

Habemus parliament and president

THE European Snacks Association was delighted to welcome newly elected and re-elected Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) at the Summer garden party of the Parliament in Strasbourg in July. We met with many 'old friends' and were glad to make new ones as well. The word on the street is all about the Green Deal and industrial competitiveness - at least these were the vibes that resonated most when talking to MEPs.

Concerning the possibility that far-right groups would take a large share of the votes in the elections, they did make some significant gains. The far-right Rassemblement National in France won 32% of the vote—double the share of President Macron's centrist alliance. There was an increase in share of vote for the far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), which won 16.4% of the vote and was second largest party behind the centre-right CDU-CSU. There was also an increase in the share of the vote for Geert Wilders' far-right Freedom Party (VVD) in the Netherlands, while far-right and nationalist parties made notable gains in Austria, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain.

However, immediately after the elections, the European People's Party (EPP) called upon the socialists (S&D) and the liberals (Renew Europe) to come together in a coalition. This would mean stability and - in the larger sense - an attempt to maintain the status quo from the previous mandate.

And so it is that, while the far-right groups made remarkable gains, the core coalition in the European Parliament remains relatively stable and the general approach maintains the so-called cordon sanitaire to exclude the right-wing fringes from key positions. Such a coalition of EPP, S&D and Renew Europe would account for 55.69% of the MEPs.

On 18 July, the European Parliament endorsed Ursula von der Leyen for a second term as President of the European Commission, with 401 votes in favour, 285 against and 15 abstentions (plus 19 mistakes or absents).



Business thrives on certainty, so **Sebastian Emig** welcomes the relative stability that seems likely to follow the results of the recent elections across Europe

What might that mean for food and farming generally? On agri-food, these are the key remarks from her Political Guidelines 2024-2029: Europe's quality of life depends on having a secure and affordable supply of quality local food. Farming is a core part of our European way of life, and it must always stay that way. It is thanks to Europe's 9 million farms - and the wider agri-food sector - that Europe has the healthiest and highest-quality food in the world. This is a strategic asset, meaning Europe is vital for global food security.

It is imperative to continue engaging with farmers, policymakers, civil society, stakeholders and citizens to build a competitive and resilient agriculture and food system. This is why she convened a Strategic Dialogue on Agriculture, which will shortly present its report. Building on these recommendations, the Commission will present a Vision for Agriculture and Food in the first 100 days, looking at how to ensure the long-term competitiveness and sustainability of our farming sector within the boundaries of our planet. It is further vital that farmers have a fair and sufficient income. They should not be forced to systematically sell their products at prices below production costs.

Europe will support the competitiveness of our entire food value chain through investment and innovation on farms, cooperatives, agri-food businesses and the many SMEs in the sector. We need to strengthen farmers' positions and further protect them against unfair trading practices.

She announced a 'European Competitiveness Fund' that will direct cash to everything from AI to space and from clean tech to biotech. She also pledged to expand the European Green Deal with an ambitious 2040 climate target, a plan to prepare the European Union for the impacts of climate change and a programme to boost clean technology manufacturing.

WHAT THIS MEANS OR OUR INDUSTRY

It is a little too early to say for certain, but we anticipate that we will see a more moderate approach towards the EU Green Deal, rather than its burial. That probably means great attention to farmers, firmer positions on international trade and some re-nationalisation of policies, with consequent risks for the integrity of the EU Single Market.

We may expect broad support for measures to enhance Europe's global competitiveness (as this was a strong topic discussed during the campaign) and further the EU's work on defence, security and immigration. However, we cannot predict precisely what will be proposed.

For files pending from the previous mandate, we may not expect a reopening of the discussions, given that the majority coalition (EPP, Renew, S&D) remains the same, having achieved deals before the vote.

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