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## WELCOME NOTE

Dear readers,

For all of us, these days are really challenging. We are facing a crisis where no one can fall back on past experiences. In these days, it is said, it is the hour of strong executive governments. It might be right; we need fast and difficult decisions – but it is also the hour of system changes. This can be our momentum to change the current model of competition, trade and values together with many citizens and entrepreneurs all over Europe. It can be the momentum of organics to change the food and farming system.

We all have to learn very quickly to stay connected and collaborate even more intensively than before. Many of us are having positive experiences with new tools and settings beyond physical meetings. Formerly, web conferences and webinars were a tool for minorities, now they are common for almost all of us. Last week I experienced that more of our farmers and staff members are getting actively connected, because the efforts and cost of travels are not a barrier anymore. Except for occasional bad connectivity, which is still an obstacle in many regions, the opportunities to connect and collaborate intensively are growing and making Europe more organic.

So let's use this momentum: Let's stay connected, let's meet and work together and let's make system change happen.

This is why we are keeping our General Assembly and European Organic Congress on our planner. Now is our chance to involve even more people in our movement.

Concretely speaking, IFOAM EU will host its 10th General Assembly, which is the highest decision-making body of IFOAM EU, on 30 June 2020. At this biannual meeting, IFOAM EU's membership reviews and decides on the general policy and direction of IFOAM EU. Our members will address important matters, including finance and future strategies, vote on motions and elect the next IFOAM EU Board for 2020-2022. [IFOAM EU's members will find more information about the General Assembly on the IFOAM EU member extranet.](#)

The participation of all IFOAM EU's members to our General Assembly is a key part of our democratic process. It gives our members the power to direct IFOAM EU's work and ensure genuine representation. The 10th edition of the GA will be a special one as it will take place online, giving more of our members the chance to join and be part of this important process.

At the General Assembly, my fellow Board members and me will report on the progress we made on implementing IFOAM EU's internal strategy to achieve our Vision 2030.

Additionally, following the General Assembly, IFOAM EU and our member and co-organiser BÖLW invite you all to the [European Organic Congress 2020](#). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this event will also take place online.

We invite you to five different online sessions throughout 1-3 July. The European Organic Congress provides a platform where policy-makers and expert speakers will update you about the latest policy developments and discuss our vision for a post-pandemic Europe. We expect to inform you about the programme, registration, and tools we will use in May.



This 2020 edition of the European Organic Congress will also see the launch of our new website and new logo. The entire IFOAM EU office has been working hard on this and cannot wait to share the final results with you!

Organics regards,  
Jan Plagge  
IFOAM EU President



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## POLITICAL HOTSPOT

The current Covid-19 pandemic has far reaching effects on Europe, life as we know it, agriculture and the organic sector.

The European Commission already announced [special measures](#) to address some impacts of Covid-19 on the food and farming sector and is reviewing its [2020 work programme](#). However, it should not delay publishing the Farm to Fork Strategy and other initiatives like the EU Biodiversity Strategy. The goals and targets the organic movement expects to be set in the Farm to Fork strategy will be influential for the ongoing CAP negotiations, namely on the level of ambition and support that Member States will grant for organic farming.

IFOAM EU believes it is important that this strategy is published before the CAP negotiations will be finalised. Furthermore, the European Green Deal must be placed at the heart of the EU's post-pandemic recovery plan. The Covid-19 crisis should not weaken current environmental requirements.

At the same time, organic operators need to be able to continue providing EU citizens with good quality (and quantity of) food. That is why we believe it is necessary that the application of the new EU Organic Regulation should be postponed for one year. It should not become effective at the beginning of next year, but in January 2022. This would allow organic producers and the organic control system to focus on responding to the Covid-19 crisis. However, this call should not be used to amend other parts of the basic regulation. IFOAM EU's members can read more information in a letter by IFOAM EU's President Jan Plagge to the Agriculture Commissioner, the Members of the EU Parliament and the EU Member States on the [member extranet](#).

