

UEAA NEWSLETTER

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LATEST NEWS

Swedish Presidency of the Council of the EU 2023

Sweden has just taken over the rotating Presidency of the EU Council of Ministers for the next half year until the end of June 2023. The previous presidency was the Czech Republic. From July until December 2023 Spain will hold the Presidency.

What does it mean, holding the presidency in this context? Will Sweden have a lot of power to push for its own positions?

No, not that kind of power. The central role is to lead the work of the Council of Ministers at all levels. The Council of Ministers meets in different formations, e.g. the Ministers of Agriculture and Fisheries for issues related to agriculture, forestry and fisheries or the Ministers of Environment and Climate when it comes to environment and climate.

The main task is to process legislation proposed by the Commission (which has the right of initiative). The Presidency cannot propose any new legislation. It will take over what is on the table that was not finished by the previous presidency and take up new proposals put forward by the commission. The presidency is supposed to preside over the council in a professional manner, not trying to advance its own national positions.

The Swedish Presidency has identified four overarching priorities:

- Security – Unity
- Competitiveness
- Green and energy transitions
- Democratic values and the rule of law – our foundation

For the areas most relevant to the UEAA the program is planned as follows:

Agriculture

The Ministers for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries normally meet once per month.

The agricultural ministers will follow and discuss the situation related to markets, in particular following the invasion of Ukraine.

Work on legislation about Geographical Indications and Farm Sustainability Data Network will continue aiming for a common position (mandate for negotiations with the European Parliament) for both these files.

Ongoing work will be pursued regarding the proposed regulation for Sustainable use of plant protection products which suggests i.a. quantitative reduction targets up to 50 %. At their meeting in December the agricultural ministers requested, after intense discussions, additional information to the impact analysis from the Commission within six months. Thus it is uncertain whether an agreement could be reached during the Swedish Presidency but an exchange of views between ministers is planned.

The agricultural ministers will also discuss the agricultural aspects of the proposed Regulation on the certification of carbon removals which is linked to the climate package Fit for 55 with ambitious measures to reduce emissions of carbondioxide. This file will be decided by the environment ministers.

The Industrial Emissions Directive will also be dealt with in the Environment Council but the agricultural aspects, which relate to emissions of methane and ammonium and will have an impact on livestock agriculture, will be discussed by the agricultural ministers.

Bioeconomy will be discussed based on a report from the Commission and Council Conclusions on the opportunities of bioeconomy in the light of current challenges will be adopted. Such conclusions are not binding, but they give the views of the Council as a political statement and are adopted by unanimity.

The Council will also adopt conclusions on the EU priorities for the FAO, probably at the March meeting.

At the last meeting in June the Commission will present their proposal for a Regulation on plants produced by certain New Genomic Techniques (NGT). This is an important proposal which may change the situation since many years with regard to NGT's in the EU.

Forestry

Work will continue in relation to the “Deforestation regulation”, i.e. the Regulation on import and export of certain commodities and products associated with deforestation and forest degradation.

This proposed regulation aims at preventing import of forest products from countries that practice highly unsustainable forestry but can also have an impact on forestry in EU member states.

Environment

The environment ministers will continue work on the proposal for a Regulation on nature restoration. This regulation is a follow up of the Biodiversity Strategy and aims at improving biodiversity through binding targets for restoring damaged ecosystems at land as well as sea.

There will be substantial impacts on agriculture as well as forestry and fisheries and obvious conflicts with objectives for food production and forestry have led to intense discussions. The ambition is to reach a General Approach in first reading at the council meeting in June.

For the Directive on Industrial Emissions the ambition is to achieve a General Approach at the council meeting in March. The formal meetings of the Council will take place in Brussels or Luxemburg. In addition there will also be a number of so called informal meetings of ministers as well as officials in Sweden. No formal decisions can be made at these meetings which are mainly for discussions on themes chosen by the Presidency.

There will be informal meetings for agricultural ministers (in June) as well as environment ministers (in April).

The chief veterinary officers, the director generals of the food authorities, the forest directors and the CAP directors will also meet informally in Sweden.

A scientific conference on forest monitoring will take place at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences 1-2 February. This is very timely since the Commission is preparing a legislative proposal in relation to forest monitoring. An important aspect will be to what extent the EU will take over national monitoring of forests. This proposal is expected in the summer of 2023.

Another scientific conference related to Bioeconomy will be organized 27-28 February 2023.

Is it possible to follow these council discussions? Yes, partly. Normally there will be items on the agenda where the discussions of the ministers can be followed electronically.

Can the discussions and decisions still be influenced? Well, it is late in the process but in principle it is still possible to contact your national ministers as well as members of the European Parliament.

It is also good to know that after the formal EU decisions have been made they will be implemented nationally and important decisions may be made by national authorities. This is especially the case for directives whereas regulations are binding as decided in the EU.