

Agrifood

Ukraine's farm minister warns of 'moral losses' from EU agriculture tariffs

Ukraine's agriculture minister said that managing national output requires "knowing the election calendar in EU member states."

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The EU's decision to throttle trade in agricultural products with Ukraine will trigger big losses for the national economy this year and undermine efforts to plug the country into the bloc's single market, Agriculture Minister Vitalii Koval said Monday.

The measure - **approved** by EU member states last week at the behest of big farming states - will take effect from 6 June and rolls back full trade liberalisation introduced after Russia's full-scale invasion back in 2022.

The new rules will reinstate 2017 tariff quotas on Ukrainian agricultural exports, a policy that will harm more than just the food industry.

"What about the moral losses? This is not calculated in billions, but millions of Ukrainian citizens supporting integration into the EU," Koval said during an appearance at the Agriculture and Fisheries Council (AGRIFISH) in Brussels on Monday.

Koval said that the war has decimated Ukraine's other major industries, such as chemicals and steel, leaving agriculture to account for 17% of the country's GDP. That means that a return to pre-war tariff quotas with the EU will work out at losses of between €2.8 billion and €3.5 billion for Ukraine in 2025.

But for the European Commission, the move to revert to old trade rules is just a temporary fix while negotiations continue over a longer-term trade framework between Kyiv and Brussels.

Koval said the target is to arrange a long-term trade framework with the EU by the end of July.

Meanwhile, Poland's Agriculture Minister Czesław Siekierski hailed the reintroduction of the pre-war trade regime with Ukraine as a major political victory ahead of critical elections this weekend. Siekierski's visit to Brussels to host talks amongst the EU's farm ministers comes as Poland's centre-right government is set to face off against the far-right Law and Justice (PiS) in Sunday's second round of presidential elections.

The issue is particularly sensitive in Poland, since Ukrainian imports have fuelled farmer unrest over recent years.

"These are figures which are very favourable to us, because these amounts are very low," Siekierski told reporters on the sidelines of the AGRIFISH meeting, referring to the limited quantities of Ukrainian agricultural exports that will be allowed into the EU from 6 June.

The Polish minister said the future talks would require "some dialogue" and that the discussion on how much to liberalise the agricultural market for Ukrainian goods also rests on the settlement of the Kyiv's war against invading Russian forces.

Speaking to reporters, Ukraine's Koval joked that managing Ukrainian agriculture output requires "knowing the election calendar in EU member states" to respond to national political campaigns. He said his mission in Brussels on Monday was to counter "myths" about Ukrainian products disrupting the EU market.

This story has been corrected to reflect that agriculture makes up 17% of Ukraine's GDP.

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