



Brussels,  
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# EU AGRI-FOOD DAYS



## Ramón ARMENGOL

President - COGECA (The General Confederation of Agricultural Cooperatives)

Ramón Armengol was born in Lleida, Spain in 1959 into a farming family. He went on to study Law and business and took over his father's pig meat farm in 1978. With the ambition of ensuring the growth and sustainability of his farming enterprise he became very involved in his cooperative d'Ivars. With his dedicated work and strong belief in the value of cooperation, he became a member of the board of his cooperative, but also of Spanish Pig meat Interbranch Organization, Regional Cooperative Federation of Catalunya, and the Board of Spanish Agrifood Cooperatives. He is also very active in the promotion of the agri-cooperative model in Europe, as the President of Cogeca. Today he manages his farm together with his son, continuing together the sustainable growth of the enterprise. Ramon is happily married with 3 grown up children.



## Ignacio ATANCE MUÑIZ

Deputy Director General for Agricultural Policy Planning at the Secretary-General Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Spain

Ignacio Atance Muñiz (Madrid, 1972) has a PhD in Agricultural Engineering from the Polytechnic University of Madrid (2001). Professor in the Area of Economics, Sociology and Agrarian Policy at the University of Valladolid, Spain, between 2001 and 2005.

Working as public officer since 2006 in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, he has held different positions, among others, Deputy Director General of Analysis, Foresight and Coordination and Deputy Director General for Fruits, Vegetables and Wine. He currently is Deputy Director General of Agricultural Policy Planning, the unit coordinating the preparation of the CAP Strategic Plan for Spain and its management.



## Kerli ATS

Farmer and Board member - Estonian Farmers Federation

Kerli Ats is a chief executive officer (CEO) at Estonian Farmers' Federation, an umbrella organization representing Estonian small and medium-sized farmers. She is also a member of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). She is an active farmer herself, managing almost 120 ha of agricultural land in the Pärnu county, and is engaged in pasture-raised organic beef cattle production.

Kerli has graduated from Estonian Business School and has a master's degree in entrepreneurship. Since 2018, she is a doctoral student in the Estonian Business School specializing in knowledge transfer and agribusiness networks. She has also studied animal husbandry at the Olustvere School of Service and Rural Economics.



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## Miriam AUGDOPPLER

Expert on Agri-Environment - Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management, Republic of Austria

Miriam is a federal employee of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management at the Unit for "Agri-Environment, Mountain Farmers and Less-Favoured Areas, Organic Farming" since 2021. She is working mainly on the design, implementation and checks of the Austrian Agri-Environmental Programme "ÖPUL", which is covering voluntary measures around biodiversity, natural resources, climate, and animal welfare. In the process of developing the CAP Strategic Plan for Austria, her focus was AECM, Eco-Schemes and the Green Architecture in general.



## Tessa AVERMAETE

Researcher and Project Manager - Catholic University of Leuven

Tessa Avermaete is project manager at the Sustainable Food Economies Research Group (SFERE) of the Catholic University of Leuven. She manages interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary consortia that are working in the domain of food security, sustainable food systems, agriculture, and sustainable diets. She focuses on the European context, where the food system is characterized by a growing gap between consumers and producers, inequality, the prevalence of obesity, a polarized debate on sustainable food systems and a continuous decrease in the number of farmers.

Tessa was involved in the High-Level Steering Board of the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural productivity and Sustainability (EIP-AGRI) and in the focus group on new entrants in farming. She is member of diverse working groups at the national, regional, and local level, contributing to an evidence-based transition of the food system and empowerment of all the actors in the system. She is cochair of the Global Food Security Conference, expected to take place in April 2024, in Leuven.



## Yulia BARABANOVA

Policy Officer - European Commission, Joint Research Centre (JRC)

Yulia is a Policy Analyst at the EU Policy Lab, European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC). She leads a foresight study on digital transition and coordinates foresight training courses. Before her time in the Policy Lab, Yulia focused on research and innovation in the organic food and farming sector. She holds a PhD in environmental science and policy.



