The Committee on Food and Agriculture
“The Committee on Food and Agriculture deals with a wide range of issues. Its 38 members work to promote a sustainable agri-food sector, to boost family farms, and to ensure that rural areas continue to offer a good quality of life. Promoting healthy food, enhancing animal welfare and securing the future viability of the forestry and fishing sectors, horticulture and wine-growing are all subjects which feature on the Committee’s agenda, as well as promoting world food security. The Committee’s shared aim is to boost society’s appreciation of the services farmers provide and the safe and high-quality food they produce.”

Alois Gerig, CDU/CSU
Chairman of the Committee on Food and Agriculture
The German Bundestag’s decisions are prepared by its committees, which are established at the start of each electoral term. Four of them are stipulated by the Basic Law, the German constitution: the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Defence Committee, the Committee on the Affairs of the European Union and the Petitions Committee. The Budget Committee and the Committee for the Rules of Procedure are also required by law. The spheres of responsibility of the committees essentially reflect the Federal Government’s distribution of ministerial portfolios. This enables Parliament to scrutinise the government’s work effectively.

The Bundestag committees
The German Bundestag sets political priorities of its own by establishing additional committees for specific subjects, such as sport, cultural affairs or tourism. In addition, special bodies such as parliamentary advisory councils, committees of inquiry or study commissions can also be established. The committees are composed of members of all the parliamentary groups, reflecting the balance of these groups in the German Bundestag. The distribution of the chairs and deputy chairs among the parliamentary groups also reflects their relative strengths in the plenary. In the current electoral term, the committees have between nine and 49 members.

The committees discuss and deliberate on items referred to them by the plenary. They also have the right to take up issues on their own initiative, allowing them to set priorities in the parliamentary debate. When necessary, they draw on external expertise – usually by holding public hearings. At the end of a committee’s deliberations, a majority of its members adopt a recommendation for a decision and a report, which serve as the basis for the plenary’s decision.
The Committee on Food and Agriculture has 38 members and is chaired by Alois Gerig (CDU/CSU), with Carina Konrad (FDP) as his deputy. The Committee members deal with a wide spectrum of issues relating to food and agriculture, as well as consumer health protection. Although the latter issue is not part of the Committee’s name, key aspects of it fall within the Committee’s remit, including consumer health protection in relation to food and consumer products (such as clothing, cleaning and maintenance products, cosmetics, toys and tobacco products). The Committee is the parliamentary counterpart of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture.

The Committee on
Food and Agriculture
The topic of “food” in the Committee’s name draws together issues of all kinds relating to healthy food, nutrition education, the handling and sale of food, food safety and quality monitoring, food labelling and food research. The German agri-food sector’s opportunities in the global value chain, world food security and international agricultural cooperation are also part of this policy field.

Numerous regulations and checks ensure that the food which ends up on supermarket shelves is safe to eat. It is also important for consumers to know what they are buying: meaningful, pragmatic labelling must enable them to see what ingredients or allergens are contained in foodstuffs. Then there are eating habits: the question of what constitutes “healthy food” has to be considered from a very young age. Encouraging children to develop a varied and balanced diet is an important task for society, and starts in child day care centres and schools. In this context, the Committee focuses in particular on the food policy pursued by the Federal Government and the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture. It is essential to find the right and appropriate response to the growing shift to foodstuffs being traded globally, to new ingredients and products coming onto the market, to the potential emergence of new pathogens, or to changes in consumers’ eating habits.
The topic of “agriculture” in the Committee’s name refers to its parliamentary responsibility for national agricultural policy and its role in scrutinising the European Union’s common agricultural and fisheries policy. The Committee’s tasks include supporting rural regions and social policy for the agricultural sector. Agriculture in Germany is still dominated by family farms. Agriculture stands for animals and plants, forestry and hunting, the climate and the environment, organic farming and renewable raw materials. Agriculture means crop farming, horticulture and wine-growing. The maintenance of cultivated landscapes and efforts to enhance quality of life in villages and rural areas also fall within this part of the Committee’s remit. Relevant issues also include the social security arrangements for agricultural workers, the use of biomass as a renewable energy source, animal feed, animal protection, welfare and health, high welfare standards in animal husbandry, approaches to dealing with animal diseases, and appropriate and environmentally safe use of crop protection products and fertilisers, as well as hunting, which contributes to the conservation of animal and plant habitats. The Committee’s deliberations also cover wood, among other things as a renewable construction material, and fishing, including aquaculture and maritime policy. Naturally, the policy field of agriculture also covers the major economic issues relating to the national implementation of the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). In the current electoral term, one particularly important issue will be the negotiations on the design of the CAP in the next funding period from 2021 onwards. This is especially true against the backdrop of the United Kingdom’s impending exit from the EU (Brexit). With regard to the CFP, the Committee seeks to ensure that the sustainability principle is upheld across the board in the management
of all fish stocks, in order to safeguard the long-term future of the German fishing sector, fish trade and fish-processing industry. The digital revolution, or in other words the use of new information and communication technology in the agricultural sector, is of growing importance in the Committee's work. The Committee supports and scrutinises the policies pursued by the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture. It is generally the lead committee in the Bundestag for matters relating to food, agricultural, forestry and fisheries policy. In addition, it is consulted by other committees, such as the Committee on Economic Affairs and Energy, the Committee on Labour and Social Affairs, the Committee on the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety or the Finance Committee, when they deal with initiatives which touch on the remit of the Committee on Food and Agriculture.

