistical report](#). Highest increases in monthly export values in February 2016 were witnessed for the USA (+15%) and China(+13.5%). For the past 12 months, imports increased by 8.4% compared to the same period one year ago, the export surplus standing at about €16 billion. This month's report focuses on EU trade with China, which is the second most important destination and the fourth most important origin for EU agri-food imports. In 2015, exports to China increased in all major product groups with the most significant hike in commodities (+71%; from €1 billion to €1.7 billion). For example, pork exports to China more than doubled (from €432 million to €934 million) in 2015 which demonstrates the importance of pig meat in EU exports to China. Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development Phil **Hogan** is this week [on a visit to China and Japan](#) accompanied by a business delegation of European agri-food executives representing key sectors in the EU trade. Opening up new markets and promoting consumption of EU dairy products and pig meat is one of his priorities.

Commission welcomes opening of Mexican market to Spanish pigmeat

The Mexican market is now open for fresh pigmeat from Spain, with a number of other EU Member States expected to follow in the coming months. Concerted efforts to remove technical barriers to EU exports of agricultural products to third markets are bearing fruit for EU producers who can benefit from new trade opportunities, and this was welcomed by Commissioners **Andriukaitis**, **Malmström** and **Hogan**, who was recently in Mexico: *"This is a step in the right direction. In light of this positive development, we expect the Mexican authorities to continue granting access to such imports from other EU Member States. The barriers our exporters face are not justified in the light of our very high safety standards. Moreover, as the world's largest food importer we are clearly respecting our international obligations. We are now insisting on equally fair treatment from our trade partners and this is already bringing good results. We are determined to get even better results in the future, working closely with our Member States and our food exporting industries. We are confident that we will make complementary progress in the sanitary and phytosanitary area in the near future and that barriers to trade will be further reduced in line with our international obligations. Making progress in this area is a priority in order to offer our companies more and better trading opportunities in the future. The market is opening for fresh pigmeat from Spain; we expect the go-ahead for fresh pigmeat from France; and work is ongoing for exports from Germany, Romania, Italy and Poland."* For the 12-month period February 2015 to

January 2016, EU agri-food exports reached a value of more than €129 billion, meaning an increase by 6% in value compared to the same period one year ago.

Public procurement: new EU rules applicable from today

As of today, Member States and their public authorities must comply with the three Directives on public procurement and concessions adopted in [2014](#). Elżbieta **Bieńkowska**, Commissioner for Internal market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs said: *"Public procurement rules are there to ensure that taxpayers' money that goes into the public purchase of goods, works and services is well spent. The new rules will further simplify public tender procedures and render them more flexible to the benefit of SMEs in particular. They also encourage the shift towards an energy and resource efficient economy alongside the well-established objective of achieving the best quality-price ratio."* Authorities that have already made the transition to eProcurement report savings between 5% and 20%. Given the size of the total procurement market in the EU (€ 1.9 trillion per year), each 5% saved could return around €100 billion to the public purse. More details on [DG Growth's website](#)

The Investment Plan for Europe comes to Greece

European Commission Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen** is in Athens on Monday to mark the approval of the first project in Greece to benefit from the [Investment Plan for Europe](#). The industrial company will use the financing for research and development and establishing new product lines in manufacturing. During his visit, the Vice-President will meet with investors, small-and medium-sized businesses, and local politicians to present the Investment Plan. He will also present the state-of-play of all three pillars of the Investment Plan at the National Parliament. Finally, Vice-President **Katainen** will discuss the Investment Plan and how Greece can benefit from the [European Fund for Strategic Investments](#) (EFSI) with Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras. Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, said: *"I am very pleased that the European Investment Bank (EIB) has approved the first Investment Plan project in Greece. The project puts a strong emphasis on research and innovation - R&D being one of the areas where we see that the Investment Plan makes a real difference. Today I will update the government, MPs, and private sector stakeholders on the progress we have made. Greece can benefit enormously from the European Fund for Strategic Investments. Greek SMEs, via banks and financial intermediaries, as well as strategic sectors where innovation might be needed, like the food and tourism industry, can tap into the investment plan opportunities. The EIB office here in Athens is doing great work in offering technical support to help project promoters and local authorities prepare their project proposals."* Also on Monday, the EIF signed an [SME financing agreement](#) backed by the EFSI to provide €90 million in loans to innovative SMEs in Italy. (For more information on the Investment Plan in Greece see the [press release](#))

EU supports Ecuador following deadly earthquake

Following the deadly earthquake, which caused multiple casualties and left many injured in Ecuador, the Commission has taken immediate steps to provide coordinated European support to the relief efforts. The EU has today released €1 million as initial humanitarian aid to the victims of the earthquake in Ecuador while detailed assessment of the needs is underway. This assistance will be delivered through EU's humanitarian partners in the country. *"The EU is fully committed to supporting the international relief efforts to assist the thousands affected by the earthquake in Ecuador. We are already channelling emergency assistance through the EU civil protection mechanism, to provide lifesaving support to those in need. The Commission's humanitarian experts are also on their way to the affected areas to assist in relief efforts and assess the need for further assistance"*, said Christos **Stylianides**, EU Commissioner for

humanitarian aid and crisis management. The [EU Civil Protection Mechanism](#) was activated upon the request of Ecuadorian authorities and the United Nations, requesting emergency assistance such as urban search and rescue teams (USAR) and night lights as well as expertise. The mobilisation of assistance is coordinated through the Commission's [Emergency Response Coordination Centre](#) (ERCC), which closely monitors developments. Offers of assistance are incoming from Spain, France, Poland and other participating states. First deployments are already underway since the early hours of Monday, with the EU facilitating logistics and co-financing the transport of emergency assets to the affected areas. Moreover, advanced satellite imagery generated through EU's Copernicus system is being provided to Ecuador to facilitate the assessment of damage in the areas around the epicentre and beyond. A press release is available [here](#).

