

EU agrees to extend trade liberalisation measures for Ukraine

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EU negotiators have agreed to extend trade liberalisation measures for Ukraine for another year. The measures, which were first introduced after Russia invaded Ukraine in 2014, have been extended until June 2025. The latest proposal by the European Commission to extend the measures until June 2025 included import caps on Ukrainian sugar, poultry and eggs to address the concerns of EU farmers. However, the European Parliament approved additional restrictions in a plenary vote last week, leading to further negotiations between member countries, represented by the Belgian presidency of the Council, the Parliament's rapporteur, Latvian centre-right lawmaker Sandra Kalniete, and the Commission.

The deal expands the import caps to honey, maize, oats and groats. It also requires the Commission to act more quickly in the event of a surge in imports, with a deadline of two weeks to reimpose tariffs instead of three. While there won't be hard limits on wheat, the Commission will be required to implement measures in case of market disruption.

Negotiators decided against extending the 2022-2023 reference period for calculating the caps to include 2021 when imports from Ukraine into the EU were much lower. This measure, supported by a coalition of countries including Poland and France, would have cost Ukraine €1.2 billion in lost trade revenues, according to Commission estimates.

The deal, which has the backing of the European People's Party, the Socialists and Democrats, Renew Europe and the Greens, must now be formally approved by EU countries and the Parliament. EU diplomats are expected to discuss it at a technical level followed by a sign-off by EU ambassadors. The Parliament's international trade committee is expected to scrutinise the deal with a wider vote in the plenary expected in late April.