IFOAM EU members who want to know more about what is happening with regards to Covid-19 on a global, European, and national level are invited to have a look at and contribute to our Covid-19 working document. It is available on our [member extranet](#) (under [Hot Topics](#)) and collects all relevant information about the impact of Covid-19 on the agricultural (organic) sector.

Are you an IFOAM EU member who has issues accessing the member extranet? Contact [communication@ifoam-eu.org](mailto:communication@ifoam-eu.org).

# 1 NEWS FROM IFOAM EU WORKING FIELDS

## 1.1 Policy

### Common Agricultural Policy

#### Covid-19 – A double-edged sword for the European organic sector

The coronavirus is causing the biggest and most acute crisis Europe faced in the last decades, and it is also severely impacting the organic sector. The whole supply chain is dealing with major difficulties as transport across borders is restricted and important economic activities like gastronomy and catering are closed.

Dairy and animal products are among the most negatively impacted activities, just like fruits and vegetables as seasonal workforce is not available. Bigger supermarkets and discounters, however, are reporting increased sales in several countries, resulting in a higher demand also for organic, especially for non-perishable products like pasta, rice, canned food and beans.

After issuing guidelines for border management and for the free movement of workers, the Commission has announced different measures related to the CAP. On 25 March, DG AGRI announced an extension of the deadline for submitting CAP payment application (postponed until 15 June). On 2 April, the European executive proposed to allocate higher advances of payments (both for direct payments and rural development), the possibility for Member States to use flexibility between pillars and a reduction in the number of on-the-spot checks.

Listening to the call of many Member States, European associations and Members of the European Parliaments (MEPs), several tools of the Common Market Organization (CMO), including the Private Storage Aid (PSA) and the authorisation of self-organisation market measures by operators in hard hit sectors, have been triggered by DG AGRI on 22 April. Commissioner Wojciechowski first expressed his reluctance to use these market measures due to the lack of financial resources, but finally declared that they will be useful for *“providing stability to future prices and production and thus stable food supplies and food security.”*

On the environmental side, some voices are pushing for postponing the European Green Deal and the Farm to Fork strategy. IFOAM EU wants a timely publication of the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies, as the goals and targets we expect to be set in the Farm to Fork strategy will be crucial for the ongoing CAP negotiations and the level of ambition of CAP national strategic plans. We believe that the European Green Deal must be placed at the heart of the EU’s recovery plan, like this was expressed by 13 European climate and environment ministers.

IFOAM EU’s members receive periodical updates about Covid-19 and its impact on EU organic. If you are an IFOAM EU member who does not receive this information yet, please contact [communication@ifoam-eu.org](mailto:communication@ifoam-eu.org).

## Transition to the new CAP: Rules agreed in European Parliament

On 28 April, the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (COMAGRI) of the European Parliament voted on the rules of the transition regulation of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Transitional rules are the general rule to bridge two consecutive programming periods, but this time they will probably last longer and cover the years 2021 and 2022.

The new CAP was supposed to be applied from 1 January 2021. However, considering the current state of negotiations, the basic acts will not be adopted very soon and its entry into force will be delayed. Moreover, the 4 regulations the CAP is composed of (Rural Development, Horizontal, Direct Payments, Common Market Organisation) will be inapplicable in practice as of 2021 as they do not contain the necessary Union support or national ceilings beyond 2020.

For these reasons, the European Commission came up with a proposal for the transitional period of 2021 last autumn. The main aspects of the proposal are:

- The same rules as in the current CAP apply, with new budget allocations equal to those in the CAP proposal and coherent with the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027 budget.
- If Member States decide not to prolong their current rural development programmes, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EARDF) allocations for 2021 will be transferred to the EARDF allocations for 2022 to 2025.

Yet, the European Parliament declared that a one-year transition period would be insufficient, given that neither the new CAP nor the new MFF are close to be agreed. Its proposal is the following: if the new CAP and the new MFF are not agreed between Council and the Parliament by 30 October, the transition period will be prolonged by one year (until 31 December 2022).

Moreover, whereas the Commission's text states that "*for new commitments to be undertaken as from 2021 Member States (MS) shall determine a shorter period of one to three years in their rural development programmes*", the Parliament proposes to allow Member States to have 5 year-long multiannual programmes for agro-environmental/climate, animal welfare or organic measures.