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## Vasco CORDEIRO

President - The European Committee of the Regions

Vasco Alves Cordeiro is the President of the European Committee of the Regions. He is a member of the Legislative Assembly of the Autonomous Region of the Azores, an autonomous region of Portugal and an EU outermost region. In 2012, he was elected President of the Regional Government of the Azores for the first time, a position for which he was re-elected in 2016, and, in that capacity, represented the region at European and international level, including as President of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe. Elected for the first time in 1996 as a member of the Legislative Assembly of the Autonomous Region of the Azores, he has also held several positions in the regional executive, including Regional Secretary of Economy, Regional Secretary of the Presidency, responsible for European and External Affairs, and Regional Secretary for Agriculture and Fisheries.



## Lorenzo GIOVANNI BELLÙ

Team Leader, Senior Economist - Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations

Lorenzo Giovanni Bellù is a Senior Economist and Lead of the Policy Intelligence Branch - Global Perspectives of FAO, is FAO Focal point for the UN Futures Lab and the UN Foresight Community of Practice and coordinates the FAO Corporate and Regional Strategic Foresight Exercises. Lorenzo holds a PHD in Economic Policy, an MSc in Public Investment, a Master's degree in Economics and a Bachelor's in Economics and Trade. He brings more than 20 years of experience at FAO UN. His key areas of expertise include global and country-level long-term development processes and related implications for agrifood systems; economic and social impact assessment of policies; policy impact analysis by means of Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) Models and other quantitative analysis tools. On these topics, he authored several articles and books. Lorenzo is also Lead Author of the FAO flagship reports in the series 'The future of food and agriculture (FOFA)' comprising - Alternative pathways to 2050', 'Trends and challenges' and the recently published 'Drivers and triggers for transformation'.



## Gianluca BRUNORI

Full Professor - University of Pisa

Vasco Gianluca Brunori is Full Professor at the University of Pisa, where he teaches Food Policy and Bioeconomy. He is the coordinator of the project CODECS, on the costs and benefits of digitalization in agriculture. He is editor in chief of the journal Agriculture and Food Economics. He has served as a member - and in two years as a chair - of the expert panel of EU SCAR for foresight.



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## Jacob BIRKENHÄGER

Head of Business Unit - ifok GmbH

Jacob Birkenhäger is Head of Unit for Deliberation, Open Government and Democracy at the German-based, international consultancy ifok. He is a sought-after expert on citizen participation and deliberation in Germany and Brussels. In his role, Jacob leads a team of 13 consultants and has been responsible for the design, implementation, and facilitation of Citizens' Assemblies on the federal level in Germany and the European Citizens' Panel in the Conference on the Future of Europe and - very recently - for the European Commission on Food Waste, Virtual Worlds and Learning Mobility. Jacob is a very experienced professional moderator for all kinds of interactive and panel formats as well as online-events.



## Wolfgang BURTSCHER

Director-General - European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI)

Wolfgang Burtscher has been Director-General of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI) since April 2020. From 2009 to 2020, he was Deputy Director-General of DG Research and Innovation (responsible for i.e., agriculture, food, and health). From 2000 to 2009, he was Director in DG AGRI (responsible for i.e., legal issues, quality policy and the control of agricultural expenditure). Before 2000, he was a representative of the federal states in the permanent representation of Austria to the EU.



## Isabelle BUSCKE

Head of the EU Liaison Office - Federation of German Consumer Organisations (vzbv)

Isabelle Buscke is the Head of the EU Liaison Office in Brussels of the Federation of German Consumer Organisations Verbraucherzentrale Bundesverband (vzbv) - and coordinates the organisation's EU advocacy. She has been leading the office since its establishment in 2012. The organisation covers all topics necessary to strengthen consumer rights: consumer law, digitalisation, financial services, energy, food mobility, etc. Ms Buscke represents vzbv on the board of BEUC (the European Consumer Organisation) and in the Steering Committee of the Transatlantic Consumer Dialogue (TACD). She is a member of the Consumer Policy Advisory Group for the European Commission's Directorate-General Justice and Consumers. A German, French and Belgian national, Ms Buscke holds a master's degree in Political Science and Roman languages from the University of Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany.



