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# GAIN Report

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### **New Protein Initiative in Lower Saxony**

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**Report Highlights:**

The agricultural minister of Lower Saxony has introduced a new protein feed initiative on July 29. The goal of the initiative is to promote the cultivation of peas, beans and lupins. Coincidentally, the dependence of imported soybeans will be reduced. Lower Saxony is the center of livestock production in Germany with roughly two third of the German chicken and pork production.

**General Information:**

The agricultural minister of Lower Saxony has introduced a new protein feed initiative on July 29. The goal of the initiative is to promote the cultivation of peas, beans and lupins. Christian Schmitt, the Green Minister for Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection in Lower Saxony declared that the current trend of feeding more and more imported soybeans and soymeal must be reversed and domestic protein feed for local products has to be the name of the game. He underlined that there is no alternative to reduce the dependence on “problematic soy imports” in the medium and long term. Soy imports are considered problematic in Germany due to the dependence of imports from overseas and the fact that most imported soybeans are grown using biotechnology.

Lower Saxony is the center of livestock production in Germany with roughly two third of the German chicken and pork production and the federal state will finance the project with around €520,000, which runs until fall 2017. The funding goes to demonstration farms to prove the practicability and to informative events and workshops to raise awareness for this important issue. The protein feed initiative will complement ongoing projects on national level. For more information about protein projects in Germany please see GAIN report: [Ag Ministry publishes draft 'protein strategy'](#).

However, replacing imported soy protein presents Lower Saxony and Germany with real-world production and policy challenges. In order to replace the estimated 2 million ton protein need of Germany with pulses, Germany would have to grow 7.9 MMT of faba beans or 8.4 MMT of field peas or 5.8 MMT of sweet lupines. Assuming 6 year average yields (2005-2010) this would require an area of 2.5, 2.7, and 4.3 million hectares, respectively. In Germany, 11.9 million ha are currently used for arable crop production. If only one of the three crops in question were to fill the gap, it would require 19, 23, or 37 percent of Germany’s available arable land. In contrast, pulses currently make up less than one percent of arable land use in Germany. In the end, the expansion of protein crops in Lower Saxony and Germany would lead to a decrease of high yielding and profitable crops such as wheat, corn and rapeseed. For more information please see GAIN report: [Ag Ministry publishes draft 'protein strategy'](#).

The protein feed initiative in Lower Saxony can also be seen as a reaction to southern German state of Bavaria participating in the Danube Soybean Association. Bavaria is part of an initiative to produce more ‘GMO-free’ soy for the European market. The “Danube Soya Association” promotes the production and processing of non-biotech soybeans in Europe. Since January 2013, eight countries and Bavaria have signed the “Danube Soya Declaration”: Austria, Bavaria, Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, and Switzerland. It’s possible but economic inefficient to produce soybeans in Lower Saxony and the Danube Soy Association has been drawing a lot of attention in recent years. So, public pressure with the need to show some action against “problematic soy imports” in the German heartland of livestock and poultry production could have played also a role to implement a protein feed initiative in Lower Saxony. For more background information please see GAIN report: [Agricultural Biotechnology Annual 2014](#).