IFOAM EU supports COMAGRI's position to allow organic farmers entering 5-years schemes for conversion and/or maintenance in 2021. However, uncertainty remains regarding budgetary issues: will the next MFF be ambitious enough to support sustainable practices, including in the transition period?

## Organic Regulation

### Official publication of new secondary regulations complementing the new Organic Regulation (EU) 2018/848

Following the publication of the new Organic Regulation (EU) 2019/848 in June 2018, two secondary legal acts have been published in the EU Official Journal.

First, [Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2020/427](#) brings a few amendments related to sprouted seeds, feeding of bee colonies as well as juvenile production and feeding in aquaculture.

Second, [Commission Implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2020/464](#) integrates the new Organic Regulation on different issues, among other, the production rules for processed food and feed as well as production rules for various animals (bovine, ovine, cervine, caprine, equine, poultry, rabbit and aquaculture). It also provides Annexes (I and II) on the stocking densities and minimum outdoor and indoor areas for livestock and aquaculture animals.

It also covers the retroactive recognition of the conversion period by providing details on the documents to be supplied for this purpose.

In addition, it follows up with information concerning the availability of organic and in conversion Plant Reproductive Material (PRM), animals and aquaculture juveniles. Finally, the Commission Implementing Regulation [\(EU\) 2020/464](#) presents in Annex III information on member states database concerning the availability on the market of organic and in-conversion plant reproduction material, organic animals and organic aquaculture juveniles.

These above-mentioned acts are designated to complete the new organic Regulation (EU) 2018/848 foreseen to be implemented from 2021 onward.

As regard to the current Commission Regulation (EC) No 1235/2008 on import of organic products from third countries, a new [Commission Implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2020/479](#) related to the Certificate of Inspection (COI) was published.

This new implementing regulation corrects Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2020/25, published earlier this year.

## 1.2 Food, farming and environment

### Commission to publish Farm to Fork strategy on 29 April 2020... or will it?

The Farm to Fork strategy and the EU biodiversity strategy – both essential components of the European Green Deal – foreseen to be published on 29 April 2020, will be delayed.

The Farm to Fork Strategy was initially supposed to be published on 25 March 2020, but disruptions due to Covid-19 delayed the publication date to 29 April. However, the publication of both the Farm to Fork strategy and the EU biodiversity strategy is delayed. Vice-President Timmermans said the following in an address to the European Parliament's ENVI committee: "The initial plan [for the publication of both strategies] was end of April. It might be a couple of weeks later, certainly not months". It seems that Mr. Timmermans is putting maximum pressure for the publication to be delayed of only a couple of weeks, not more. As such, **the publication of both strategies is now announced for 20 May 2020 at the latest.**

IFOAM EU will keep up the pressure to avoid a further delay of the publication of these strategies, and a weakening of their ambition.

On 15 April 2020, NGOs sent a [letter](#) to Vice-President Timmermans and other relevant commissioners to argue for not postponing the publication of the Farm to Fork strategy. This letter was picked up by important "EU bubble" news outlets such as EurActiv and AgraFacts.

## Organic in the SAPEA report

The recently published Science Advice for Policy by European Academies (SAPEA) report "[A sustainable food system for the European Union](#)" takes an integrated systems-based approach when identifying "'workable paths' to deliver an inclusive, 'just' and timely transition to an EU sustainable food system".

The report presents organic as one of the pathways leading towards a more sustainable food system. It focuses on the Danish organic market, referred to as "the most successful organic food market in the world". Prior to delving into the Danish example, SAPEA contributors write that although EU countries had similar instruments at their disposal when it comes to organic farming, the use of these instruments are different on the ground. The report underlines that success in Denmark is partly due to the fact that the Danish government intervened from the outset, both on the supply side and the demand side, to facilitate the development of an organic food sector. More information on this Danish success from page 136 onwards!

In its report, SAPEA highlights the fragmented legislative framework surrounding food policies and related policies, like health policies. It advocates for "strong leadership to integrate actors across all parts of the food system, highlighting the need for better-coordinated governance". SAPEA also highlights agriculture's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions, the negative impact of meat consumptions on health, and the need to address food waste to meet the global demand for food by 2050.

