

#TRENDY THURSDAY

AGRIFOOD

New EU Forced Labour rules to crack down on exploitation in agri-food supply chains

EU negotiators reached a deal to ban products linked to forced labor from the bloc's market, affecting agricultural and food commodities both within and outside the EU. The agreement targets any product made with forced labor, potentially impacting certain agricultural commodities like Brazilian beef. The regulation includes measures to remove and destroy affected products, even within the EU's agriculture sector, which faces issues of labor abuse, particularly in sectors such as strawberry production in Spain.

HEALTH

France enshrines abortion in its Constitution, a world first

France becomes the first country to embed abortion rights in its constitution after a historic vote at the Château de Versailles. With a significant majority, lawmakers affirm women's right to choose, signaling a victory for feminism and human rights. Amid global challenges to abortion rights, including recent setbacks in the US and Europe, French leaders and activists aim to defend these rights at both national and European levels. Despite this triumph, concerns persist over the rise of far-right forces in upcoming European elections and their potential threat to reproductive freedoms.

ENVIRONMENT & INDUSTRY

Europe's industrial decarbonisation at risk amid sharp drop in CO2 price

The EU's CO2 price plummet, driven by high energy costs and political uncertainty, risks undermining the carbon market and industrial decarbonization efforts. While the price nearly halved in a year, from €95 to €52, concerns arise over stalled decarbonization in sectors like electricity and potential funding gaps in the green transition. Despite short-term price fluctuations, long-term projections anticipate a rebound in carbon prices amid the EU's economic recovery and reduced permit availability.

EUROPEAN UNION

EU centre-right plots post-election alliances left and right

The European Parliament elections signal a power shift favoring the centre-right European People's Party (EPP), positioning them to maneuver between left and right factions. With Ursula von der Leyen set for a second term, the EPP's influence grows with over 10 commissioners and a strengthened position in Parliament. Plans to collaborate selectively with right-wing forces like ECR may face hurdles, yet EPP aims to assert control over policymaking, potentially blocking socialist initiatives. Despite internal disputes, EPP's dominance poses challenges for opposing factions in shaping EU legislation.

DEFENSE

Europe starts war machine to wean itself off US weapons

EC unveiled a defense industrial strategy and a €1.5 billion Investment Programme to address security concerns amid tensions with Russia. The strategy aims to boost defense capabilities and reduce reliance on American weapons, marking a shift in EU defense policy. However, concerns persist regarding national sovereignty and funding challenges. The proposal includes measures to facilitate weapons procurement and allow Ukraine's participation in joint purchases. The success of the strategy hinges on funding and potential joint debt issuance, although resistance from frugal nations remains a hurdle.

INTERNATIONAL

Takeaways for Europe as Biden, Trump dominate Super Tuesday primaries

Biden and Trump secure major wins in nationwide primary contests, setting up a significant rematch in November's election. Trump sweeps Republican votes across several states, while Biden secures Democratic victories. Both candidates highlight each other's weaknesses, with Biden emphasizing Trump's threat to democracy and Trump focusing on Biden's immigration policies. Despite legal challenges, Trump's support among Republican voters remains solid, with European observers noting potential implications for transatlantic relations.