

EU Livestock 2030: Aligning Policy, Practice & Consumer Expectation

Brussels, 18.03.2026

On 18 March 2026, the four EU-funded sister projects PATHWAYS, mEATquality, INTAQT and CODE RE-FARM convened at the European Parliament - an event kindly hosted by MEP Benoit Cassart. The gathering brought together policymakers, researchers and food-chain stakeholders to reflect on how Europe can steer its livestock systems towards 2030. Key themes included product **authenticity and quality, consumer expectations and economic sustainability**, in line with the evolving EU agricultural policy framework.



The event opened with **Alisa Tiganj** (Cabinet of the Commissioner for Agriculture and Food), who outlined the upcoming EU livestock strategy. She emphasised that one-size-fits-all solutions are not appropriate for a sector as diverse as European livestock, and that the strategy has been developed through a bottom-up approach involving a range of stakeholders.

The strategy is built around four pillars:

1. **Resilience:** addressing animal disease, climate disruption, market volatility, and shifting consumption habits, while strengthening EU open strategic autonomy and developing robust supply and value chains.
2. **Competitiveness:** maintaining the EU's world-leading position by applying equivalent standards to imports, reducing administrative burdens, and incentivising new business models, including the valorisation of bioproducts.
3. **System adaptability:** developing tailored solutions across different farming methods and animal welfare standards.
4. **Territorial diversity:** a newer pillar focusing on connecting livestock systems with broader territorial planning, enabling local value chains and supporting local champions.

Tiganj noted that the livestock strategy will not stand alone but will support other EU initiatives, including the generational renewal strategy.

Research review

Laurence Smith, PATHWAYS Coordinator, presented the four EU-funded sister projects highlighting their combined contribution to the transition towards more sustainable and reliable livestock farming models in the EU. Key remarks:

- **mEATquality**: addresses the links between husbandry practices, meat quality and consumer trust.
- **PATHWAYS**: investigates pathways for the transition to sustainable livestock production.
- **Intaqt**: develops tools and evidence to authenticate animal-source foods.
- **Code:re-farm**: explores alternative farming ecosystem models that combine product quality and sustainability.

Common themes across all four projects include quality and authenticity, sustainable systems, consumer trust, and evidence-based policy support.

Authenticity of animal sourced food in EU

Bruno Martin, from INTAQT project, focused his presentation on the authenticity of meat of animal origin, drawing on analyses carried out by **mEATquality** and **INTAQT** projects. He explained that production and processing techniques, together with environmental conditions, determine specific characteristics that give the product its identity and added value. In this context, he emphasized the need for commercial claims to accurately reflect these qualities, as a safeguard against food fraud and to protect the integrity of European agri-food chains.

In this regard, **mEATquality** has contributed to the development of key tools for authentication, notably the verification of livestock systems—improving the ability to predict product composition—and the authentication of agricultural production systems.

It has also worked on validating geographical origin and specific farming practices, such as environmental enrichment or livestock feeding, using combined analytical approaches. These results have laid the foundations for the creation of a EU Meat Database focused on authentication, data exchange and the identification of information gaps. Taken together, these tools strengthen the integrity of the agri-food system and bolster consumer confidence in the EU's food model.

Consumers' perspectives on quality

Klaus Grünert, from mEATquality, presented a summary of **PATHWAYS**, **INTAQT** and **mEATquality** conclusions, placing particular emphasis on the role of the consumer as a driving force in the green transition. He highlighted that consumers' purchasing decisions can either accelerate or slow

down this transition, making them a decisive factor. He also added that behaviour is influenced by factors such as willingness to pay a higher price, the ability to recognise sustainable products, and their availability on the market.

The key findings of this overview included:

- Most consumers value animal welfare and sustainability in meat production.
- Credible communication, optimising text, images and labelling, is key to influencing perceptions of quality and purchase intent.
- There is a potential market for sustainable meat products, provided that their sustainability profile, packaging and price are aligned with the target audience.
- Food policies can foster conditions that drive the development and adoption of sustainably produced meat.

