

# Competitiveness and innovation in the EU's agricultural food systems: what implications for food safety?

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# Competitiveness and innovation in the EU's agricultural food systems: what implications for food safety?

## Details of the Deep Dive

*Topic:* N/A

*Thematic area(s):* Corporate matters; Methodology development/Cross-cutting science; Preparedness and foresight

*Keyword(s):* Competitiveness; Innovation; SMEs; Food Risk Assessment

*Query:* policy AND (competitiveness OR innovation OR sustainability) AND ("agricultural food system" OR "food process") AND (EU OR Europe) AND ("food safety")

*Timeframe:* 2024

## A. Deep dive general introduction

The European Commission's transition pathway for the agri-food industrial ecosystem is a critical stage in the development of a competitive, sustainable, and resilient EU food system. The pathway, which was co-developed with Member States, industry associations, NGOs, and other stakeholders, employs a food systems approach to confront the challenges and opportunities in the food processing industry. The pathway establishes the groundwork for transformative change by fostering smart sustainability investments, promoting equitable returns across the value chain, supporting global competitiveness, and advancing circular business models. Enhanced collaboration between business support organisations, increased awareness of research and innovation (R&I) funding opportunities, and the adoption of the EU Code of Conduct on Responsible Food Business and Marketing Practices are among the proposed actions of the pathway. This deep dive examines the policy context in which this dialogue is being shaped and key stakeholder voices and opinions on the matters by exploring: i) which EU policy developments led by the European Commission around competitiveness may impact EFSA's work and in what ways, ii) which other stakeholders or actors EFSA may need to monitor closely on the topic of competitiveness, and iii) how the role of science could evolve over time within the context of the EU Commission's priorities for 2024-2029.

## B. Distilled information

Not requested

## C. Monitoring timelines

The time period covered by the following deepening is from 1 January 2024 to 20 December 2024.

## D. Key actors and roles

***EU policy developments led by the EC (or major actions by other EU stakeholders) around competitiveness that may impact EFSA's work and in what ways***

| Organization  | Document title                    | Reference           | Reason for inclusion   |
|---|-----------------------------------|---------------------|--|
| Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations | Updated results framework 2022-25 | <a href="#">URL</a> | The FAO's "Updated Results Framework 2022-25" aligns closely with the EC's policies aimed at enhancing agricultural competitiveness through sustainability and innovation. The EC's emphasis on integrating advanced agricultural technologies and promoting resilience in the sector resonates with FAO's goals of optimizing production systems sustainably. Digital agriculture is a shared priority, with both FAO and the EC advocating for the adoption of digital tools to enhance efficiency and resource management. This development requires EFSA to assess the implications of digital |

