

Farm Protests Across Europe Reject Concessions, Demand New Economic System

by Marcia Merry Baker and *EIR* International Staff

Feb. 9—The farmer-led demonstrations going strong in many nations across Europe all reject the concessions being made by the European Union, and by their respective governments, as too little. Farm protest leaders, plus truckers, fishermen, port workers and many others are all demanding a full-scale change in the economy.

The scale of the activation is unprecedented. This week in Italy saw a mass tractorcade focused on Rome, as well as demonstrations in many other Italian cities. In Spain on Feb. 6, tractorcades shut down highways in more than 20 provinces. Protest actions continue strong in Germany and France, and renewed demonstrations are underway in many other nations, including Belgium, the Netherlands, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Poland, Romania, and more.

In mid-February, major demonstrations are in the works for Madrid and Athens. Special features of the mass actions include coordinated, temporary shut-down of ports, border crossings, and also stopping truckloads of food going from one country to the next. Farmers intercept the trucks, take their imported food cargo, then give it away to local charities, or dump it to publicize the point against imports that undercut domestic production. This week, two border crossings between Germany and Poland were temporarily blocked. In Spain, farmers intercepted a ferry boat load of food imports from Morocco. The German ports of Hamburg, Bremerhaven and Wilhelmshaven were interrupted this week, as was the Spanish port of Málaga.

The co-organizers behind the mass mobilizations in most of the countries are networks—often newly-

created via WhatsApp and social media—of non-established farm leaders and groups. These new groups disdain the long-standing farm organizations, and also political parties, for having stood by over the last three decades, accommodating to the takedown of agriculture, and their lives. But given the gravity of today's crisis, differences between farm groups—current or past—are frequently set aside in order to bring off joint action and demands.



XI@teacherdude

Angry with government inaction in the face of skyrocketing costs and falling incomes, Greek farmers rallied in Thessaloniki, demanding a full-scale change in the economy, as part of nationwide protests throughout Greece.

The gist of the stated demands is that farmers cannot and will not continue to operate at a loss, nor can other sectors in the economy. Import-dependency is unacceptable. Farmers are demanding prices for their output that cover costs of production, an end to the supermarket and food processor monopolies, protection and compensation from drought and floods, and an end to the Green Deal directives restricting use of land, crop-defense chemicals, and numbers of livestock, etc. Farmers are demanding a complete re-doing of the new EU Common Agriculture Policy package, announced in 2023.

The protestors charge that office holders in Brussels and national capitals are incompetent and immoral, for carrying out measures that shut down farming, the food supply, and the economy in general.

Empty Concessions

The Green Deal elitist groups, politicians and media are scurrying to respond to the protests. Mostly, the green machine claims to be “friends” of the farmers, while opposing their activation and premises. In addition, there is a smear campaign, orchestrating propaganda to claim farm protestors are right-wing dupes. Farmers in Germany demonstrated against the lying media this week, with actions in front of the NDR (*Norddeutscher Rundfunk*) public radio and TV broadcaster’s main office in Hanover, as well as offices of the *Bayerischer Rundfunk* in Unterföhring, and the *Allgäuer Zeitung* newspaper.

On Feb. 1, leaders of the 27 member nations of the EU met at the European Council in Brussels, offering a few concessions, but no commitment to fundamental economic change. The EU Green directive was waived, that otherwise ordered farmers to set aside 4% of their land from any productive use. (This directive is rationalized as furthering biodiversity, anti-emissions, “re-naturalization,” soil health, etc.) The EU pledged to implement “safeguards” against Ukraine food imports harming EU farmers, but the imports are still to come in. The EU promised to refrain from any deal with South America—the long-stalled Mercosur trade agreement—that would allow their food imports to undercut EU farmers.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen is in a tizzy to respond, while solidly in fantasyland. On Feb. 6, she made another empty gesture

of concessions, announcing that the EU would ease-up on its extreme Green Deal directive that farm pesticide use must be halved by 2030. However, this is not a new concession, it was already put in operation last fall, by vote of the European Parliament, under extreme pressure from farmers.

When von der Leyen addressed the European Parliament Feb. 1, she told the lawmakers that climate-change and Russian President Vladimir Putin were responsible for the farmers’ plight. With crocodile tears welling, she said,

Many of them [farmers] feel pushed into a corner. Farmers are the first in line feeling the effects of climate change. Droughts and floods have destroyed their harvests and threatened livestock. Farmers are feeling the impact of the Russian war.... I think we owe them appreciation and thanks and respect.

The very next day, a smarmy joint statement was released by several of her notorious collaborators in a private EC “stakeholders” discussion process she kicked off in Brussels Jan. 25, titled, “Strategic Dialogue for the Future of Agriculture.” The Feb. 2 statement is titled, “Building Momentum for Agroecological Farming,” and it is signed by some 20 entities including the World Wildlife Fund, Greenpeace, Slow Food, IFOAM Organics Europe, and ECVC (*European Coordination Via Campesina*). They are all part of the 27 groups that were at the private von der Leyen “stakeholders” discussion to smile while destroying the economies of Europe.