Science Advice for Policy by European Academies (SAPEA) brings together expertise in engineering, humanities, medicine, natural and social sciences from over 100 academies, young academies and learned societies across Europe. SAPEA is part of the European Commission's [Scientific Advice Mechanism](#). This report is destined for input to the Commission in preparation of the Farm to Fork strategy.

### 1.3 EU Research & Innovation Policy / TP Organics

#### Video on optimising the conditions for foraging pigs

Carl Sheard, an organic pig farmer in France, is experimenting with a system of outdoor fattening using various combinations of forage crops. Within the Horizon 2020 project OK-Net Ecofeed, he aims to reduce the amount of concentrate feed and improve the nutritional quality of meat. [Check out the video of Carl explaining the experiments.](#)

Carl started his trials in Pays de la Loire in the west of France in autumn 2019. Phase one of the trial consisted of laying out fences, organising grazing paddocks, familiarising the pigs to the forage parcels and observing and analysing their behaviour. Carl reduced the level of concentrate by a third to encourage forage consumption. Over a six-week period, Carl observed that "The pigs proved to be extremely independent in establishing their own grazing routine". The results are encouraging for the second phase of the trial, which will focus on pigs' growth rates, including regular weighing, analysing forage and meat quality. ITAB supervises the experiments.

The OK-Net EcoFeed project helps organic pig and poultry farmers to achieve the goal of 100% use of organic and regional feed. The three-year project will extend the OK-Net knowledge platform. IFOAM EU coordinates the project consisting of 11 partners and 8 third linked parties from 12 countries.

### **Coming soon - SmartAgriHubs open call, supporting new Innovation Experiments in the agrifood sector**

The SmartAgriHubs project is soon launching its much-awaited open call!

If you are a Digital Innovation Hub (DIH), supporting one or more Innovation Experiments, and looking for potential funds to support your project, the open call is your opportunity.

One DIH could request up to €100.000 funding from SmartAgriHubs in one or several proposals. A maximum of 20% of the funds could be dedicated to DIH services and the remaining 80% to the realisation of the innovation experiment\*.

Interested? Grab your pen/laptop and keep an out for the launch of the SmartAgriHubs open call.

More information will be provided in the coming weeks, but you can already have a look at this [interview](#) of Harald Sundmaeker, the leader of Work Package 2 “Network expansions by open calls”. You can also visit [SmartAgriHubs website](#) and its [Innovation Portal](#).

SmartAgriHubs is a €20 million European project under the Horizon 2020 instrument and brings together a consortium of well over 164 partners in the European agri-food sector. The project aims to realise the digitisation of European agriculture by fostering an agricultural innovation ecosystem dedicated to excellence, sustainability and success.

*\*The SmartAgriHubs project is still working on the preparation of the open call in close collaboration with the European Commission. As such, the information in this article is provided “as is” and no guarantee of warranty is given that the information is fit for any particular purpose. The user thereof uses the information at its sole risk and liability.*



*This project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement N°818182.*

## 2 IFOAM EU DEVELOPMENTS

### IFOAM EU's General Assembly is going digital!

30 June 2020

On 30 June 2020 IFOAM EU will host its 10<sup>th</sup> General Assembly. At this biannual meeting, IFOAM EU's membership reviews and decides on the general policy and direction of IFOAM EU.

The participation of all IFOAM EU's members to our General Assembly is a key part of our democratic process. It gives our members the power to direct IFOAM EU's work and ensure genuine representation. **The 10<sup>th</sup> edition of the GA will be a special one as it will take place online, giving more of our members the chance to join and be part of this important process.**

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Following the General Assembly, IFOAM EU and our member and co-organiser BÖLW invite you all to the [European Organic Congress 2020](#). Due to the Covid-19 pandemic this will take place online.