A large proportion of the items of business for which the Committee is the lead committee are bills, usually introduced by the Federal Government. There are also a large number of motions tabled by the parliamentary groups in the Bundestag. These deal with matters such as genetically modified products, approaches to plant protection products, the protection of bees, precautions to prevent outbreaks of animal diseases, changes to land management and utilisation in eastern Germany, and adapting approaches to nutrients in order to protect the environment. The Committee also regularly requests briefings from the Federal Government, on the basis of interpellations tabled by the parliamentary groups, and discusses the Federal Government's reports; these include the Forest Report, the Animal Welfare Report, the Agricultural Policy Report, the Food Policy Report, and the report on the Federal Government/Länder Joint Task for the Improvement of Agricultural
Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council when it comes to issues of consumer health protection. The Committee also has a role to play in relation to international cooperation (regarding free trade agreements, for example), global trade (with regard to the World Trade Organization) or the world food situation (for example as part of economic cooperation and development assistance). More than 800 million people are still suffering from hunger and malnutrition – an unacceptable situation which has been further exacerbated by the consequences of climate change. The Committee seeks not only to respond to political and humanitarian challenges, but also to set priorities of its own. How can new plant breeding technolo-

Structures and Coastal Protection. In the case of items referred to the Committee as the lead committee, the Committee prepares recommendations and reports for the plenary, on the basis of which the Bundestag as a whole takes its decision. When the Committee on Food and Agriculture is asked for its opinion on an item, it submits its recommendations to the lead committee, which takes them into account in its deliberations.

The Committee devotes a great deal of time to EU items – draft regulations, directives, communications, green papers and much more – and to the Federal Government’s reports on its activities within the Council of the EU, especially the preparations for and follow-up to the meetings of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council, which deals with subjects such as maritime policy and agricultural exports, but also the meetings of the
Committee members to form their own impression of a subject. In addition, the Committee sends delegations, normally consisting of nine of its members, on trips abroad to gather information about current issues, developments and challenges in the field of food and agricultural policy in the countries and regions they visit. After returning to Berlin, the members of the delegation report back to the Committee about the trip. In turn, representatives of foreign parliaments and governments are often keen to hold talks with the Committee members during visits to the Bundestag.

Ges (including “green genetic engineering”) play a part in solving food problems? How can Germany’s domestic markets be safeguarded and improved without holding back the development of agricultural structures in developing countries and emerging economies? These issues are very important to the Committee members.

Dealing with all of the items which land on the Committee members’ desks requires a wealth of detailed knowledge. But no matter how well-prepared they are, the members cannot clarify and resolve all issues and problems simply by studying the documentation. For this reason, in-depth talks are regularly held – often by the rapporteurs of the parliamentary groups – with experts, representatives of associations, (grassroots) initiatives and non-governmental organisations, and with academics and researchers. Consultations and public hearings with experts are another valuable tool which enables the Committee members to form their own impression of a subject. In addition, the Committee sends delegations, normally consisting of nine of its members, on trips abroad to gather information about current issues, developments and challenges in the field of food and agricultural policy in the countries and regions they visit. After returning to Berlin, the members of the delegation report back to the Committee about the trip. In turn, representatives of foreign parliaments and governments are often keen to hold talks with the Committee members during visits to the Bundestag.
Committee members

The 38 members of the Committee on Food and Agriculture

Alois Gerig, CDU/CSU
Chairman
Farmer, manager, b. 30 Jan. 1956 in Höpfingen; married; three children.
Bundestag Member since 2009