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|   |   |                     | <p>innovations on food safety and traceability. Furthermore, the One Health approach, central to the EC's "Farm to Fork" strategy, is mirrored in FAO's efforts to manage risks across the human-animal-environment interface, which will demand integrated risk assessments from EFSA. Support for small-scale producers is another area of convergence, with both FAO and EU policies emphasizing equitable access to resources and market opportunities. EFSA's work will be crucial in ensuring that food safety standards are inclusive and attainable for these stakeholders. As the EU pursues its green and digital transitions, EFSA's role in evaluating the safety and environmental impacts of these shifts will be essential to maintaining public trust and compliance with regulatory frameworks. Overall, the FAO's framework underscores the interconnectedness of sustainability, innovation, and competitiveness, highlighting EFSA's critical role in enabling these transitions.</p>  |
| Ministry for Primary Industries - New Zealand | Food Safety Insights And Emerging Risks (2 August 2024)                                       | <a href="#">URL</a> | <p>The bulletin identifies several global food safety challenges that could influence the EC's policies on competitiveness, thereby impacting EFSA's work. The bulletin highlights the increasing complexity of food supply chains, climate change effects on food production, and the emergence of new foodborne pathogens as key concerns. These challenges necessitate robust risk assessment and management strategies to ensure food safety and maintain consumer confidence. As the EU aims to enhance its global competitiveness, EFSA may need to adapt its risk assessment methodologies to address these evolving challenges.</p>  |
| Ministry for Primary Industries - New Zealand | Food Safety Insights And Emerging Risks (29 August 2024)                                      | <a href="#">URL</a> | <p>In a subsequent bulletin, additional insights were provided on the global food safety landscape, emphasizing the increasing complexity of food supply chains, the effects of climate change on food production, and the emergence of new foodborne pathogens.</p>   |
| FoodDrinkEurope                               | Competitiveness and Growth  | <a href="#">URL</a> | <p>FoodDrinkEurope emphasizes the necessity of a fully functional Single Market to sustain the EU food and drink industry's competitiveness, advocating for the removal of national barriers that impede the free movement of goods and services. This aligns with the EC's policies aimed at enhancing market integration and economic growth. EFSA's role in ensuring consistent food safety standards across MSs is crucial to maintaining consumer confidence and facilitating seamless trade within the Single Market.</p>  |
| FoodDrinkEurope                               | Europe's food and drink sector: a catalyst for industrial growth, sustainability and security | <a href="#">URL</a> | <p>In another post, FoodDrinkEurope highlights the strategic importance of the EU's food and drink sector in driving industrial growth, sustainability, and security, emphasizing the need for strong policy support. Dirk Jacobs, Director General of FoodDrinkEurope, urged policymakers to adopt the organization's proposed EU Food Investment and Resilience Plan. This plan includes an EU Food Investment Strategy to address funding gaps and stimulate investments in areas such as sustainable agricultural practices, renewable energy, and digital infrastructure. It also calls for increased capacity within EFSA to accelerate risk assessments and approvals, providing companies with the confidence to innovate in the EU. Additionally, Jacobs stressed the importance of regulatory simplification, a competitiveness check for proposed laws, and appointing an Executive Vice-President of the EC for Agri-Food to strengthen leadership on sustainable food systems. The plan advocates for policy co-creation to ensure that business expertise contributes to effective and forward-looking policy frameworks. This comprehensive approach aligns with the EC's objectives to enhance competitiveness while maintaining safety and sustainability standards across MSs.</p> |
| FoodDrinkEurope                               | Action Project for Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems                                     | <a href="#">URL</a> | <p>In this activity report, FoodDrinkEurope outlines its ongoing initiatives to promote sustainable and resilient food systems within the EU. Building upon previously discussed targets—such as achieving a net-zero carbon food chain by 2050, halving per capita food waste by 2030, and ensuring all packaging is recyclable or reusable by 2030—the report introduces new actions relevant to</p>   |

