

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

# GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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## **Belgium EU-28**

**Post:** Brussels USEU

### **Priorities of the Bulgarian Presidency**

**Report Categories:**

Policy and Program Announcements

Trade Policy Monitoring

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**Report Highlights:**

On January 1, 2018, Bulgaria took over the rotating EU Presidency. This report provides an overview of the Bulgarian Presidency's priorities for the next six months (January - June 2018).

On January 1, 2018, Bulgaria took over the rotating EU Council Presidency for the first time in its history. During the first half of 2018, Bulgaria will schedule and chair all ministerial meetings with the exception of the Foreign Affairs Council. Bulgaria is the second country of the [Trio Presidency Program](#) composed of Estonia, Bulgaria and Austria. A Trio Presidency Program is a common program developed by three consecutive presidencies to ensure continuity.

With regards to Brexit, the Bulgarian Presidency states in [its program](#) that it will “support proactively the implementation of the conclusion on the European Council (Article 50) of December 2017”. “The key priority is to safeguard the unity of the remaining 27 Member States.”

The four main priorities of Bulgaria for the next six months are:

- [Future of Europe and Young People](#)
- [Digital Economy](#)
- [Security and Stability](#)
- [Western Balkans](#)

### **Agriculture and Fisheries Council**

- The modernization and simplification of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) post 2020 and the budget for agriculture in the next Multiannual Financial framework (MFF) are the main priorities of the Bulgarian Presidency in the area of agriculture. The Presidency will base its work on the European Commission’s Communication on “[The Future of Food and Farming](#)” published in November 2017.
- The Bulgarian Presidency will also closely monitor price development and production levels in the sugar sector following the abolition of the quota regime in 2017.
- The topic of unfair trading practices in the food supply chain is also set out as a major priority for Bulgaria as a legislative proposal by the Commission is expected in the first quarter of 2018.
- The Bulgarian Presidency aims to finalize the Council’s position on the [proposal](#) for a Regulation on Spirit Drinks in view to open the trilogue negotiations with the European Parliament and the European Commission.

### **Environment Council**

- The Bulgarian Presidency will lead preparatory work and technical negotiations in view of the Conference of the countries (COP24) within the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2018.
- On February 5-6, 2018, Bulgaria will organize, with the European Commission, the [21<sup>st</sup> European Forum on Eco-Innovation](#) to promote innovative solutions to improve air quality and protect the health of citizens and the environment.

### **Agenda**

The tentative calendar of meetings under the Bulgarian Presidency (January – June 2018) can be downloaded from the Council's website at <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-15966-2017-INIT/en/pdf>

#### Agriculture and Fisheries Council Meetings:

- January 28, 2018 (Brussels): The future of food and farming, market situation, trade-related agricultural issues
- February 19, 2018 (Brussels): The future of food and farming, road map on the development of an EU Protein Strategy
- March 19, 2018 (Brussels): The future of food and farming, strengthening farmers' position in the food supply chain and tackling unfair trading practices: assessment of progress made on the implementation of December 2016, trade-related agricultural issues, fisheries
- April 16-17, 2018 (Luxembourg): The future of food and farming, Food losses and food waste: assessment of progress made on the implementation of June 2016 Council conclusions
- May 14, 2018 (Brussels): The future of food and farming, proposal to improve the food supply chain, market situation
- June 3-5 2018 (Sofia): Informal meeting of EU Agriculture Ministers in Bulgaria
- June 18-19 2018 (Luxembourg): The future of food and farming, fisheries

#### Environment Council Meetings:

- March 5, 2018 (Luxembourg): Greening the European Semester, delivering the Circular Economy Plan (EU strategy on plastics, interface between chemicals, products and waste legislation, monitoring Framework for the circular economy), reports on recent international meetings
- June 25, 2018 (Luxembourg): Proposal for the revision of Council Directive 98/83/EC on the quality of water intended for human consumption, reports on recent international meetings