### Isabella Lang

After almost 3 years at IFOAM EU, we are saying goodbye to IFOAM EU Policy Coordinator Isabella Lang, who will now work for a Member of the European Parliament. Isabella started her contribution to the European organic movement as a European Solidarity Corps (ESC) volunteer and grew into Policy Coordinator. She was responsible for the Interest Group on Organic Farming and the Plant Protection expert group, and worked on key issues such as biodiversity, natural substances, and pesticides reduction.

We will miss Isabella's in-depth knowledge of organic farming practices and her good spirit. We would like to thank Isabella for her commitment to IFOAM EU's work. She will be missed by many IFOAM EU members and by the office team, especially her colleagues from the policy unit. We take comfort knowing that she will continue defending the values of organic farming.

ORGANIC IN EUROPE  
**EXPLORE OUR  
INTERACTIVE  
MAP**  
Browse data on organic  
production and retail

UPDATED

## 3 EVENTS

### 3.1 Preview of events

#### Save the date: Webinar on Horizon Europe by TP Organics on 5 May

5 May 2020

TP Organics will hold a webinar about the EU's next research & innovation framework programme Horizon Europe. Based on the [briefing](#) published earlier by TP Organics, the webinar will provide TP Organics and IFOAM EU members with a better understanding of the structure of the 100 EUR billion research & innovation programme as well as with an assessment by TP Organics. Participants will moreover get an insight into TP Organics' new [Position Paper](#) which describes priority challenges and corresponding portfolios of actions for the first Work Programme of Horizon Europe.

The webinar will take place from 15:00-16:30 CEST on 5 May 2020 on the GoToMeeting platform (25 participants maximum). Please register [here](#). Do note that this webinar is only open to TP Organics members and IFOAM EU members.

#### Join the digital edition of the European Organic Congress!

1-3 July 2020

The European Organic Congress 2020 is going digital! Given this new format, we will extend the congress by one day, and we will welcome you with 5 different online sessions throughout 1-3 July. The European Organic Congress provides a platform where policy-makers and expert speakers will update you about the latest policy developments and discuss our vision for a post-pandemic Europe. We expect to inform you about the programme, registration, and tools we will use in May. Of course, we will also update [organic-congress-ifoameu.org](http://organic-congress-ifoameu.org) and our social media. Follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) using #EUorganic2030 #EOC2020.



**Save the date: Final conference “Improving sustainability and welfare in organic poultry and pig production”**

27 October, Brussels

It is with great excitement that [OK-Net EcoFeed](#) announces its final project conference that brings together 3 three research projects: OK-Net EcoFeed, [PPILOW](#) and [FreeBirds](#). Mark the 27<sup>th</sup> of October 2020 in your calendar and follow for the joint conference “Improving sustainability and welfare in organic poultry and pig production”.

The OK-Net EcoFeed project partners have been working hard to help organic pig and poultry farmers achieve the goal of using 100% organic and regional feed. To conclude the three-year project, OK-Net EcoFeed joins forces with the multi-actor project PPILOW and the CORE Organic project FreeBirds.

The joint conference is a perfect opportunity to present the project’s outcomes such as a ration-planning tool and a welfare self-assessment tool, exchange experiences and discuss the next steps in the development of the [Organic Farm Knowledge platform](#). The event will also host a policy debate targeting a wide range of audience including policy makers, farmer and animal welfare associations, processors, feed companies and retailers. This conference wants to be a meaningful contribution in improving the sustainability and animal welfare in organic livestock production. Stay up-to-date on the [OK-Net EcoFeed webpage](#).

The OK-Net EcoFeed project helps organic pig and poultry farmers to achieve the goal of 100% use of organic and regional feed. The three-year project will extend the OK-Net knowledge platform. IFOAM EU coordinates the project consisting of 11 partners and 8 third linked parties from 12 countries.

The PPILOW project aims to propose and study welfare improvement levers in a participatory approach involving all actors of the production chain from farmers to consumers, citizens, scientists, and policy makers.

The FreeBirds project is committed to improve the birds’ welfare and consolidates consumer acceptance and marketing of the organic products.