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|                 |   |                     | EFSA's mandate. Notably, FoodDrinkEurope has launched a Net Zero Toolkit to assist businesses in reducing carbon emissions and has updated its Food Safety Toolkit to maintain high safety standards amid evolving production practices. Additionally, the introduction of the FoodDrinkEurope Learning Zone, an online platform offering resources like step-by-step videos on achieving net-zero and reformulation guidelines, aims to support companies in their sustainability efforts.  |
| FoodDrinkEurope | The Food Investment & Resilience Plan                                       | <a href="#">URL</a> | In its Food Investment and Resilience Plan, FoodDrinkEurope outlines a comprehensive strategy to enhance the EU food and drink sector's competitiveness and sustainability. The plan emphasizes stimulating investment, supporting innovation, boosting trade, building better regulation, and improving governance. Notably, it calls for accelerating risk assessment and approvals for sustainable food solutions by increasing EFSA's capacity, thereby enabling companies to innovate confidently within the EU. This initiative aligns with the EC's objectives to foster a competitive and sustainable agri-food sector, positioning EFSA as a pivotal entity in ensuring food safety while facilitating innovation.  |
| FoodDrinkEurope | A Mission for Industrial Competitiveness for Europe's Food and Drink Sector | <a href="#">URL</a> | In a LinkedIn post, FoodDrinkEurope addressed an open letter to Commissioner-designate Stéphane Séjourné, urging policymakers to prioritize the competitiveness of the EU food and drink sector. Highlighting the sector's critical role as Europe's largest manufacturing industry, FoodDrinkEurope emphasized its contribution to economic growth, sustainability, and support for rural communities. The post outlined key recommendations, including the development of an EU Food Investment and Resilience Plan to address funding gaps and drive innovation, with support from the European Investment Bank. It also called for regular competitiveness reviews to assess the impact of regulations on SMEs, reduce administrative burdens, and foster sector-specific innovation. Furthermore, FoodDrinkEurope advocated for removing barriers within the Single Market through measures like the Single Market Barriers Prevention Act to enhance cross-border trade and reduce operational costs. These initiatives align with the broader goals of strengthening Europe's industrial strategy and ensuring the sector's resilience amidst global competition and geopolitical challenges. |
| FoodDrinkEurope | A Mission for a Competitive, Resilient, and Sustainable Europe              | <a href="#">URL</a> | Linked to the other post, in another post, Dirk Jacobs - Director General at FoodDrinkEurope - addressed an open letter to President Ursula von der Leyen, emphasizing the EU food and drink sector's pivotal role in Europe's economy, sustainability, and food security. The post reiterated the need for a comprehensive EU Food Investment and Resilience Plan to address financing gaps, promote innovation, and bolster global trade. FoodDrinkEurope highlighted barriers such as regulatory complexity and market fragmentation, urging the EC to streamline policies and enhance the sector's competitiveness through measures like better governance and public-private partnerships. The letter also emphasized the strategic importance of the food and drink industry for crisis preparedness and advocated for its explicit recognition as critical to society by MSs. These recommendations align closely with the EC's objectives for sustainable and resilient industrial strategies while underscoring EFSA's critical role in ensuring food safety and fostering innovation.  |
| FoodDrinkEurope | Annual Report 2024  | <a href="#">URL</a> | In its Annual Report 2024, FoodDrinkEurope reiterates its commitment to enhancing the competitiveness of Europe's food and drink sector through sustainability and innovation. The report emphasizes the industry's dedication to achieving a net-zero carbon food chain by 2050, reducing food waste, and ensuring all packaging is recyclable or reusable by 2030. These initiatives align with the EC's goals of promoting sustainable growth and a circular economy. For EFSA, this underscores the importance of evaluating the safety impact of new packaging materials and sustainable practices to ensure they meet food safety standards. Additionally, the report highlights the sector's focus on healthier living, aiming to provide balanced diets and  |

