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Global Agricultural Information Network

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New French President's Agricultural Priorities

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Agriculture in the Economy

Agriculture in the News

Approved By:

Kate Snipes

Prepared By:

Xavier Audran

Report Highlights:

Highlights: On May 17, newly elected French President Emmanuel Macron announced his Cabinet. French Senator Jacques Mezard from Cantal was named Minister of Agriculture. A strong ecologically-minded anti-biotech leader, Nicolas Hulot was named as the Minister of Ecological Transition.

General Information:

French President Emmanuel Macron (39) was elected President of France with 65 percent of the vote defeating opponent Marine Le Pen in the run-off election on May 7, 2017. On May 17, he announced his Cabinet. It is important to note because France's Parliamentary elections are June 11 and 18, it is possible that the cabinet composition will change after those elections.

President Macron was elected on a pro-Europe, pro-trade, centrist platform while Ms. Le Pen had a staunch anti-EU and protectionist stance. However, while Macron received 90 percent of the vote in metropolitan areas including Paris, his opponent fared much better in rural areas. She won the majority in many small villages and in many agricultural regions of France. Some polls indicate that that about half of farmers voted for Le Pen, which means that her anti-trade, anti-EU message resonated with many in agriculture.

President Macron said publically before his election that different types of farms can coexist in France. France can have productive agriculture, geared toward export with mass production and competitive prices, and small-scale organic farming focused primarily, but not exclusively, on local consumption. He believes both models should be supported by national and European farm policies. The French President also has said he generally supports decreasing the dependency of French farmers on public support.

President Macron is favorable to free trade agreements providing they ensure fair competition between trading partners. Soon after the June legislative elections, Emmanuel Macron wants to organize a large high-level forum for producers, processors, retailers and consumers with the goal of ensuring farmers receive a larger share of the earnings.

Based on his campaign statements, his vision for the future of the EU, Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform, and domestic agricultural policy prioritizes the following:

- Maintaining the EU farm budget and spending at its current level and encouraging CAP to be more protective of farmers (currently no details on what *more protective* entails);
- Increasing risk management support through CAP payments;
- Investing €5 billion in farms and food processing plants; including €200 million specifically for farmers investing in environmentally related projects;
- Decreasing use of pesticides when alternatives are present;
- Supporting farmers' investments in environmental protection;
- Facilitating the formation of new producers' groups;
- Reducing regulations and constraints on farming; and
- Reducing (or eliminating) the frequency that France exceeds EU norms and regulations when implemented domestically, also known as gold-plating.

President Macron's Cabinet was announced May 17 with two new members that are particularly important to agriculture.



French Senator Jacques Mezard (70) was named as the new Minister of Agriculture. He has been the Senator of Cantal, a rural constituency in central France since 2008 and president of the Metropolitan area of Aurillac. He is a lawyer by trade, and has not participated in many agricultural related committees or topics in the Senate. Minister Mezard joined the En Marche political movement supporting Emmanuel Macron's Presidential bid in the summer of 2016.



Nicolas Hulot (62) was named the new Minister of State in charge of Ecological Transition, with the second cabinet rank just below the Minister of Interior. This means this environmentally-oriented Ministry will be many levels above the Minister of Agriculture in terms of their importance in the cabinet. Nicolas Hulot is a journalist who became highly popular in France for advocating for sustainable development and ecological causes. He has publicly and repeatedly opposed the use of biotechnology in agriculture, and consistently criticizes the use of pesticides and intensive agriculture in general.