Protests in Many Nations

Farmer-led protests are underway not only in the major EU farming nations of France, Germany, Italy



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Tractorcades are visible everywhere in Italy as farmers take to the streets, protesting the ruinous agricultural policies of the European Union and the Italian government. The sign reads: “Citizens: When agriculture ends, famine begins.” Feb. 8, 2024.



EIRNS/Vincenzo Romello

A tractorcade protest in the southern region of Puglia, Italy. Feb. 5, 2024.

and Spain, but in Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, and others. In Germany, the momentum remains strong. The following are a few updates.

SPAIN. Protests exploded Feb. 6. Tractorcades shut down highways in more than 20 provinces. On Feb. 7, 1,250 tractors rolled into Barcelona. Food imports from Morocco were dumped. This all resulted from several weeks of WhatsApp social media organizing by groups outside the established farm organizations, taking them and the government by surprise. In the province of Castile and León alone, 7,000 tractors were mobilized. The leaders of the wildcat action issued a [Manifesto](#) last weekend, called the “Primary [Agriculture] Sector: Platform F-6,” which warns:

[Spanish agriculture] is in a critical state; the countryside is dying; the abandonment of farms is growing, and there is no generational replacement.... The prices of many agricultural products are usually below cost of production....

Their demands then spell out a new pro-

posed system.

On Feb. 7, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez tried to cool things out with vague promises that no imports would come into Spain from countries with production standards lower than the EU; and that Spain’s “Food Chain Law” would be tweaked to prevent prices to farmers from dropping below their cost of production.

The talk now is that a nationwide action focused on Madrid will take place Feb. 21, in which the established farm associations will also participate. There is no reason to take Sánchez’s promises seriously.

ITALY. This week farmers converged on Rome Feb. 6–8, and the tractorcade will continue there for several days, as well as at other sites. Thousands of tractors streamed in. Various groups put aside differences, and organized the mass turnout. They are not demanding single measures, but rather call for total change. They want parity prices, protection from cheap imports, a stop to the Malthusian Green directives. They put forward, for instance, that Italy—the home of pasta—imports wheat, when, instead, Ital-



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Putting aside their minor differences, and demanding parity prices, protection from cheap imports, and a stop to the government’s Malthusian Green directives, thousands of Italian farmers converged on Rome for several days of protests beginning Feb. 6, 2024.



XI@greekcitytimes

When their meeting with Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis failed to resolve the crisis in agriculture, Greek farmers conducted major actions throughout the country, blocking highway interchanges, including the main east-west highway from Türkiye to the rest of Europe.

ian wheat production could be easily doubled if the farmer's production costs are covered.

One of the organizers is the CRA—*Comitati Riuniti Agricoli*, which issued a press release stressing that non-farmers are also supporting the protests because the widespread crisis in Italy “is not limited exclusively to the agriculture sector, but is also detrimental throughout the most varied sectors of the entire nation.”

GREECE. A nationwide action is expected in Athens the week of Feb. 12, following major actions in many parts of the country over the past 10 days. Farm leaders met Feb. 7 in the town of Nikaia to plan out the Athens tractor rally. In the north this week, farmers set up roadblocks on the Egnatia Odos thoroughway, the main east-west highway from Türkiye to the rest of Europe.

Speaking there, the *Pan-Serres Agricultural Association* head Diamantis Diamantopoulos announced that farmers will escalate their actions. On Feb. 5, protest leaders said that the meeting they had with Prime

Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis Feb. 5, did not go far enough on what must be done to resolve the agriculture crisis.

GERMANY. The Berlin parliamentary vote has been postponed from Feb. 2 until March 22 (in the upper chamber, the *Bundesrat*), for the 2024 budget, in which it will be decided what happens to such things vital to farming, as whether the farm-use diesel will remain subsidized.

Protests continued this week. Farmers deployed tractors Feb. 5 for decentralized actions in several of the 16 German states. For example, farmers—including winegrowers—blockaded ten of the central warehouses of major supermarket chains, serving the Rhineland-Palatinate. They targeted the transnational food cartel firms Aldi, Edeka, Globus, Kaufland, Lidl, and Netto. They did this in other states; they blocked two border crossings with Poland. They are demanding decent prices, and also logistics terms in which the purchasing supermarket company makes arrangements for storage of fresh produce, and does not put this bur-

den, as now, on the farmers to provide shelving, and temperature-controlled handling, etc.

Policy Statement, LsV

A dairy farmer from Lower Saxony toured on his tractor Jan. 27–Feb. 7 to state capitols in 13 of the 16 states, to publicize the recent policy statement from the east German branch of the LsV (*Land schafft Verbindung*, Countryside Creates Connections), co-organizer of the farmer protests. Werner Koslowski, a 59-year-old dairyman from Wonste in Lower Saxony, made the point that in doing this, he is campaigning for the farmer to have a higher and steady income, a bigger and fair share of the “added value” involved in food provision. He said that the price of farm-use diesel cannot be allowed to increase by a higher tax, but it must not be compensated for by a new subsidy.