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|                                  |   |                     | clear consumer information. The emphasis on thriving businesses and quality jobs indicates a need for EFSA to consider the implications of regulatory measures on SMEs within the industry, ensuring that food safety regulations are both effective and economically feasible for all stakeholders.   |
| GFI Europe                       | Four ways the new European Commission can boost EU competitiveness through protein diversification  | <a href="#">URL</a> | In a recent blog post, Alex Holst - Deputy Head of Policy of GFI Europe emphasized the critical role of protein diversification in bolstering the EU's competitiveness while addressing global challenges such as climate change and food security. The post highlighted alternative proteins—plant-based foods, cultivated meat, and fermentation products—as a burgeoning sector with the potential to create millions of jobs globally. GFI stressed the need for the EC to invest in scaling up food biotechnology through initiatives like the Clean Industrial Deal and European Biotech Act. Key recommendations included increasing public-private partnerships to overcome infrastructure gaps, enhancing R&I funding under Horizon's successor FP10, and strengthening EFSA's capacity to ensure timely and thorough assessments of novel foods under the EU's Novel Food Regulation. The post also called for leveraging the Common Agricultural Policy to enable farmers to capitalize on plant-based opportunities and creating an EU Action Plan for plant-based foods. These actions align with the EC's goals for sustainable innovation and highlight EFSA's central role in enabling safe market access for novel protein solutions. |
| spiritsEUROPE                    | spiritsEUROPE launches "Objective 2030", a roadmap for an open EU trade policy to support competitiveness, resilience and growth            | <a href="#">URL</a> | SpiritsEUROPE's "Objective 2030" roadmap calls for an open EU trade policy to enhance the competitiveness, resilience, and growth of the spirits sector. Highlighting the industry's economic and cultural significance, the plan urges the EU to foster a stable trade environment, deepen regulatory cooperation with third countries to remove barriers, and expand market access through ambitious trade agreements. These measures aim to sustain the sector's global success, benefiting rural communities and the EU's agri-food trade balance.   |
| FRUCOM                           | Report of the Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture – recommends new approach on sustainability, improved coherence with trade | <a href="#">URL</a> | The FruCom report on the Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture outlines 14 recommendations to address sustainability, trade, and competitiveness in the EU food and agricultural sectors. Key points include aligning trade policies with EU standards, harmonizing sustainability assessments, and strengthening farmers' roles in the value chain. The report emphasizes the need for robust governance, risk management, and support for non-EU operators to meet EU regulations.  |
| Wageningen University & Research | How to make sustainable food systems with AI  | <a href="#">URL</a> | The Wageningen University post highlights the role of AI in sustainable food systems, featuring Orbisk's smart monitors that reduce food waste by up to 70% through data analysis. Professor Ioannis Athanasiadis emphasizes the need for EU-supported facilities like AgrifoodTEF to help startups scale innovations such as weeding robots and AI solutions for agriculture. These initiatives aim to foster collaboration, share datasets, and accelerate the adoption of sustainable agrifood technologies, aligning with EU goals for innovation and competitiveness.   |
| Wageningen University & Research | Governing SDG Interactions in East Africa   | <a href="#">URL</a> | Wageningen University's project on "Governing SDG Interactions in East Africa" examines mechanisms to align multi-level governance of SDGs across Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda. It focuses on mitigating trade-offs and maximising synergies in landscape restoration, climate-smart livestock, and the water-energy-food nexus.  |
| Wageningen University & Research | The opportunities of AI in food and ecosystems  | <a href="#">URL</a> | Wageningen University explores AI's transformative role in food systems and ecosystems, highlighting applications like plant disease detection, ecosystem resilience analysis, and ethical AI in agriculture. The research prioritises responsible, FAIR-compliant data usage and ethical, legal, and societal considerations.   |
| FEFAC                            | EC political guidelines: new  | <a href="#">URL</a> | FEFAC welcomed the European Commission's 2024–2029 Political Guidelines, which emphasize the agri-food sector as a strategic asset   |

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|  | Vision for Agriculture and Food |  | for global food security and sustainability. The proposed "Vision for Agriculture and Food" prioritizes competitiveness, sustainability, and innovation, supported by a new EU Competitiveness Fund and enhanced trade policies. FEAC President Pedro Cordero highlighted the feed industry's role in driving innovation through circular feed resources and climate-smart solutions to strengthen the EU livestock sector. Aligning with EC priorities, FEAC's 12 key recommendations focus on improving competitiveness and advancing sustainable production systems, with EFSA playing a key role in ensuring regulatory compliance for these innovations. |
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**Other stakeholders or actors EFSA may need to monitor closely on the topic of competitiveness**

