



LBPT for the Informal Meeting of EU Agriculture Ministers April 7–9, 2024

Theme: Strategic autonomy of proteins in Europe

The Belgian guild of agricultural journalists (BVLJ-ABJA) is pleased to welcome 20 ENAJ journalists to attend the [informal meeting of EU agriculture ministers](#). The visit will be accompanied by several farm tours, one of which we hope will include the agricultural ministers.

The informal meeting of ministers will take place April 7–9, 2024, in the city of Genk in the province of Limburg. The ministers will discuss the annual performance reports for the CAP, future steps for the CAP, and the review EU plant protein policy. The theme of the informal meeting is strategic food autonomy.

PROVISIONAL PROGRAM

Sunday, April 7

Morning **Arrival of journalists in Leuven**

15:00 **Visit to quinoa grower Wouter Saelens in Herent**



Our first visit will take us to the home of Wouter Saelens, a sixth-generation beef producer and arable farmer. Together with his parents, Wouter runs [Hoeveslagerij Ten Halve](#) in Herent. The Saelens had been trying to grow soy with difficulty for quite some time. In 2021, he decided to venture into quinoa production. To do this, he worked closely with [Praktijkpunt Landbouw Vlaams-Brabant](#).



On this tour, Els Gils from Praktijkpunt Landbouw Vlaams-Brabant will give an introduction on quinoa production. Following that, Wouter Saelens will explain why and how he grows quinoa, as well as some of the challenges he's faced, including the need for mechanical weeding.

- 17:15** **Return to hotel in Leuven** (hotel details to be announced)
- 18:00** **Guided walking tour of Leuven, ending with a drink**
- 20:00** **Dinner sponsored by the [Belgian Feed Association](#) (BFA) and [FEFAC](#)**

Monday, April 8

- 8:30** **Check out of hotel**
- 9:00** **Bus departs for Ferme Laruelle**
- 10:00–12:00** **Visit at [Ferme Laruelle](#), Belgian Blue & White production**

Note: The EU agricultural ministers and journalists may attend this tour together. (BVLJ-ABJA is awaiting confirmation from the Cabinet)



Manu Laruelle (Elevage des Waleffes) is a renowned Belgian Blue breeder located in the Walloon region of Belgium. In addition to the professionalism of monitoring his herd, Manu has also developed his own sector to market the meat he produces. On this tour, participants will meet representatives from the [Walloon Breeders' Association](#) (AWÉ Group), which supervises Belgian breeders in the south of Belgium.



The presentations will develop the international interest in the Belgian Blue breed in terminal crossbreeding, research to further reduce the breed's carbon footprint and AWÉ's international research projects include Holicow, which aims to provide dairy farmers with tools based on useful biomarkers that improve on-farm resilience. The visit will end with a special Belgian Blue meal.

12:00–14:00 Lunch and presentation from AWÉ Group

14:00 Transfer to the cooperative fruit auction BelOrta in Borgloon

14:30-16:00 Visit to BelOrta and introduction to the 100% CO₂-neutral Flemish pear



[BelOrta](#) is Belgium's largest cooperative fruit and vegetable auction. Last summer, BelOrta opened a new automated sorting centre for apples and pears in Borgloon. With a capacity of 60,000 tons, the project is an important milestone for the Belgian cooperative and the Belgian apple and pear sector.



The building was developed with a focus on centralization, automation and logistics optimization. The innovative infrastructure uses advanced technologies such as optical and infrared cameras for accurate

internal and external quality assessment.

16:30-18:00 Visit to pear producer Marc Nickmans in Halen, Limburg



In Halen, Limburg, [Mark Nickmans](#) operates a family pear business. In addition to its own production, almost twice as many pears are packed and stored for third parties. He applies green principles not only for the company but also for his own home. Marc Nickmans was a finalist in De Klimaatkoploper ('the climate leader') contest.

18:00 Transfer to hotel in Hasselt/Genk (hotel details to be announced)

20:00 Dinner courtesy of [Boerenbond](#) (Flemish Farmers Union)

Tuesday, April 9

9:00–13:00 Meeting of the ministers

13:15 Press conference with the Presidency and Commissioner

Lunch and departure of journalists for airport

Enquiries and accreditation:

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*This press trip is open to a maximum of 20 ENAJ member journalists. The cost to participate is **€250/person**. The cost includes meals, transportation during the program, and accommodation for two nights. **Registration deadline: March 22, 2024.***

USEFUL INFORMATION

Travelling by public transport

Please note that there are two airports in Brussels, Charleroi and Zaventem. It is not easy to travel with public transportation from Charleroi, so please book your flights to Zaventem. It is the main airport. Public transportation is available to Leuven from [Brussels Zaventem by train](#). The train station is located in the lower level of the airport. Tickets can be purchased directly in the train station or [online](#). The direct train takes 15 minutes and costs €22,40 to and from the airport. Please factor this into your travel costs.

Accommodation:

More details to come