Carina Konrad, FDP
Deputy Chairwoman, FDP spokeswoman on the Committee
Agricultural specialist, b. 19 Sep. 1982 in Simmern, Hunsrück; married; three children.
Bundestag Member since 2017
Hermann Färber,
CDU/CSU
Farmer,
b. 26 Mar. 1963
in Böhmenkirch,
Baden-Württemberg;
murried;
five children.
Bundestag Member
since 2013

Katharina Landgraf,
CDU/CSU
Land-improvement engineer,
b. 24 Feb. 1954
in Kirchengel,
Thuringia;
murried;
four children.
Bundestag Member
in 1990 and since 2005

Dr Michael von Abercron,
CDU/CSU
Agricultural specialist,
b. 17 Nov. 1952
in Ehlerstorf;
murried;
two children.
Bundestag Member
since 2017

Artur Auernhammer,
CDU/CSU
Farmer,
b. 9 Mar. 1963
in Oberhochstatt,
Weißenburg.
Bundestag Member
from 2004 to 2005
and since 2013

Katharina Landgraf,
CDU/CSU
Land-improvement engineer,
b. 24 Feb. 1954
in Kirchengel,
Thuringia;
murried;
four children.
Bundestag Member
in 1990 and since 2005

Hans-Georg von der Marwitz,
CDU/CSU
Farmer,
b. 8 Apr. 1961
in Heidelberg;
murried;
four children.
Bundestag Member
since 2009

Silvia Breher,
CDU/CSU
Executive, lawyer,
b. 23 July 1973
in Löningen;
murried;
three children.
Bundestag Member
since 2017

Artur Auernhammer,
CDU/CSU
Farmer,
b. 9 Mar. 1963
in Oberhochstatt,
Weißenburg.
Bundestag Member
from 2004 to 2005
and since 2013

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murried;
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Bundestag Member
since 2009

Silvia Breher,
CDU/CSU
Executive, lawyer,
b. 23 July 1973
in Löningen;
murried;
three children.
Bundestag Member
since 2017
Marlene Mortler, CDU/CSU
Specialist in home economics,
b. 16 Oct. 1955
in Lauf an der Pegnitz;
widowed;
three children.
Bundestag Member since 2002

Johannes Röring, CDU/CSU
CDU/CSU spokesman on the Committee Farmer,
b. 16 May 1959
in Vreden;
mixed;
four children.
Bundestag Member since 2005

Albert Stegemann, CDU/CSU
Farmer,
b. 9 Mar. 1976
in Nordhorn;
unmarried.
Bundestag Member since 2013

Dieter Stier, CDU/CSU
Agricultural specialist,
b. 29 June 1964
in Weißenfels;
unmarried.
Bundestag Member since 2009

Hans-Jürgen Thies, CDU/CSU
Lawyer,
b. 11 Aug. 1955
in Celle;
mixed;
six children.
Bundestag Member since 2017

Kees de Vries, CDU/CSU
Agricultural entrepreneur,
b. 30 Aug. 1955
in Nibbixwoud, the Netherlands;
mixed;
six children.
Bundestag Member since 2013
Katrin Budde, 
SPD 
Workplace ergonomics specialist,
b. 13 Apr. 1965 in Magdeburg; 
mixed; 
two children. 
Bundestag Member since 2017

Susanne Mittag, 
SPD 
Police officer, 
b. 23 July 1958 in Cleveland, 
Ohio, USA; 
one child. 
Bundestag Member since 2013

Johann Saathoff, 
SPD 
Public administration specialist, 
b. 9 Dec. 1967 in Emden; 
mixed; 
five children. 
Bundestag Member since 2013

Uwe Schmidt, 
SPD 
Skilled port worker, 
b. 14 Feb. 1966 in Bremerhaven; 
mixed; 
one child. 
Bundestag Member since 2017

Ursula Schulte, 
SPD 
Housewife, 
b. 9 Aug. 1952 in Alstätte; 
mixed; 
two children. 
Bundestag Member since 2013

Rainer Spiering, 
SPD 
SPD spokesman on the Committee 
Vocational school teacher, 
b. 27 Jan. 1956 in Disse (formerly Erpen); 
mixed; 
three children. 
Bundestag Member since 2013

Susanne Mittag, 
SPD 
Police officer, 
b. 23 July 1958 in Cleveland, 
Ohio, USA; 
one child. 
Bundestag Member since 2013

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Franziska Gminder, AfD
Business administrator,
b. 4 Feb. 1945
in Gablonz
an der Neiße
(now Jablonec
nad Nisou);
made; three children.
Bundestag Member since 2017