| Organization                    | Document title   | Reference           | Reason for inclusion   |
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| SGS Digicomply                  | European Union Food Regulatory Guide - Competent Authorities   | <a href="#">URL</a> | The SGS Digicomply guide offers a detailed overview of the EU's food regulatory framework, highlighting the roles of key bodies such as the EC, DG SANTE, and EFSA in ensuring food safety and public health. It emphasizes EFSA's role in conducting risk assessments and providing scientific advice to underpin EU food safety policies. This guide is a valuable resource for navigating the EU's complex regulatory landscape, aligning with EFSA's mission to support safe, compliant, and innovative food systems across MSs. |
| Food Navigator                  | F&B excluded from European Commission's competitiveness-report   | <a href="#">URL</a> | Food Navigator highlights the European Commission's exclusion of the food and drink sector from its competitiveness report. This exclusion has raised concerns about the sector's recognition in EU industrial strategy, potentially impacting policy support and investment in areas crucial for maintaining competitiveness and ensuring food safety.  |
| FoodBev Media                   | FoodDrinkEurope outlines roadmap to boost Europe's competitiveness and sustainability                  | <a href="#">URL</a> | Food Bev reports on FoodDrinkEurope's roadmap, which aims to enhance the EU food sector's competitiveness and sustainability through investments in innovation, trade facilitation, and regulatory improvement. These actions are critical to ensuring resilience and maintaining food safety.   |
| Competere                       | EU Agrifood: Driving Competitiveness, Sustainability, and Resilience                                   | <a href="#">URL</a> | Competere emphasizes the need for the EU agri-food sector to be central in policy agendas, advocating for balanced sustainability that integrates economic, social, and environmental needs. They highlight the importance of supporting farmers, entrepreneurs, and researchers to enhance competitiveness and resilience in the face of climate challenges.  |
| Farm Europe                     | Building a Strategic Roadmap for Agriculture at a Crossroads   | <a href="#">URL</a> | Farm Europe emphasizes the need for the EU to enhance its agricultural competitiveness, which has declined over the past two decades. They advocate for increased investment, regulatory simplification, and a balanced approach that integrates economic profitability with ecological and social goals to ensure the sector's resilience and sustainability.   |
| The European House - Ambrosetti | La Roadmap del futuro per il Food&Beverage: quali evoluzioni e quali sfide per i prossimi anni?        | <a href="#">URL</a> | The European House - Ambrosetti's Forum Food Community brings together leaders from the agri-food sector to discuss strategies for enhancing competitiveness, sustainability, and resilience in the industry. Their insights and policy recommendations are valuable for EFSA in understanding industry perspectives on maintaining food safety while promoting economic growth.   |
| EuroCommerce                    | Beyond Manufacturing: A New Competitiveness Agenda for the EU in partnership with retail and wholesale | <a href="#">URL</a> | EuroCommerce emphasizes the critical role of the retail and wholesale sectors in the EU's economy, contributing over 10% of GDP and employing 26 million people. They advocate for a comprehensive EU competitiveness strategy that includes services sectors, focusing on strengthening the Single Market, diversifying supply chains, and fostering innovation to enhance economic security and resilience.  |
| Corporate Europe                | Competitiveness': inside the troubling   | <a href="#">URL</a> | Corporate Europe Observatory critiques the European Commission's upcoming focus on 'competitiveness,' highlighting concerns that corporate lobbying may lead to deregulation at the expense of   |