Koslowski:

We want to pay taxes—income taxes! To be able to do this, we have to earn a reasonable income again, through working on our farms. Politicians should not subsidize us, but clear the way for a strong domestic agriculture.

The LsV Statement lists the following demands:

1. Effectively prohibit unfair trading practices, in particular the purchase of food from farmers, below production costs.

2. Introduce country-of-origin labeling as information for all citizens, and mandatory on all foodstuffs in retail and food service outlets.

3. Make contracts mandatory for milk and cattle deliveries—with no exception for cooperatives; end price dictates; force dairy processors and slaughterhouses to agree on specific quantities and prices in advance.

4. Break up of monopolies in the food industry and food retail: swift adoption of antitrust law reform, parallel sector investigations, break up orders against at least Aldi, DMK, Edeka, Lidl, Rewe, and Tönnies by 2024.

5. Break off negotiations with Mercosur and Chile; only conclude free trade agreements including agricultural products with countries that produce to the same social and environmental standards.

6. Expire duty-free status for Ukrainian agricultural products by June 2024, putting into immediate effect that transit is permitted only in sealed containers for shipment outside the EU.

7. Simplify revision of the production requirements for fertilization, plant protection and livestock raising, in accordance with good agricultural practices.

8. Effectively reduce bureaucracy through *de minimis* limits in administrative enforcement, below which record-keeping obligations and routine checks are no longer required.

9. Ban genetic engineering and laboratory meat and all patented processes that corporations use to control production.

10. Allow, with legal immunity, wolves to be shot at pasture fences; adapt nature conservation law and incorporate it into hunting law.

Our demands do not cost any tax money, they relieve the state, strengthen regional value creation and entrepreneurial responsibility—and need broad political support.

Farmers Could Consider Russia’s Successful Farm Policies, 2014–24

by Paul Gallagher

Feb. 6—The protests of farmers and their grassroots organizations across Europe are demanding that national economic policies support farms as going concerns, support their output and overall production of food for their populations, and enable farms to support the many other productive enterprises in the countryside.

They could raise the issue of the agricultural policies of the Russian Federation, and their results, since the EU sanctions against Russia began in 2014. Russia’s success story in agriculture was [formulated](#) and intended in Yevgeny Primakov’s brief period as Prime Minister (1998–1999), but not implemented until 2014.

This brief and preliminary summary comes primarily from OECD reports and data from CEIC Data Company and Statista.com.

Before being hit with sanctions over its reunification with Crimea and allegations that it was interven-

ing in the Donbass republics in 2014, Russia was about 50% import-dependent for food. In the decade since then, Russian government policy included:

1. Support for agricultural producers equivalent to 9–13% of gross farm income, depending on the year. This support is positively based on production, and on use of various inputs to improve yield. From 2014 to 2023 the total value of subsidies increased by 75% in dollar equivalent. Gross farm income rose from approximately \$78 billion equivalent in 2014 to over \$100 billion equivalent in 2022.

2. Subsidies for food producers' costs for railroad transport of production—first for grains, then extended to vegetables, soybeans, and other oil seeds.

3. From May 2020, supports also included subsidies of purchase of agricultural machinery and processing equipment, and increased capitalization of Rosagroleasing, the national company providing support for leasing the same.

4. President Vladimir Putin's "[Food Security Doctrine](#)," announced January 2020: The minimum

share of domestic production of crops would be targeted, from a low of 60% (fruits, berries) to 90% (grains).

5. As is best known, "sanctioning countries" imposed tariffs and import bans on food exports or re-exports.

Some results may also be of interest to farmers in other nations:

Russia's total agricultural output is up 33% since 2014, to the equivalent of \$100 billion; most of the increase occurred between 2018 and 2022;

Russia's wheat production has risen since 2014 from 60 million metric tons annually to 100 million;

Growth of total factor productivity (or technological productivity) in Russian agriculture, was reportedly a high 2.7% per year over the decade to 2022, according to research at Lomonosov Moscow State University.

The BRICS, chaired this year by Russia, is the ally of, and can be the policy model demanded by, European and American farmers.

EIR Offprint Special Report Available

The Great Leap Backward: LaRouche Exposes the Green New Deal

Executive Intelligence Review has released this Special Report to warn of the extreme danger to mankind represented by the Green New Deal, also called "The Great Reset" by the leaders of the Davos World Economic Forum.

Already being implemented, this plan is taking over the direction of national economies from sovereign governments, using the power of central banks and the too-big-to-fail private financial institutions, cutting off credit to fossil fuel power generation and to industrial and agricultural enterprises claimed to emit too much carbon. Meanwhile it is creating a new huge bubble in the "sustainable fuel" sector, hoping to prop up the increasingly bankrupt financial system.

Stopping it by returning to a Hamiltonian American System credit policy, requires an understanding which is the purpose of this report.

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Special Report

The Great Leap Backward LaRouche Exposes The Green New Deal



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