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## Jolita BUTKEVICIENE

Director JRC - European Commission, Joint Research Centre (JRC)

As the Director for Innovation in Science and Policymaking in the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission (JRC), Jolita leads a team of dedicated scientists and passionate professionals from a broad range of disciplines with the mission to bring innovation and scientific evidence in EU policymaking. Her Directorate provides scientific knowledge, foresight methods, evaluation techniques and engagement with citizens as a way of strengthening the positive impact of EU policies on society. Prior to joining the Joint Research Centre, Jolita was, for more than 10 years, Director for Latin America and Caribbean, Overseas Countries and Territories in the Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA). She has extensive experience of working in the United Nations in the field of international cooperation. Her formal background and experience is in quantitative economics and international trade and trade negotiations.



## Simona CASELLI

President - Assembly of European Horticultural Regions (AREFLH)

Since 2016, Simona has been President of the Assembly of European Fruit, Vegetable and Flower Regions (AREFLH), an association that represents Regional Administrations, Producer Organisations (as defined by the CMO and National Strategic Plan regulations), and other associated actors with interests in the fruit and vegetable sector, with members in 11 EU states. AREFLH is an active member of the EU CAP Network and participates in 5 Civil Dialogue Groups of DG Agri EU. Simona holds a degree cum laude in Economics, is an official auditor and a Corresponding Academician of the Italian National Academy of Agriculture. She is currently also President of Granlatte cooperative (parent company of Granarolo group), Head of European Affairs of Legacoop Agroalimentare and President of CRPA (Research Centre for Animal Production) in Reggio Emilia.

She was Councillor for Agriculture, Hunting and Fisheries of the Emilia-Romagna Region from December 2014 to February 2020. She is an honorary member of the National Association of Fruit and Vegetable Women and the National Association of Wine Women.



## Mathieu COURGEAU

Farmer and Representant - European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC)

Dairy farmer in the west of France. Representant of ECVC (European Coordination Via Campesina)



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## Gianluca FELIGINI

Head of Precision Technology EMEA - Case New Holland Industrial

Head of Precision Technology for Europe, Middle East and Africa, Gianluca started in CNH Industrial in 2004 covering roles of increasing responsibility within Marketing, Product Management and Business Development. From 2011 to today, he has followed numerous commercial projects, product launches and acquisitions linked to the Ag Tech and Precision Farming business with the aim of supporting the improvement of the long-term sustainability profile of the Agriculture Industry through an increased adoption of automation and digitalization with machines' on-board solutions and digital cloud platforms.



## Roberto FLORE

Head DTU Skylab FoodLab - Technical University of Denmark

Roberto has a background in agriculture and natural resource management, and more than 20 years of international experience working at the cutting edge of research and innovation in healthy food systems, and sustainability. Roberto builds bridges between disciplines by using food as a vehicle to address grand global challenges. He has significant experience collaborating with food scientists, nutritionists, public health experts and engineers as well as social scientists in the areas of human-centred and holistic design. Social and environmental sustainability stand at the heart of all the work that Roberto is engaged in.

In 2018, he designed and currently leads the DTU Skylab FoodLab, Food system change laboratory of the Technical University of Denmark. Roberto has been part of the European Commission's expert group working on the legislative framework of the EU Farm to Fork strategy, and took part of ONE THIRD, the Danish Ministry of Environment and Food's think tank on the prevention of food loss and food waste. In 2023 Roberto contributed to the 18th international Venice Biennale of Architecture, as an expert within the areas of the green transition, food environments and dietary changes. He co-developed a masterpiece installed inside the Italian pavilion.



## Per FRANKELIUS

Associate Professor - Linköping University

Per Frankelius, PhD, is Associate Professor at Linköping University and Chief Initiative Officer Innovation at the Agtech 2030 initiative focusing on agricultural innovations. Most of his ca. 500 publications (including articles in journals like Journal of High Technology Management Research, the Lancet, and Agronomy Journal) treat the subject area innovation in connection with agriculture. He holds 3 agtech patents (a precision harrow, a robot concept, and a soil compaction system) and is involved in many innovation projects together with companies and other organizations.



