

# #TRENDY THURSDAY

## INTERNATIONAL

### Ceasefire marks the beginning of Gaza peace plan

Despite pressures from within the Israeli government to abandon peace negotiations, a six-week ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas was reached on Wednesday, which took effect days later on early Sunday morning with the first release of hostages. The ceasefire is the first step of a three-phase peace plan brokered by Qatar, Egypt and the US, involving the release of prisoners on both sides, the complete withdrawal of Israeli military troops from the Gaza Strip, the entry of humanitarian aid, and the return of deceased hostages in exchange for beginning Gaza's reconstruction.

## AGRIFOOD

### Agri Chief under civil society pressure

More than 130 organisations have written an open letter to the Commissioner for Agriculture and Food, Christophe Hansen, urging him to develop a plant-based food action plan by 2026. The letter's signatories, ranging from climate advocacy and animal rights organisations to public institutions such as the European Consumers Organisation, seek to press the agriculture chief to include the plant-based strategy in the upcoming Vision for Agriculture and Food, which is expected to be presented next month. The letter calls for increasing plant protein production and consumption and highlights its benefits for health, sustainability and economy.

## EUROPEAN UNION

### EU closes ties with Mexico to overcome tariffs

The EU and Mexico have concluded negotiations for "a global agreement" aimed at deepening and broadening their political dialogue, cooperation, and economic relations. The agreement seeks to strengthen economic and commercial resilience in response to the incoming US administration's pledge to raise tariffs up to 25 percent on Mexico and Canada, and 10-20 percent on the EU. Key goals outlined in the agreement include boosting trade and competitiveness, enhancing economic security, increasing EU agri-food exports, and setting commitments to green and digital transitions. Once ratified by both sides, the agreement will replace the current text in force.

## EUROPEAN UNION

### Competitiveness Compass to be presented next week

In a speech delivered by the Commission chief Von der Leyen at the European Parliament yesterday, she assured that "next week, we will present our new Competitiveness Compass". Two times postponed due to Von der Leyen's recent illness, the new competitiveness roadmap is expected to draw the Draghi report and the Budapest Declaration into action. As Von der Leyen stated, three priorities will shape the new compass: closing innovation gap with competitors, a joint roadmap for decarbonisation and competitiveness, and strengthening our economic resilience and security. Further details will be unveiled at Wednesday's presentation.

## HEALTH

### Council facilitates healthcare access for European citizens

The Council of the EU has adopted a new regulation allowing EU citizens an easier exchange and access to health data at the EU level. Aligned with the EU's digital transformation goals, the European Health Data Space (EHDS) ensures faster and easier cross-border access to digital health services and products within the EU. The new regulation also allows certain data to be reused for research and innovation purposes, benefiting European patients by enhancing the quality and efficiency of medical care. The regulation will come into force 20 days after both the Council and the Parliament have formally signed it.

## ENVIRONMENT

### Commission plans to ban PFAS use, says commissioner Roswall

The Commissioner for Environment, Water Resilience and a Competitive Circular Economy, Jessika Roswall, admitted on Monday that the European Commission is considering banning the use of PFAS in consumer products for next year, "at the earliest", due to their long-lasting effects in ecosystems, water and human body. Although some European countries, mostly Nordic states, have already backed the proposal, the Commission is not expected to prohibit the so-called forever chemicals until "essential" exemptions are determined.