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E.U. Moves Closer to Farm Policy Deal After Revising Wine Aid Rules

The Irish presidency broadened eligibility for support, helping win broad backing for a partial CAP agreement before late-October talks.

Friday, October 9, 2026



European Union governments are moving closer to a partial deal on farm policy changes after the Irish presidency revised parts of a proposal on wine aid in an effort to break remaining deadlocks.

Agricultural experts from the 27 member states met on Oct. 5 in the EU's Special Committee on Agriculture and made further progress toward a partial general approach on the Common Agricultural Policy, or CAP, and the related common market organization regulation, known as the CMO. The goal is to reach political agreement by the end of October, before agriculture ministers meet in Luxembourg on Oct. 26 and 27.

The latest compromise text on the CMO received broad support from member states, according to Agra Europe, after the Irish presidency introduced several changes requested by some governments. The most sensitive revisions concern sectoral interventions in wine and the operational programs used by producer organizations.

One of the clearest changes affects who can receive support under mandatory interventions in the wine sector. In the earlier draft, those interventions were reserved for "recognized producer organizations." That wording has now been removed and replaced with the broader term "beneficiaries." The change is meant to better reflect the way the wine sector is organized across the bloc, where support structures and marketing systems differ from one country to another.

That adjustment matters because it could influence which wineries, grower groups, or other eligible actors are able to access European support. If the broader wording is kept in the final regulation, it could widen access to wine-sector aid in some member states and change how funds are distributed through operational programs.

The Irish presidency also revised the financing rules for those programs. Under the new compromise, cofinancing at both the EU and national levels would be capped according to the value of the production marketed by the producer organization or other eligible beneficiaries. The idea, as described in the negotiations, is to make sure the ceiling is linked to eligible public spending tied to the sectoral intervention, rather than becoming a direct payment detached from actual expenses.

At the same time, the presidency proposed keeping the current rule that public and private financial contributions to operational programs be split evenly, at 50/50. That approach appears to have eased some concerns, although it has not ended all debate.

For the beverage sector, the outcome is important well beyond legal wording. The rules under discussion would shape who qualifies for EU wine support and how sectoral programs are financed, which could affect investment decisions by wine producers and grape growers. The final design may also influence how member states structure support for promotion, restructuring, or other market measures connected to the wine industry.

The broader CAP talks remain more difficult. While negotiators have advanced on the market regulation, several major issues are still unresolved in the farm policy package itself. The main dispute remains how much flexibility member states should receive while preserving a common EU framework. Other open questions include the share of coupled income support, control rates, and new conditions attached to farm aid.

Those debates go to the core of the next CAP model. Some governments want more room to tailor spending and rules to national farming systems. Others are pushing to avoid a system that would give countries too much discretion and weaken the common nature of EU agricultural policy. The tension between national flexibility and common standards has been central to the negotiations for months and continues to shape discussions on both payments and market measures.

Despite that, the tone of the latest meeting was seen as more constructive. Agra Europe reported that delegations broadly thanked the Irish presidency for its work and said the talks were moving in the right direction. That does not mean a final landing zone has been secured, but it suggests that governments see a path to a limited political agreement before the end of the month.

Not all issues in the CMO text are settled. Several delegations are still asking for more changes on provisions related to hemp, especially on how EU rules would interact with national legislation and policy. That subject remains one of the outstanding points that could complicate efforts to close the package.

The next steps are already scheduled. The two texts, covering the CAP and the CMO, are due to return to the Special Committee on Agriculture at meetings on Oct. 12 and Oct. 19. Those discussions are expected to narrow the remaining technical and political differences before the agriculture ministers take up the matter later in October.

Ministers are expected to finalize a partial general approach at the Agriculture Council in Luxembourg on Oct. 26 and 27. That agreement, if reached, would exclude the financial points that still require separate decisions. Even so, it would mark an important stage in the negotiations by setting the bloc’s position on major policy questions, including the structure of wine-sector support.

For wine producers, the practical stakes are clear. A change from support limited to recognized producer organizations to support available to broader categories of beneficiaries could alter eligibility across national systems. The cofinancing formula could also affect how large operational programs can be and how much public money can be matched to private spending. Those choices may determine which projects move forward and which businesses are best placed to use the programs once the new rules take effect.

The talks are taking place as member states try to secure enough common ground to keep the wider CAP reform on schedule. With only a few weeks left before ministers meet, the Irish presidency is trying to lock in agreement where it can, especially on market rules where support now appears stronger than it was earlier in the process. Whether that momentum carries through the remaining disputes will become clearer in the next two rounds of technical talks.