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## Catherine GESLAIN-LANÉELLE

Strategy and Policy Analysis Director - European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI)

Since January 2023, Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle has been Director of Strategy and Policy Analysis at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI). From 1 September 2020 to 31 December 2022, she was Director at the General Secretariat of the Council (Veterinary, Plant Health, Food and Forestry). Between December 2019 and August 2020, she was Deputy Head of Cabinet of the EU Commissioner responsible for agriculture and rural development. Between 2013 and 2018, she was Director general for Economic & Environmental Performance of Enterprises (French Ministry of Agriculture). Between 2006 and 2013, she was Executive Director of EFSA. Prior to that, she was Director General of Food (French Ministry of Agriculture).



## María José HERNÁNDEZ

Director General - Spanish Agricultural Guarantee Fund (FEGA) - Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Food

As an agricultural engineer, María José has dedicated her professional career to public service in the field of agricultural policy, mainly in the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Throughout her career, she has held different positions in Madrid, related to the fruit and vegetable, olive oil and wine sectors, as well as positions abroad (seconded national expert in Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Commission, agricultural Counsellor at the Spanish Embassy to France and the Spanish Representation to the OECD). She is currently the Director General of the coordinating body and national paying agency for CAP funds in Spain (FEGA).



## Julia HOFFMANN

Senior Consultant - ifok GmbH

Julia Hoffmann is a senior consultant at the German-based, international consultancy ifok. She's an expert in participatory processes in the areas of climate change, energy transition and sustainability. She has facilitated a variety of participatory events, for example the German Citizens' Assembly on Food, the German Citizens' Assembly on Climate, and the European Citizens' Panel in the Conference on the Future of Europe. Julia is a certified mediator, especially trained in solving conflicts around nature protection and energy transition. She works in Brussels and Berlin.



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## Ali AL-JABERI

Moderator - ProModeration

Ali Al-Jaberi is a senior professional moderator and presenter who works on EU related themes on a regular basis. He is a former lecturer of Public Policy at the Hague University, a TV Correspondent at Associated Press news in Europe and an award-winning public speaker.



## Björn JURETZKI

Head Of Unit - European Commission, Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG CONNECT)

Björn Juretzki is Head of Unit for “Data Policy and Innovation” in the European Commission’s Directorate General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG CONNECT). The Unit supports the European data economy through policy initiatives such as the Data Act and the Data Governance Act. The Unit is also responsible for coordinating data spaces and steering the strategic research and innovation agenda in the sector.

Mr. Juretzki has previously worked as a policy officer in artificial intelligence and robotics in DG CONNECT. Prior to becoming Head of Unit for “Data Policy and Innovation”, he was the Assistant to the Director-General in DG CONNECT.



## Ilona KROMĀNE

Deputy Director of department and CAP Strategic Plan coordinator - Ministry of Agriculture, Republic of Latvia

Ilona has 20 years of experience working in the Ministry of Agriculture of Republic of Latvia, dealing with CAP issues and its implementation since Latvia joined EU. She had an expert role in the Twinning Light Project and LIFE OrgBalt project. She was also a member of the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the EU representing the interests of Latvia and all EU in the daily work of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). She now works as a Team leader and coordinator of CAP Strategic plan of Latvia.



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## Airi KÜLVET

Farmer - International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements, (IFOAM Organics Europe)

Airi Kylvet, board member of the of Liivimaa Lihaveis, has been active in the grass-fed beef production for 20 years. She has degree in animal science from the Estonian University of Life Sciences. As a farmer, she has introduced sustainable grazing methods, which would provide living conditions and habitats for all naturally occurring species as well as grass-fed cattle. Airi has also taught farmers in the framework of various projects led by cooperation partners Estonian Beef Breeders Association and Organic Farming Platform.