Wilhelm von Gottberg, AfD
Retired teacher,
b. 30 Mar. 1940
in Woopen,
East Prussia;
made; six children.
Bundestag Member since 2017

Verena Hartmann, AfD
Communications specialist,
b. 29 Mar. 1974
in Räckelwitz;
made; two children.
Bundestag Member since 2017

Carsten Träger, SPD
Communications specialist,
b. 25 Oct. 1973
in Fürth;
two children.
Bundestag Member since 2013

Dirk Wiese, SPD
Lawyer,
b. 11 July 1983
in Paderborn;
made; one child.
Bundestag Member since 2013

Peter Felser, AfD
Education specialist,
b. 20 Sep. 1969
in Dillingen
an der Donau;
made; five children.
Bundestag Member since 2017

Dirk Wiese, SPD
Lawyer,
b. 11 July 1983
in Paderborn;
made; one child.
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Dr Gero Clemens Hocker, FDP
Economist, b. 30 June 1975 in Bremen; married; two children. Bundestag Member since 2017

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Industrial engineer, b. 19 Mar. 1987 in Vilsbiburg; unmarried. Bundestag Member since 2017

Karlheinz Busen, FDP
Civil engineer, b. 5 Apr. 1951 in Gronau (Westphalia); widowed; three children. Bundestag Member since 2017

Heidrun Bluhm, The Left Party
Architectural draughtswoman, social scientist, b. 18 Jan. 1958 in Schwerin; divorced; two children. Bundestag Member since 2005

Amira Mohamed Ali, The Left Party
Lawyer, b. 16 Jan. 1980 in Hamburg; married. Bundestag Member since 2017

Stephan Protschka, AfD
AfD spokesman on the Committee
Self-employed, b. 8 Nov. 1977 in Dingolfing; married; two children. Bundestag Member since 2017

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Karlheinz Busen, FDP
Civil engineer, b. 5 Apr. 1951 in Gronau (Westphalia); widowed; three children. Bundestag Member since 2017
Renate Künast, Alliance 90/The Greens
Lawyer, b. 15 Dec. 1955
in Recklinghausen, married.
Bundestag Member since 2002

Friedrich Ostendorf, Alliance 90/The Greens
Farmer, b. 12 Jan. 1953
in Dortmund; married; one child.
Bundestag Member from 2002 to 2005 and since 2009

Kersten Steinke, The Left Party
Agricultural specialist, b. 7 Dec. 1958
in Bad Frankenhausen, Thuringia; married; two children.
Bundestag Member from 1998 to 2002 and since 2005

Dr Kirsten Tackmann, The Left Party
spokeswoman on the Committee
Veterinarian, b. 24 Sep. 1960
in Schmalkalden, Thuringia; married; two children.
Bundestag Member since 2005

Harald Ebner, Alliance 90/The Greens
spokesman on the Committee
Agricultural specialist, b. 8 July 1964
in Göppingen; married; two children.
Bundestag Member since 2011

Markus Tressel, Alliance 90/The Greens
spokesman on the Committee
Agricultural specialist, b. 17 Apr. 1977
in Saarlouis; married; two children.
Bundestag Member since 2009
Information online

The Committee on Food and Agriculture
www.bundestag.de/en/committees/a10

The Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture
www.bmel.de/EN

The Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety
www.bvl.bund.de/EN

The Federal Office for Agriculture and Food
www.ble.de/EN

The Federal Institute for Risk Assessment
www.bfr.bund.de/en

The Julius Kühn Institute – Federal Research Centre for Cultivated Plants
www.julius-kuehn.de/en

The Friedrich Loeffler Institute – Federal Research Institute for Animal Health
www.fli.de/en

The Max Rubner Institute – Federal Research Centre for Nutrition and Food
www.mri.bund.de/en

The Johann Heinrich von Thünen Institute – Federal Research Institute for Rural Areas, Forestry and Fisheries
www.thuenen.de/en

The Federal Centre for Food and Nutrition
www.bzfe.de
Contact details for the Committee Secretariat

Deutscher Bundestag
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11011 Berlin
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The German Bundestag takes decisions on what are at times highly complex and controversial bills and parliamentary initiatives relating to the entire spectrum of policy fields. The committees play a central role in parliamentary deliberations. They are the forum where the Members thrash out compromises and draw on expert advice before submitting their reports and recommendations for decisions to be voted on by the Bundestag as a whole.

www.bundestag.de/en/committees