

# #TRENDY THURSDAY

## AGRIFOOD

### New agricultural roadmap finally unveiled

The European Commission has presented its "Vision for Agriculture and Food" aimed at fostering an attractive, competitive and future-oriented European agri-food sector. Built on the Strategic Dialogue on Agriculture, the vision focuses on four priority areas that will shape the long-term future of the agricultural sector: ensuring attractive and fair working conditions for farmers, boosting economic competitiveness and resilience, promoting a nature-oriented approach that protects biodiversity and environment, and fostering functional rural areas. The vision will be further supported by comprehensive proposals on simplification and digitalisation later this year.

## HEALTH

### European citizens to live shorter lives

A study conducted by the renowned British Medical Journal The Lancet reveals that life expectancy in European countries decreased slightly between 2011 and 2021, reversing the upward trend seen since 1990. Portugal, Spain and Greece are among the countries experiencing the largest drops in life expectancy, while Scandinavian countries such as Sweden and Denmark have managed to maintain higher levels. However, Eastern European countries continue to have the lowest life expectancy in Europe, generally not surpassing the eighties. According to the journal, a range of factors contribute to this decline across Europe, including cardiovascular diseases, unhealthy social habits and the socioeconomic conditions of individual countries.

## EUROPEAN UNION

### EU eye seeing Sunday German elections

The German federal elections come at a crucial time for the EU. Following the newly constituted European Commission's presentation of its 2025 Work Programme and the delivery of its first roadmaps to the European Parliament, the results of the German elections will be key in assessing the extent to which the next Chancellor will align national policies with the Commission's strategic plans on economic competitiveness and resilience, decarbonisation and technological innovation. After the 'traffic light' coalition dissolved in early November 2024, Europe's largest economy now faces significant challenges related to economic instability, industrial uncertainty and immigration—all of which could have an impact on EU level decisions.

## DIGITAL

### WhatsApp obliged to comply with EU rules

After WhatsApp surpassed 45 million active users per month in 2024, the online messaging giant will be required to comply with transparency requirements under the Digital Services Act (DSA). This marks the third Meta-owned company facing consumer protection requirements after Facebook and Instagram are under ongoing EU investigations regarding alleged unfair digital practices. Under the DSA, WhatsApp will be required to tackle illegal content, undergo an annual independent audit and regularly submit compliance data to the European Commission and Member States. While a formal date for implementation has not yet been communicated, the platform will have four months to comply with the rules from the date of designation.

## DEFENCE

### Von der Leyen's plan to encourage EU defence spending

At the annual Munich Conference on International Security held last weekend, Commission President Von der Leyen announced that she is considering triggering an emergency 'escape clause' for EU Member States that would allow them to increase their military expenditure beyond budgetary control limits. While the European Commission has not yet provided detailed information on the plan, Von der Leyen emphasized that it aims to relax Member States' fiscal rules during exceptional circumstances. However, activating the escape clause appears to be a contentious issue for EU countries as highly indebted states have seen it rather insufficient, while some fiscally conservative countries have opposed it.

## ENERGY

### EU major industrial strategy to be presented next week

The European Commission is expected to present the Clean Industrial Deal strategy next Wednesday. Following the presentation of the Competitiveness Compass in late January, the Clean Industrial Deal is now the most awaited strategic document as it will outline the Commission's long-term plan to boost industrial decarbonisation and facilitate clean transition. The strategy is expected to address six areas that include securing energy prices, boosting financing, enhancing recycling efforts, tackling labor challenges related to job opportunities and skills, introducing measures to create demand for decarbonised goods and fostering global action through diplomacy.