She has a good grasp on the situation with the Estonian grass-fed beef farms, the advisors' networks, and research and educational projects pertaining to grass-fed cattle.



## Christiane LAMBERT

President - Committee of Professional Agricultural Organisations (Copa)

Christiane Lambert was Born in 1961 in Cantal, France, from parents' farmers and activists at the JAC (Christian Young Farmer). She chose very early to work as farmer, after an agricultural BTS. At 19 years old, she settled on a dairy and pig farm in Cantal. At the same time, she became involved in the Young Farmers' Union (JA) and passed through the various regional levels before becoming the first woman elected as president of the National Young Farmer association (CNJA). She was President of the FDSEA of Maine-et-Loire from 2001 to 2011, Secretary General of the FRSEA of Pays de la Loire from 2001 to 2014 and she is member of bureau of Chamber of Agriculture since 2001.

In April 2017, she was the first woman elected FNSEA President, the leading French agricultural union. Christiane Lambert has been president of Copa since 2020. She was re-elected unanimously on September 23<sup>rd</sup> for a second term, a first in more than 15 years.



## Aminda LEIGH

Moderator - AMROS

Aminda Leigh is a British-Italian broadcast journalist and moderator specialising in environmental issues including sustainable agriculture, climate change, the circular economy, food policies, animal welfare and chemicals management as well as research, innovation, and technology. Her professional experience as a moderator and master of ceremonies spans more than 15 years, facilitating discussions at many flagship European events, including previous editions of the EU Agriculture Outlook conference.

She has chaired sessions at global gatherings such as the World EXPO in Milan on topics relating to food, and at two UNFCCC COP climate talks.



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## Elodie LEMATTE

Deputy Director Agri-food sectors - Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty, France

Head of the Department of Competitiveness and Environmental Performance in the General Directorate of Economic and Environmental Performance of Enterprises at the French Agricultural and Food Sovereignty ministry.



## Ursula VON DER LEYEN

President - European Commission

Ursula von der Leyen, Dr., born in 1958, was a member of the German Bundestag from 2009 to 2019 and a Federal Minister in Germany for more than 14 years, responsible for Family Affairs (2005-2009), then for Labour and Social Affairs (2009-2013) and later for Defence (2013-2019). She completed her medical studies with a state examination and licence to practise medicine in 1987, followed by a doctorate in 1991 and a Master of Public Health in 2001. She has been a member of the CDU since 1990. From 2003 to 2005, she was a member of the CDU Parliamentary Group in the Lower Saxony State Parliament. In 2019, she was elected President of the European Commission. As the head of the European executive, she has defined six headline ambitions for Europe for her mandate: a European Green Deal, a Europe fit for the digital age, an economy that works for people, a stronger Europe in the world, promoting our European way of life, and a new push for European democracy.



## Louise MCHUGH

Professor, Member of Agri Mental Health Research Group - University College Dublin

Professor Louise McHugh is a professor of Psychology at University College Dublin. She is a world leading expert in Behavioural Science and Process Based Therapy. She has published over 100 papers and two books in the area. Most relevant to the Agri Mental Health research group is her research in the area of farmer mental health and suicide risk, the development of interventions for farmer mental health and message reframing work on climate change communication. Her work has been funded by national and international funding bodies. Professor McHugh is a founding member of the University College Dublin Agri Mental Health Group.



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## Peter MEEDENDORP

Farmer and President - European Council of Young Farmers (CEJA)

Peter is a young farmer from The Netherlands. He works in a partnership with his parents and brother on their arable family farm, where they grow starch potatoes, sugar beets, barley, onions, fiber hemp, and corn. They also provide contract work in the dairy sector and are involved in agricultural nature management. Peter has aspirations of taking over the farm fully in the future. With a background in International Relations (Groningen University) and Agricultural Economics (Wageningen University), along with a passion for farming, he has been actively engaged in national and EU agricultural policy. He was appointed to the national board of NAJK in 2021, and elected CEJA President in June 2023.



