# European Protein Strategy

2023/2015(INI) - 19/10/2023 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 305 votes to 129, with 69 abstentions, a resolution on a European protein strategy.

Proteins are essential and indispensable components for balanced and healthy diets, human nutrition and animal feed.

Protein is essential for both humans and animals and is, therefore, an indispensable component in food and feed consumed on a daily basis. Although protein-crop production in the EU has improved over the last 10 years, there continues to be a significant shortfall in domestic production as livestock production has also increased, consolidating the EU's heavy dependence on imports of protein-rich crops from non-EU countries.

***A clear need for a comprehensive EU protein strategy to enhance protein potential***

The Commission is called on to urgently present a **comprehensive and ambitious EU protein strategy** covering the sustainable production and consumption of all types of protein in the EU, especially plant- and animal-based protein, and introducing effective measures to boost open European protein autonomy in the short, medium and long term. The resolution underlined that the production of protein crops and plant-based protein should be prioritised.

***A vision for increased EU protein production***

The resolution noted that European resilience levels need to be significantly strengthened in crucial sectors such as food and feed supply by reducing, as far as possible, dependencies on agricultural products and resources from just one or a few suppliers through stronger domestic production, while encouraging the EU's competitiveness to avoid the concentration of markets in the hands of just a few key players. Therefore, the EU needs to step up the production of plant protein.

Parliament considered that imported products should meet comparable sustainability standards to provide greater competitiveness for EU producers and prevent the relocation of EU production abroad.

***Better conditions for protein production in the EU***

Parliament called on the Commission to explore opportunities to enable a profitable business model for farmers to help them convert their crops to attractive food and feed products by increasing crop resilience, protein yields and protein quality.

Members called for a swift adoption of a framework tailored to **new breeding techniques** to allow for faster development of new and robust plant varieties, including protein crops.

In addition, the resolution recalled that the production of **biomethane, biogas, biofuels or other bio-based chemicals** that use biowaste streams is one of the factors contributing to more sustainable production and is a significant revenue source that enhances the value of protein-rich crops. The growth in the production of plant protein for food and feed could lead to by-products being used in more ways for bioenergy and hence higher economic value from protein-crop production.

***Developing plant-based and alternative protein for food and feed***

Members:

- encourage the production of **soya beans** in the European Union as a source of plant-based protein by incentivising investment in research and development to improve crop quality and yield;

- recognise the strong potential of **hemp** as a sustainable protein crop and stresses the need to harmonise its regulation at EU level to facilitate its cultivation and processing into food and feed;

- highlight the role of sustainable **fishery and aquaculture** sectors in ensuring food security and in diets based on healthy and high-quality protein. Therefore, the Commission should ensure that the upcoming European protein strategy recognises the role of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

**Algae and microalgae** can be an important complementary source of protein as part of a sustainable food-production system according to the resolution. Members called on the Commission to include this in the European protein strategy.

Parliament stressed that **insects**, provided they meet high safety standards, could be regarded a useful circular alternative source of protein, particularly for organic and conventional animal nutrition, contributing to reducing the EU protein deficit and increasing the circularity of agriculture.

***Concrete policy actions***

Parliament called on the Commission to put forward a series of policy actions including:

- legislative measures such as: (i) a feed additive regulation that enables stability and innovations in feed additives; (ii) a novel food legislation that simplifies and speeds up authorisation processes; (iii) a directive on waste that enlarges the types of biodegradable waste to be considered as feed; (iv) a renewable energy directive that allows for long-term stable regulation for biofuel production; (v) an energy taxation directive; (vi) a regulation on new genomic techniques; (vii) a combination of CAP rules that provide incentives for production of protein-rich crops, grassland and legumes;

- other policy measures such as: (i) a food protein balance sheet; (ii) a clear long-term funding strategy for research and development; (iii) a framework to connect the production of plant-based proteins to the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD); (iv) more research into nutritional life cycle assessments (n-LCA) of foods.