

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000286/26
to the Commission
Daniel Buda (PPE), Dan-Ştefan Motreanu (PPE)
(26 January 2026)**

Subject: Decline in cattle numbers in the EU, rising beef prices and the impact of diseases — the Commission's view and measures envisaged

The EU's cattle population decreased from 80 million in 2005 to 72 million in 2024, despite the enlargement of the Union.

That decrease has been amplified by economic and demographic factors, as well as the impact of diseases. In France alone, blue tongue disease has resulted in the loss of 200 000 cattle in just one year.

The market is feeling the consequences. As at November 2025, prices of young cattle carcasses had increased by 30% over the previous year, while beef imports had increased by 13%, with these mainly coming from South American countries.

Thus, as domestic supply decreases, prices are rising for consumers and EU farmers are having to cope with structural uncertainties over the future of the sector.

Given these circumstances:

1. What is the Commission's view on the impact of the decline in cattle numbers (an 8 million drop in the head of cattle in two decades) on the stability of the beef market and on food security in the EU?
2. Given the increase in beef imports from third countries, will the Commission adopt measures, including through CAP instruments or from the crisis reserve, to sustain EU production and limit the risk of the substitution of domestic production?
3. Are there any existing measures in support of generational renewal and investment in cattle farming?

Submitted: 26.1.2026

**Answer given by Mr Hansen on behalf of the European Commission
(12 March 2026)**

The Commission notes that the EU beef market has experienced changes in production and trade dynamics in recent years. The latest data available ⁽¹⁾ show that cattle numbers and beef production have declined compared to previous years, while exports decreased and imports increased. The self-sufficiency rate remains strong, and the trade balance positive both in volume and value.

Firm internal demand has resulted in favourable conditions for producers, with prices reaching historically high levels and margins improving.

In its Vision for Agriculture and Food ⁽²⁾, the Commission recognises the vital role of livestock in EU agriculture, competitiveness and cohesion.

To address identified challenges, the Commission will adopt a Livestock Strategy by June 2026 to guide and establish a long-term framework for an EU livestock sector that is resilient to crises, globally competitive, and sustainable across economic, social, and environmental dimensions, in full respect of Europe's territorial diversity.

As part of its proposals for the future CAP post-2027, the Commission proposed to significantly increase coupled income support from current 13% + 2% to 20% + 5%, in order to give Member States an opportunity to support sectors such as livestock, depending on their needs.

Regarding generational renewal, the Commission notes that Member States are required to allocate at least EUR 1.14 billion to attract and support young farmers in 2026, including young cattle breeders.

This will be achieved through various forms of aid, such as area support, investment aid, and support for setting up new operations, helping to ensure the future sustainability of the sector.

⁽¹⁾ Agri-food data portal : <https://agridata.ec.europa.eu/extensions/DataPortal/beef.html>.

⁽²⁾ COM/2025/75 final.