Economics and sustainability of livestock production

Jorge Campos González, from PATHWAYS, addressed the economic aspects of livestock production, emphasising that the transition to sustainable livestock farming requires a three-way balance: environmental performance, economic viability for farmers, and social acceptance by consumers. He stressed that change will only be possible if it is profitable and builds trust in the system.

mEATquality results show that profitability is only one part of resilience. Extensive systems often build value-based resilience through product quality and territorial identity, while intensive systems rely on scale-based resilience through integration and bargaining power. Policy should support both - but in different ways.

In this regard, the **PATHWAYS** project suggests that innovations can be economically viable and that competitiveness is generally positive, and not simply a function of farm size. Meanwhile, work from **INTAQT** on intensification in poultry showed trade-offs between yield gains and quality losses, illustrating the complexity of these decisions.

Code: Re-farm findings reminded the audience that there is no single road to sustainability - rather, a landscape of diverse transformation pathways. Some farms improve what already works through familiar upgrades and greater transparency. Others innovate within the existing system, creating new welfare-oriented models that add value and open fresh revenue opportunities. A third group reshapes how the entire ecosystem is organized - strengthening local-for-local chains, circularity, and cooperation to scale solutions and reduce costs. And then there are the pioneers who move into full transformation, co-creating new partnerships, sharing monitoring tools, and building the foundations of future competitiveness. Together, these pathways form a rich map of how change can happen - not all at once, and not in the same way for everyone.

Panel discussion



livestock strategy.

The panel opened with live audience responses via Mentimeter, which showed that **sustainability** was the dominant concept participants associated with the future of livestock.

Paolo Patruno from **CLITRAVI** emphasised that while consumers say they want to buy local and sustainable products, their actual choices are largely price-driven – particularly during times of economic pressure. He called for a more competitive and pragmatic approach to shaping the

Simona Caselli from **COPA COGECA** agreed on the price sensitivity point and raised concerns about the complexity of EU origin labelling. She noted that even the most well-known EU quality mark – the organic label – is only recognised by around 30–35% of consumers, while other labels struggle to reach 15% awareness. She stressed that consumer ability to understand and choose products is fundamental, and shared that in her cooperative, origin and transparency are central to the entire value chain. She also cautioned against overproduction, noting that "we're producing more than we can afford."

Andrea Gavinelli from **Animal Welfare SANTE.G.3**, argued that competitiveness should not be reduced to price alone. He framed authenticity as a genuine market opportunity for Europe and stressed that defending EU standards against non-EU imports requires building trust – through research, investment, and getting ahead of the competition.

Bruno Martin from **INRAE** reiterated the importance of a holistic methodological approach, acknowledging that integrating all dimensions of sustainability is methodologically complex but necessary.

Closing remarks

MEP Benoit Cassart drew together several key threads from the event:

- Scientific approaches can help guarantee meat quality and build Europe-wide databases – but the majority of consumers, not just niche markets, must be considered as EU agricultural policy is revised.
- EU standards are already the highest in the world; further raising them without considering economic impact risks undermining competitiveness.
- The renationalisation of the CAP poses a dual threat: creating competition between producers and

fragmenting the single market. Cassart advocated for a more European, rather than purely local, approach.

- Stability and productivity – not one-off income peaks – are what will motivate the next generation of farmers.
- Authenticity, quality, sustainability, and diversity are the four pillars of a sustainable livestock system, but they must be delivered within a framework that ensures farmer's income and consumer access.

As **mEATquality** concludes its activities, this final event served as a strong reminder of the value of EU-funded research: bringing stakeholders together, generating robust knowledge, and contributing to solutions for a more sustainable and trustworthy food system.

We extend our sincere appreciation to our sister projects - PATHWAYS, Intaqt and Code:Re-farm - and to all participants whose engagement and contributions made the event both meaningful and memorable.

mEATquality project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement No 101000344. This material reflects the author's views and does not necessarily reflect the views or policy of the European Commission.