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Report Highlights:

On March 4, 2020, the European Commission published the founding legislative proposal of the EU Green Deal: the EU Climate Law. The proposed regulation sets a legally binding EU-wide common target of net-zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050 as well as a reduction on GHG emissions of 55 percent by 2030. The European Parliament has adopted its position on the proposed text, while the Member States are still finalizing their own position. Further work is needed in order for the three institutions to reach agreement on the 2030 targets.

European Commission's proposal

On March 4, 2020, the European Commission published the founding legislative proposal of the EU Green Deal: [the EU Climate Law](#). The proposed regulation sets a legally binding EU-wide common target of net-zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050 and establishes a legislative framework for achieving that objective. Net-zero means that GHG emissions must not exceed removals of GHGs. The proposed regulation would require EU institutions and Member States to take the measures necessary to achieve the collective climate-neutrality objective.

The proposed European Climate Law aims to raise the ambition relative to the existing EU GHG reduction targets, which are expected to reduce GHG emissions by only 60 percent by 2050. Currently, the EU has a target of reducing GHG emissions by 20 percent by 2020, compared with 1990 levels, and by 40 percent by 2030. The EU is on track to exceed that target since in 2018, the GHG emissions in the EU were 23 percent below 1990 levels. On September 17, 2020, the Commission published an [impact assessment](#) on the possible increase of the 2030 target¹. Following, this impact assessment, the Commission amended² its original proposal to include a reduction of net GHG emissions by at least 55 percent compared to 1990 levels by 2030.

2020 target	Current 2030 target	Proposed 2030 target	Proposed 2050 target
- 20%	- 40%	- 55%	- 100%

Table 1: EU targets and Commission's proposed targets for net reduction of GHG emissions compared to 1990 levels.

The proposed EU Climate Law requires the Commission to propose revisions of key EU climate and energy legislation in line with the revised 2030 target by June 30, 2021. This includes the European Emissions Trading System (EU-ETS) Directive, the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) Regulation and the Renewable Energy Directive (REDII).

The proposed text would also empower the Commission to adopt legislation setting out a trajectory to reach carbon-neutrality by 2050, starting from the 2030 target. The proposed Climate Law would also require Member States to improve adaption to climate change and to develop and implement adaptation strategies and plans. Moreover, by September 30 2023, and every five years thereafter, the Commission would be required to assess collective progress towards climate neutrality and on adaptation, the consistency of relevant EU and Member State measures with the climate neutrality objective, and the adequacy of relevant EU and national measures for progressing on climate adaption.

¹ That same day, the European Commission published its Climate Target Plan 2030 which assess how the EU can reach this objective. More information can be found in GAIN Report '[EU Commission Unveils EU Climate Target Plan 2030](#)'

² Amended proposal for the European Climate Law: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020PC0563>

The European Commission's proposal was sent to both the European Parliament (EP) and the Council of Environment representing the Member States as part of the EU's legislative process. Both the EP and the Council have now amended the proposal.

The European Parliament's Position

The European Parliament adopted [its position on the EU Climate Law](#) on October 7, 2020. Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) want the EU to be even more ambitious with its targets. Therefore, they called for a reduction of GHG emissions of 60 percent by 2030. MEPs also want an interim target for 2040 to be proposed by the Commission to ensure that the EU is on track to reach its 2050 target. The Parliament also wants to make it legally binding that both the EU and all Member States individually must become climate-neutral by 2050.

MEPs also want to set up an EU Climate Change Council (ECCC), an independent scientific body. The purpose of the ECCC would be to provide the EU's institutions annually with assessments of the consistency of the EU measures to reduce GHG emissions with the Union's climate objectives and its international climate commitments.

The Member States' Position

The Council of Environment adopted a [partial position on the EU Climate Law](#) on October 23, 2020. The Council's position remains partial because it does not yet specify an updated 2030 GHG reduction target. The Council did not reach an agreement either on whether every Member State should individually achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 or whether the goal could be achieved by the EU as a whole, allowing flexibility at Member State level. The Council explained that further work is needed to reach agreement among Member States in this regard.

However, Member States agreed on making the climate target fixed in law. Similar to the European Parliament, the Council wants the Commission to propose an intermediate target for 2040 after the first global stocktake of the Paris Agreement. The Council retained the concept of an indicative trajectory proposed by the Commission but only as a tool to help the Commission. The Council also wants the Commission on the operation of the European Climate Law within six months after each global stocktake under the Paris Agreement.

Next Legislative Steps:

The European Member States now need to finalize their position on the EU Climate Law. This is expected to be discussed during the next meeting of the European Council, which is the institutions where the EU Heads of State meet. This is the highest level to take a political decision for the Member States. This meeting is scheduled for December 10-11, 2020.

Once the Member States finalize their position on the proposal, they will then meet with the European Parliament and the Commission in the 'trilogue' format. The objective of trilogue meetings is to find compromise on a package of amendments, acceptable to both the EP and Council. The compromise found in the trilogue will then be formally adopted by the EP and Council before it becomes EU law.

Conclusions:

Once the EU Climate Law is adopted and enters into force, one of the founding principles of the European Green Deal, for the EU to become carbon neutral by 2050, will be enshrined into law. The European Union and its Member States will then have to find ways to reach this goal. This will be done through legislative and non-legislative changes that may impact agriculture and food production.

The Farm to Fork Strategy, the Biodiversity Strategy³, the Climate Target Plan and the Methane Strategy⁴, published by the European Commission as part of the Green Deal, give indication on some of the future proposals that will be put forward to reduce the amount of EU greenhouse gas emissions that are caused by agriculture and food production. These future proposals include:

- A Revision of the Renewable Energy Directive (REDII) to increase the overall binding renewable energy target for the EU and improve the sustainability criteria for renewable energy, including biofuels and forestry biomass;
- A Review of the data on biofuels with high indirect land-use change risk and setting up of a trajectory for their gradual phase out by 2030;
- A Revision of the regulation on greenhouse gas emissions and removals from land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF);
- An EU Carbon Farming Initiative to increase carbon removal and carbon storage;
- A Proposal for a revision of the feed additives regulation to reduce the environmental impact of livestock farming, and especially methane emissions;
- A Proposal for a sustainable food labelling framework to empower consumers to make sustainable food choices;
- An Action Plan for Organic Farming for 2021-2026;
- A Proposal to avoid or minimize the placing of products associated with deforestation or forest degradation on the EU market (“deforestation-free supply chains”).

Attachments:

No Attachments.

³ More information on the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies can be found in GAIN Report [‘Green Deal Strategies for the EU Agri-Food Sector Present a Politically Ambitious Policy Roadmap’](#)

⁴ More information on the Methane Strategy can be found in GAIN Report [‘EU Adopts Its Methane Strategy’](#)