## Claudia MERLINO

Vice President - Geopa- Copa, Employers' Group of Professional Agricultural Organizations in the EU

Claudia is the Vice President of Geopa-Copa, the Employers' Group of Professional Agricultural Organisations in the European Union. She is also the Head of the economic agricultural policies of CIA- AGRICOLTORI ITALIANI, one of the most representative agricultural professional organizations in Italy and Europe, with over 900,000 members. In this role she develops, manages, and presides over the economic policies of the agricultural sector. She also coordinates the activities of the offices and associations that deal with the following issues: Wine, Olive, Fruit and Vegetable, Cereals, Industrial crops, gardening, Community Agricultural Policy (CAP), Environmental policies, Food Quality policies, Territorial policies, Irrigation resources, Biological, Fishing, Agritourism, Direct sales. She takes care of relations with the competent ministries and institutions.



## Fergal MONAGHAN

Director - Hen Harrier Programme, Agri-Climate Rural Environment Scheme (ACRES)

Fergal is a Director of the Hen Harrier Project, a company which manages the roll out of three of the eight ACRES Co-operation Projects in Ireland. The Co-operation Projects help deliver a locally adapted hybrid results-based scheme to 20,000 farmers in High Nature Value Areas. In the last CAP cycle, Fergal led the Hen Harrier Project EIP which rolled out a results-based scheme to over 1,600 farmers in Special Protection Areas for the protection of the Hen Harrier. Fergal has 20 years' experience as a farm advisor working with farmers in NATURA 2000 areas across Ireland.



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## George MORRISON

Director Of Global Public Affairs - Arla Foods

George Morrison leads Arla's Global Public Affairs team and is responsible for the company's political and civil society engagement. Before starting in his current role, George was responsible for delivering the communication strategies for Arla's European and Global commercial functions. Before joining Arla, George worked for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the UK's Foreign Ministry, for 11 years. He held various positions in their London Head Quarters including working on the UK's relationship with the European Union Institutions. He was also Head of Communications and Asia regional policy in roles with the British Embassy in Thailand and the British High Commission in Australia. George has also worked in the Scottish Government's Department for Agriculture and Rural Affairs, the Danish Ministry of Agriculture and the Australian Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade.



## Célia NYSSENS-JAMES

Policy Manager for Agriculture and Food Systems - European Environmental Bureau (EEB)

Célia Nyssens-James leads the European Environmental Bureau (EEB)'s work on EU agriculture and food policies. Before joining the EEB, she worked on agriculture, public health, and climate policy in Scotland. She holds a B.Sc. in Political Sciences from KU Leuven and an M.Sc. in Global Environmental Politics from the University of Edinburgh.



## Michael PIELKE

Acting Director - European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI)

Michael Pielke has first worked for the European Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI), dealing with rural development programmes. After he changed to the market policy, he was policy officer in units in charge of the meat markets and direct payments. Mr Pielke returned to the Rural Development directorate as Deputy Head of Unit of the unit Consistency of Rural Development. Until January 2022 he was Head of Unit of the Unit in charge of rural development programmes of Bulgaria, Croatia, Poland, and Slovenia as well as Financial Instruments. In his current assignment, he leads the unit for Economic Sustainability of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and is Acting Director of the Directorate B Sustainability.



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## Andrea PORCELLA ČAPKOVIČOVÁ

Analyst, Outlook Coordinator - European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI)

Andrea Porcella Čapkovičová is a co-ordinator of the EU Agricultural Outlook and a socio-economic analyst in the unit of Analysis and Outlook at the European Commission's Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI). Among other than Outlook responsibilities, she is also responsible for the development of thematic dashboards on outlooks and food security on Agri-food data portal. She has a background in Agricultural Economics as she obtained Masters' degrees from Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, and Corvinus University in Budapest.



## Rūdolfs PULKSTENIS

Farmer and Vice-President - European Council of Young Farmers (CEJA)

Rūdolfs completed his studies in business administration and gained various work experiences. He and his family returned to their hometown five years ago. In 2015, he embarked on his agricultural journey by starting organic cereal farming on both family-owned and rented land. Despite starting from scratch, he managed to develop the farm while simultaneously working full-time in the financial institutions sector. Three years later, he expanded his ventures by establishing a logging company. He believes that his deep-rooted passion for agriculture, forestry, and the land has been passed down through five generations of his family. Rūdolfs has served on the board of the Latvian Young Farmers Club and became CEJA Vice-President in June 2023.



