

FROM POLAND TO SPAIN, EUROPE'S FARMERS PROTESTS INTENSIFY

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Europe's farmers have intensified protests against EU measures and rising prices, with roads blocked in Poland, Hungary, Spain and Belgium.

The protests have moved to action farmers across the continent. However, their complaints vary widely.

Farmers in **Poland and Hungary** complain that the European Union is not doing enough to halt cheap imports from Ukraine undercutting local produce. They want the EU to restore a requirement on Ukrainian truckers to obtain a permit to work across the 27 member states.

In **Poland**, lines of tractors, many flying the Polish flag, appeared on roads in 256 places, blocking traffic and forcing police to arrange alternative routes.

Many of the farmers bore banners saying no to the EU's Green Deal, aimed at bringing down greenhouse gas emissions.

Earlier this week the European Commission recommended that net emissions should be reduced by 90% by 2040 compared with 2015 levels, but abandoned its Green Deal plan to halve pesticide use across the EU. Farmers have complained that cutting pesticides will harm their crops and jeopardise food production.

Hundreds of **Hungarian** farmers converged in their tractors on the main border-crossing with Ukraine at Zahony, on Friday, joining the Europe-wide protests for the first time.

Organisers said they were protesting against cheap Ukrainian imports which were undermining Hungarian markets, and also in solidarity with farmers elsewhere in Europe.

"According to my calculations, the average loss this year to a farmer for the wheat we planted last September will be about €300 per hectare," an Hungarian agriculture expert told the BBC.

He says medium-sized farms of 100-400 hectares have been worst hit.

Hungary's farmers share many of the concerns of their counterparts elsewhere, such as high fertiliser prices and cheap imports of Ukrainian grain, dairy produce, eggs and meat.

In **Spain**, farmers shut down roads for a fourth day in several areas, complicating traffic in big cities such as Bilbao where 100 tractors headed to the centre in columns.

Residents in Pamplona woke up to find dozens of tractors parked in two columns in the city centre, while in Toledo hundreds of tractors blocked access to the heart of the historic city.

Agriculture unions in the Basque country complained about EU policies and minister Luis Planas said that he respected their right to demonstrate, but urged farmers to avoid intimidation or violence.

In **Greece**, farmers have demanded lower electricity prices, tax-free diesel and subsidised animal feed, as well as changes to EU environment rules.

Prime Minister is expected to meet farmers' leaders next Tuesday but the government has insisted that the roads must remain open.

An estimated 600 farmers headed to the **Belgian** city of Genk, where EU ministers were holding an industry summit.

Farmers in **Italy** were heading for the Sanremo song festival on Friday where they planned to read a statement out on stage.

A parade of tractors were due to drive around Rome's motorway ring road on Friday evening, but a large tractor rally in the central Piazza San Giovanni was cancelled so as not to annoy the public.

A symbolic convoy of four tractors drove past the Colosseum shortly before the big agriculture organisations met Prime Minister.

Farmers are also angry about an income tax break that was scrapped as part of this year's budget.