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| Observatory (CEO)                         | corporate blueprint for the coming Commission   |                     | environmental and social standards. This perspective is crucial for EFSA to consider, as it underscores potential challenges in maintaining food safety and public health standards amid shifting policy priorities.   |
| EuroNews                                  | How Europe can support its food and drink industry to remain competitive and sustainable    | <a href="#">URL</a> | Euronews discusses strategies for the EU to bolster the competitiveness and sustainability of its food and drink sector. The article emphasizes the importance of innovation, supportive policies, and investment in sustainable practices to ensure the industry's growth and resilience.   |
| EUNews                                    | EU competitiveness goes through free trade agreements                                       | <a href="#">URL</a> | Eunews reports on the European Commission's 2024 Annual Single Market and Competitiveness Report, which emphasizes that trade is key to the EU's long-term competitiveness. The report highlights the need for modern trade agreements and partnerships to maintain the EU's economic strength, suggesting that the EU should build a more modern network of trade agreements, partnerships, and alliances while continuing to work on reinforcing multilateral cooperation and open trade.  |
| CEPS (Centre for European Policy Studies) | How the EU can – and should – enhance its security and global competitiveness               | <a href="#">URL</a> | CEPS emphasizes that the EU must prioritize its enlargement policy, defense strategy, and global partnerships to achieve security and competitiveness objectives by 2030 and beyond. They advocate for boosting Europe's defense industry, increasing production capabilities, addressing procurement issues, and harmonizing technical and operational standards to strengthen the EU's global competitiveness.   |
| The Parliament Magazine                   | The role of the European non-alcoholic beverage sector in a competitive Europe              | <a href="#">URL</a> | UNESDA Soft Drinks Europe emphasizes the significant contribution of the non-alcoholic beverage sector to the EU's economy, supporting over 1.8 million jobs and maintaining a strong local presence. They advocate for policy support to enhance competitiveness and sustainability, highlighting the sector's role in driving economic growth and ensuring food safety.  |
| BusinessEurope                            | A proactive trade agenda for EU competitiveness: priorities for the next political cycle    | <a href="#">URL</a> | BusinessEurope advocates for a proactive EU trade agenda to enhance competitiveness, emphasizing the need for diversification, modern trade agreements, and partnerships. Their recommendations aim to strengthen the EU's global economic position, which is vital for the agri-food sector's growth and resilience.  |
| Elysee - President of France              | A new agenda to boost competitiveness and growth in the European Union                      | <a href="#">URL</a> | The French and German governments propose a joint contribution to the EU's Strategic Agenda, aiming to enhance Europe's global competitiveness and resilience. They emphasize the need for innovation, investment, and a smarter regulatory framework to maintain the EU's position as an industrial and technological powerhouse, while also pursuing ambitious, sustainable trade policies.  |
| Yara                                      | Yara's recommendations for the 2024-2029 European mandate                                   | <a href="#">URL</a> | Yara International emphasizes the need for the EU to transition from setting targets to implementing incentives to accelerate the green transition and secure Europe's strategic autonomy. Their recommendations focus on sustainable crop nutrition, support for farmers through the Common Agricultural Policy, and the promotion of regenerative agriculture. These initiatives aim to enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of European agriculture while ensuring food safety. |
| Smart Packaging Europe                    | The Future of European Competitiveness: Key Insights and Opportunities for the EPS Industry | <a href="#">URL</a> | Smart Packaging Europe discusses how the Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) industry can contribute to Europe's competitiveness through innovation, decarbonization, and resilience. The organization emphasizes the importance of aligning industry practices with Europe's sustainability goals to maintain economic leadership.   |

***Evolution of the role of science over time in the context of the priorities of the EU Commission 2024-2029***

The evolving role of science as a driver of innovation, sustainability, and competitiveness is highlighted across various EU-focused reports and articles. The most relevant are described as follows:

The FAO's "Updated Results Framework 2022-25" [URL](#) highlights the evolving role of science as a cornerstone for driving innovation and addressing complex challenges in global agricultural systems, aligning with the EU Commission's 2024-2029 priorities. Science is emphasized as a tool to enhance productivity, sustainability, and resilience in agriculture, particularly through initiatives such as digital agriculture and the application of the One Health approach. The FAO's focus on integrating data-driven technologies, such as precision farming and advanced monitoring systems, reflects the EU's ambition to foster green and digital transitions. This alignment demonstrates how science underpins policy-making and regulatory frameworks, enabling the safe and effective deployment of innovative technologies. **FoodDrinkEurope's** Annual Report 2024 [URL](#) emphasizes integrating scientific advancements into industry practices to enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of the EU's food and drink industry, aligning with the EU Commission's priorities for 2024-2029. The **Good Food Institute Europe's** blog post [URL](#), advocates for investment in scientific research to develop alternative proteins. GFI emphasizes the role of robust regulatory frameworks, supported by scientific evidence, to ensure safety and foster market confidence in novel food solutions. Additional contributions come from **Wageningen University**, which highlights the transformative potential of AI in sustainable agriculture and **SGS Digicomply** that showcases science's role in ensuring regulatory coherence and risk assessment.

Collectively, these sources illustrate the critical role of science in addressing the EU's strategic priorities, acting as the bridge between ambitious policy objectives and actionable, sustainable innovation.