## Genevieve SAVIGNY

Member - European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC)

Running a free-range chicken farm in the Southern Alps, Geneviève Savigny has long been representing small and medium scale farmers in the Brussels arena for the European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC). She was also member of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) from 2015 to 2022 for the French farmers union "Confédération paysanne" where she held several positions and activities, including longer-term thinking for rural areas.



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## Gijs SCHILTHUIS

Head Of Unit - European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI)

Gijs Schilthuis is the Head of Unit for Policy Perspectives at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI). He has worked since 2008, in different capacities, on agricultural policy reform in this Directorate-General. He first joined the European Commission in 2005 at the Directorate-General for Health and Consumers. Prior to joining the Commission, he worked at the European Parliament as a parliamentary assistant. He earned a master's degree in agricultural economics from Wageningen University in 2000.



## Max SCHULMAN

Senior Advisor - The Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners (MTK)

Max, born 14.03.1966, grew up on his family's farm which he took over in 1986. Stor-Tötär Gård, is an old family farm that combines arable land and forestry in Southwestern Finland that has been in the family for around 400 years. Continuity that hopefully will go forward since Max is raising three boys together with his Spanish wife Marta.

For the last 15 years he has been working in the Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners (MTK). He is a member of the Crops and Fertilizer Market Observatory. Chair of the Agri Food Chain Round Table on PPP 2020 - and Chairman of the Copa-Cogeca Phytosanitary Working Group from 2023.



## Constantin SCHÄFER

Senior Consultant - ifok GmbH

Dr. Constantin Schäfer works as Consultant for Deliberation, Open Government and Democracy at the German-based, international consultancy ifok. He is a renowned expert on European democracy and political participation with both academic and practical credentials. As project lead of the European Citizens' Panels for the European Commission, he has gathered a rich experience in the design, implementation and facilitation of transnational, multilingual participation processes.



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## Pierre SULTANA

Public Affairs Director - [AnimalhealthEurope](#)

Son of a horse breeder, Pierre Sultana grew up on a farm in the rural region of Auvergne in Central France. Right after graduation with a degree in EU and WTO Law, he gained experience in EU and National policy making within the EU and French institutions. Returning to Brussels, he created and led the Brussels offices of different associations before he joined AnimalhealthEurope as Public Affairs Director. Pierre has close to 10 years of experience working in the field of EU animal related policies.



## Will SURMAN

Deputy Director General Strategic Communications, ESG - [FoodDrinkEurope](#)

Will is Deputy Director General and Director of Strategic Communications, Public Affairs and ESG at FoodDrinkEurope. Will began his professional career in the European Parliament before working as a food, agriculture, and environment journalist. He has since worked as a communications expert at the UK National Farmers Union and CropLife International where issues such as food security, climate change, biodiversity loss and diet have been a common thread. Will has worked professionally in London, Buenos Aires and Uganda and has been based in Brussels since 2011.



## Alexandru VALENTIN TACHIANU

Farmer and Vice-president - [AFR - Pro Agro](#)

Alexandru is a 2nd generation farmer, with over 20 years of experience in the field of cereals production. His entire career was focused on the agricultural fields. He graduated from the University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Bucharest, and later obtained an MBA from the FH Weihenstephan – Triesdorf, Germany. Right now, he has an ongoing Doctors degree in the field of Agronomic Sciences, which he will complete in a very short time. He also has experience in the field of public administration, from his time as a State Secretary in the Romanian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.



