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# Facing farm protests, EU eases demands in 2040 climate proposal

The EU executive dropped specific references to agriculture emissions cuts as farmers protest across Europe.

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Farmers' protests have broken out in many countries across Europe in recent weeks | Sameer Al-Doumy/AFP via Getty Images

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BY KARL MATHIESEN AND EDDY WAX

Under intense pressure from farmers, the European Commission has dropped key passages in a proposal for a new 2040 goal for cutting greenhouse gas pollution.

“All sectors” would need to contribute to the effort, the EU executive's plan says. But a mention of a possible 30 percent cut to agricultural pollution between 2015 and 2040, which was in previous drafts seen by POLITICO, had been removed.

Also excised were recommendations for citizens to make changes to their behavior, like eating less meat, and a push to end fossil fuel subsidies.

Farmers' protests have broken out in many countries across Europe in recent weeks, with the industry expressing discontent over the EU's green policies. Some of the largest demonstrations have been in Germany, prompted by a cut to diesel subsidies. Brussels has faced calls from industry groups and some political parties to lay out a 2040 climate pathway that doesn't ignite further anger.

The EU's plan is set to be presented on Tuesday and will recommend a 90 percent cut in total EU emissions by 2040 from 1990 levels — a suggestion in line with scientific advice.

The updated version of the plan, which is still subject to change, framed agriculture in a more positive light compared to earlier drafts. The role the sector plays in the EU’s “food sovereignty” was also emphasized.

This reframing is in line with a demand made by the powerful center-right European People’s Party (EPP) — the political family of top EU executive Ursula von der Leyen and the European

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90 percent 2040 target was conditional on more emphasis being placed on “positive opportunities” for farmers and less on “new instruments that rather see the farmers as an enemy of climate policy.”

But however positive the framing, the reality is hard to escape, said one EU official. The agriculture industry, the official argued, could and should contribute to hitting the EU's climate goals, which include a legal mandate to be climate-neutral by 2050.

“Despite all the semantics in the [Commission], there is an unequivocal Impact Assessment making a very compelling (business) case for an ambitious headline target and all sub-targets for sectors,” said the official, who was granted anonymity to discuss the negotiations, referencing an analysis that will accompany the EU’s plan.

## *Jakob Hanke Vela contributed reporting.*

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