Plant Health: Member States endorse additional EU measures against *Xylella fastidiosa*

Last Friday, Member States experts endorsed additional measures against *Xylella fastidiosa*, one of the most dangerous plant bacteria known worldwide. The new measures update some elements of the existing emergency provisions adopted in May 2015. In particular, it takes into account the evolution of *Xylella fastidiosa* in the Italian territory (Apulia region) and the fact that new outbreaks have been reported in the area surrounding the infected province of Lecce since the adoption of the last emergency [measures in 2015](#). The measures endorsed on Friday provide for an enlarged demarcated area in order to prevent further spread of the bacterium in the rest of the Union territory. More information on plant health and biosecurity is available [online](#).

European Commission and World Bank sign agreement to boost development cooperation

The European Commission and the World Bank Group signed a Framework Agreement on Friday, 15 April 2016, to further their cooperation on the implementation of development projects across the globe. This agreement sets the terms under which the World Bank will disburse EU budget money on development projects on the ground. The agreement was signed by Vice-President Kristalina **Georgieva** on behalf of the European Commission and by Vice-President Axel van Trotsenburg on behalf of World Bank. The European Commission and the World Bank first signed a cooperation agreement in 2001. The current document is a revision of an agreement dating from 2014. The revision of the agreement adjusts to the revised funding model of the World Bank, with clarified remuneration, accountability, simplification and increased transparency. For the period 2010–2015, the European Commission has contributed over 2.0 billion euro to the [World Bank Trust Funds](#), thus becoming the third biggest contributor. More information is available [here](#), pictures are on [EbS](#).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Bulc visits lorry check and opens consultation on the future of the road sector

Tomorrow EU Commissioner for Transport Violeta **Bulc** will open the [Road Transport Conference "Driving change for business and people"](#) in Brussels. This conference kicks off a wide-ranging consultation process aiming to make the European road transport sector perform better, be it economically, environmentally or socially. In the margin of the conference, Commissioner **Bulc** will also participate in a roadside check of lorries to get some first-hand understanding of the current challenges in the road sector. Commissioner **Bulc** said: "*Digitalisation of the road sector offers significant*

opportunities. Clear, fair and common rules for road operators and workers support growth and jobs creation".

Commissioner Malmström participates in OECD high level symposium on steel

Today, Trade Commissioner Cecilia **Malmström** will participate in the OECD high level symposium on excess capacity in the steel sector. Hosted in Brussels by the Belgian government and the OECD, this meeting will bring together ministers, senior officials and private sector representatives from around 30 countries including the EU, China, Japan, the WTO, and the OECD, in order to seek solutions to the overcapacity crisis. In the afternoon, Commissioner Malmström will participate in the intergovernmental roundtable to outline the challenges the European steel industry faces and ways of addressing them. Overcapacity in steel was above 700 million metric tons at the end of 2015, and new plants are set to add another 47 mmt by 2018, according to OECD analysis. Meanwhile steel consumption is expected to have declined last year. The steel industry in Europe is world-leading in certain steel product segments, represents 1.3% of EU GDP and provided around 328,000 jobs in 2015. Despite the potential of the European steel sector and the significant efforts made to innovate and modernise, its competitive position on the global steel market has deteriorated in recent years. Excess production of steel in third countries such as China has increased exports, depressed prices, and given rise to an unprecedented wave of unfair trading practices, distorting the global level playing field. The Commissioner's intervention at the roundtable will be available online once delivered.

The donor co-ordination group for the Palestinian people meets in Brussels on 19 April

Tomorrow the annual spring meeting of the donor coordination group for the Palestinian people - the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) – will take place in Brussels. The meeting will be hosted by the EU High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini**. It will be presided by the Norwegian Foreign Minister Børge Brende in his capacity as Chair of the AHLC. Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes **Hahn**, will also participate. Since 1993, the AHLC has served as a key policy-level coordination mechanism for development assistance to the Palestinian people. The forthcoming meeting, which is taking place in an increasingly challenging regional environment, is expected to review the progress made by the Palestinian Authority in its reform agenda, including with regards to its fiscal sustainability and the robust regulatory framework, the ultimate objective of which is to alleviate the situation for the Palestinian people. A [media advisory](#) is available online.

Upcoming events

- **[Friday 15 April: EU launches world's biggest health and safety campaign](#)**
European Commission - Upcoming events The news: On 15 April, the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) will launch its two-year Europe-wide campaign called "Healthy Workplaces for All Ages". The background: This is the world's biggest workplace safety and health campaign.
- **[Thursday 28 April: The Commission adopts its monthly infringements package](#)** European Commission - Upcoming events The news: On Thursday, 28 April 2016, the European Commission will adopt its monthly infringements package. These decisions seek to enforce EU law across Europe so that citizens and businesses can benefit fully from the internal market.

- **26-27 May: The EU at the G7 summit in Japan** European Commission - Upcoming events The news: The 42nd edition of the G7 will take place from 26 to 27 May in Ise-Shima, in the Mie Prefecture (Japan), under Japanese presidency. The European Union, who is a full member of the G7 (and the G20), will be jointly represented by by the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, and the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk.

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Find out [here](#) what will be discussed next week in the European Commission, the European Council and the European Parliament.