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## Saskia VISSER

Orchestrator Resilient & Climate Neutral Regions Cluster - EIT – Climate Kic

Dr. Saskia Visser is the manager of the team resilient and climate neutral regions at EIT-Climate Kic. She has 24 years of experience in both execution and management of sustainable land use research. Saskia is responsible for actively orchestrating the application of the Deep Demonstrations methodology in national & regional contexts to achieve decarbonisation, climate adaptation and regeneration of (agri)biodiversity. Saskia is the strategic advisor of the European Joint Program on Agricultural Soils under climate Change. In that role Saskia facilitates the development of a Europe wide network of Soil researchers, supports strategic partnerships of EJP SOIL with both European and worldwide initiatives.



## Janusz WOJCIECHOWSKI

European Commissioner for Agriculture - European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI)

Born in 1954 in Rawa Mazowiecka, Poland, Janusz Wojciechowski graduated from the University of Łódź in 1977 with a Master's degree in Law. He served as a judge in the Polish Supreme Court and Tribunal of State before being elected to the Polish Sejm in 1993 and the European Parliament in 2004, serving for three terms before joining the European Court of Auditors. In 2019, he was appointed as EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development. Commissioner Wojciechowski's responsibilities include supporting the reform and implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy and developing a Long-term Vision for rural areas.



## Sjaak WOLFERT

Senior Scientist - Wageningen University & Research

Sjaak is a Senior Scientist and Theme Ambassador 'Digital Innovation for Sustainable Food Systems' at Wageningen Economic Research. He holds a PhD on Crop Science and Information Technology from the Wageningen University. His research topics are the application of ICT in agri-food with special attention to socio-economic aspects such as data economy, data spaces, and digital innovation ecosystems. He was the Scientific coordinator of (inter)national projects such as the Internet of Food and Farm 2020, SmartAgriHubs and Data4Food2030, and President-in residence of EFITA: European Federation of ICT in Agriculture. He is a visionary and likes to be challenged by complex socio-technical problems that require a science-based approach.



Brussels,  
5-8 December 2023

On-site event with web  
streaming



# EU AGRI-FOOD DAYS



## Alessandra ZAMPIERI

Director - European Commission, Joint Research Centre (JRC)

Alessandra is the Director of the Directorate for Sustainable Resources at the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC). An Economics graduate, Alessandra's career began in Brussels with the DG for Energy and Transport and the Cabinet of VP De Palacio, where she worked inter alia on maritime and aviation policies. She joined the JRC in 2009, leading units focused on maritime affairs, demography, migration, and disaster risk management. Before becoming Director, she was Deputy Director for Space, Security, and Migration.



## Valters ZELČS

Farmer and Policy Advisor - Farmers' Parliament (ZSA)

Valters Zelcs is a young farmer from Latvia who is also actively involved in fighting for farmers' rights by being involved in different farmers' NGOs. Together with his father, they run a 250-hectare family crop farm in central Latvia, where they grow various crops such as winter wheat, oilseed rape, peas, beans, red clover and more. Their farm is also implementing different tools and techniques that would make farming more sustainable, such as precision farming technologies and no-till farming. Valters has a degree in political science as well as he is on his way to receive a degree in agronomy, which would serve well in his Policy Advisor position within largest farmers' NGO of Latvia called Farmers' Parliament (ZSA).



## Kristina ŠERMUKŠNYTĖ-ALEŠIŪNIENĖ

CEO - AgriFood Lithuania

Kristina Šermukšnytė-Alešiūnienė is currently chief executive officer (CEO) of AgriFood Lithuania, a non-profit organization established in 2011 in Vilnius that brings together major research, business, and public stakeholders in Lithuania for the common mission of transforming agriculture, food and associated sectors with AGtech innovations. AgriFood Lithuania is recognized by the European Commission as good practice digital innovation hub and cluster, and in 2021 has become an EIT Food hub in Lithuania. Kristina has a vast experience in product development and innovation for research, development, and implementation, with a focus on information technologies and services, and ICT products on a cross-sectoral basis. She has more than 12 years of experience as an international digitalization expert in national and international working groups. She is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in economics at the Institute of Economics and Rural Development of the Lithuanian Center for Social Sciences. Her scientific area of interest evaluates the effectiveness of the industries' twin transition in EU member states.