*This project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 773911. This communication only reflects the author’s view. The Research Executive Agency is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information provided.*

**Save the date for TP Organics’ Organic Innovation Days 2020**

24-25 November 2020

TP Organics announced its annual Organic Innovation Days 2020, the event that brings together important and diverse actors of the organic food and farming movement. Mark 24 and 25 November 2020 in your calendar and prepare for two important days in Brussels. Registrations will open in July!

This year’s edition will take place in cooperation with the [LIVSEED project](#). Besides showcasing exciting innovations in the seed and plant breeding sector, the Organic Innovation Days 2020 will



host a policy debate on the role of organic food and farming in [Horizon Europe](#), the EU's new research & innovation framework programme. €10 billion are expected to flow into Cluster 6, Food, bioeconomy, natural resources, agriculture and environment. To find partners for the first calls of Horizon Europe, TP Organics will organise a brokerage event.

Stay up-to-date by visiting the [event page on the TP Organics website](#). All the information including the programme and the registration link will be published there in the coming months.

IFOAM EU hosts the secretariat of TP Organics since 2008 and is a founding member.

LIVESEED is an EU Horizon 2020-funded project that aims to boost organic seed and plant breeding across Europe. IFOAM EU and FiBL-Switzerland are the coordinators of the project that has 50 partners covering 18 EU countries.



*TP Organics is co-financed by the LIFE Programme of the European Union, under the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME). The sole responsibility for this communication lies with TP Organics. The EASME is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information provided.*



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### 3.2 Review of events

#### Key take-aways from the successful Digital Forum: Food without Farmers

23.04.2020

Thank you for joining our event '**Food without Farmers**' on 23.04.2020. We reached **1 million** people on social media and **7,000** people tuned in from all over the world.

We had some great discussions about the role organic agriculture can play in shaping sustainable food systems as well as the potential of lab-grown food to alleviate the climate crisis.

On the role of farmers, let us quote Julia Lernoud, one of our panellists and board member at IFOAM - Organics International,

**"At the moment we are clapping for all the essential workers getting us through this crisis. I think we need to include farmers here. They are the ones ensuring we have enough food to eat. Let's clap for famers!"**

Here are some of the key messages from our discussions:

1. True cost accounting is needed to internalize the externalized costs of our food systems, creating a level playing field for food coming from sustainable production.
  2. Governments have taken see swift action on COVID-19, we also need to see decisive steps to tackle climate change and the degradation of our natural resources.
  3. A transition to healthy and sustainable diets is needed globally which includes cutting back on meat consumption in the developed world.
4. Technology, like microbial protein production, has to be taken out of the hands of corporations, they need to be people-owned and open-source in order to feed people without exacerbating climate change.
5. We need to take care of our productive landscapes or ‘foodscapes’ not only to protect nature, our waters, and soils, but also to save people’s livelihoods.

If you would like to learn more about organic agriculture, please sign up for our blog updates and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [Linkedin](#).

## 4 MAKING EUROPE MORE ORGANIC – SUPPORT IFOAM EU

### IFOAM EU KEY SUPPORTER 2020

The contributions of sponsors allow IFOAM EU to focus on its most important work – representing organic stakeholders. This funding is a means to co-finance IFOAM EU events, projects and publications and is a highly valued contribution to our work. Are you interested in getting visibility in IFOAM EU’s communication? Contact [SupportUs@ifoam-eu.org](mailto:SupportUs@ifoam-eu.org).



## 5 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

1-3 June 2020

[Global Symposium on Soil Biodiversity](#)

Rome, Italy

30 June 2020

[IFOAM EU General Assembly](#) [digital] (for IFOAM EU members only)

~~Berlin, Germany~~

1-3 July 2020

[European Organic Congress](#) [digital]

~~Berlin, Germany~~

21-22 September 2020

[NATEXPO](#)

Lyon, France

27 October 2020

[Improving sustainability and welfare in organic poultry and pig production](#)

Brussels, Belgium

24-25 November 2020

[Organic Innovation Days](#), LIVESEED final conference & LIVESEED European workshop

Brussels, Belgium

6-10 September 2021

[Organic World Congress](#) [new date]

Rennes, France

*Due to the [COVID-19 pandemic](#), we advise you not to book any travels to our scheduled events yet. We will keep you informed about any future developments.*



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