## **E. Key insights and recommendations**

- **Encourage capacity development among stakeholders in agri-food value chains to implement safe and compliant innovations.** This includes providing training programs and resources that align with EU regulatory and sustainability goals, as highlighted in FoodDrinkEurope's Annual Report 2024.
- **Ensure EU regulations remain adaptable to emerging technologies, enabling a secure transition to innovative practices.** Such adaptability is vital for maintaining global competitiveness while addressing food safety concerns, as emphasized by GFI Europe in advocating for alternative protein solutions.
- **Foster collaboration among governments, industries, and civil society to balance food safety objectives with competitiveness.** Multi-stakeholder initiatives, such as those proposed by FoodDrinkEurope, can integrate science-driven innovations into policy frameworks and promote harmonized implementation.
- **Invest in transformative technologies like Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS) and expand their use across the food system to anticipate and mitigate emerging risks.** These advancements enhance consumer trust and align with the EU's broader competitiveness and security goals, as supported by insights from Smart Packaging Europe and CEPS.
- **Leverage the proposed EU Competitiveness Fund to drive innovation and sustainability.** Collaboration with stakeholders like COPA-COGECA and FEFAC can harmonize policies and advance climate-smart agricultural solutions, promoting long-term resilience and sustainability in the sector.
- **Align food safety initiatives with the EU's green and digital transitions by prioritizing technologies such as traceability tools and sustainable packaging.** Improved stakeholder coordination and a commitment to innovation will be essential to meeting these objectives, as outlined in recent reports from Elysee and EUNews.

## **F. Concise summary**

With this deep dive, EFSA aims to understand the policy context shaping the dialogue on competitiveness and to identify key stakeholder voices and opinions.

In terms of EU policy developments led by the EC or major stakeholders, several initiatives highlight the interplay between competitiveness, sustainability, and innovation impacting EFSA's work. The FAO's "Updated Results Framework 2022-25" and the EC's "Farm to Fork" strategy emphasize advanced technologies and resilience, requiring EFSA to address food safety implications of digital agriculture and integrated risk assessments. FoodDrinkEurope's advocacy for a fully functional Single Market and accelerated risk approvals positions EFSA as pivotal in supporting innovation while safeguarding standards. Global food safety challenges highlighted by New



Zealand's Ministry for Primary Industries call for EFSA to adapt methodologies to climate change and emerging risks. GFI Europe's push for alternative proteins underscores EFSA's role in validating novel foods. Initiatives from stakeholders like spiritsEUROPE and FRUCOM stress the importance of harmonized trade standards, while Wageningen University's AI-driven solutions and AgrifoodTEF facilities emphasize EFSA's role in integrating science with regulation.

Regarding other stakeholders or actors EFSA may need to monitor closely on the topic of competitiveness, key players such as Farm Europe and EuroCommerce highlight critical strategies for enhancing the EU agri-food sector's competitiveness through investments in innovation, regulatory simplification, and trade facilitation. Organizations like CEPS and BusinessEurope advocate for modern trade agreements and partnerships to strengthen the EU's global economic position, which is essential for resilience and growth. Insights from UNESDA Soft Drinks Europe and Smart Packaging Europe emphasize the need for sustainable practices and innovative solutions to align with EU competitiveness goals. Additionally, Corporate Europe Observatory warns against deregulation risks, underscoring the importance of balancing competitiveness with robust food safety and environmental standards. These perspectives provide EFSA with a comprehensive understanding of industry dynamics and potential areas requiring regulatory oversight.

The role of science is increasingly central to achieving the EU Commission's 2024-2029 priorities, serving as a foundation for innovation, sustainability, and competitiveness. Reports like FAO's "Updated Results Framework 2022-25" and FoodDrinkEurope's Annual Report underscore the integration of advanced technologies such as precision agriculture and alternative proteins into sustainable practices. Wageningen University highlights AI's transformative potential, while SGS Digicomply emphasizes the importance of regulatory coherence. Together, these insights demonstrate how science bridges policy ambitions and practical implementation. For EFSA, this evolving science-for-policy function is crucial in ensuring food safety and fostering innovation in a rapidly changing agri-food landscape.