

## MONTHLY EU-US HIGHLIGHTS: JUNE 2019



## Energy &amp; environment

Congress	<p><b>June 14:</b> Congress introduced an amendment earlier this month that would force the <a href="#">Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to set a drinking water standard for “forever chemicals,”</a> known as PFAS. <b>These chemicals were found to have contaminated water in at least 43 states and are linked with cancer and other negative health impacts.</b> The EPA initially had until the end of 2019 to decide on drinking water standards for PFAS, but the amendment requires the agency to speed up its timeline.</p> <p><b>June 14:</b> Exxon Mobil Corp. has asked the EPA to <a href="#">evaluate the environmental and health risks of two groups of chemicals</a> [diisodecyl phthalate (DIDP) and diisononyl phthalate (DINP)] used to make polyvinyl chloride (PVC) flexible. Products containing PVC include car parts, carpet backing, and coat wires. Exxon expressed a willingness to pay for the EPA to evaluate chemicals that are vital to their products and services – the first time a corporation has requested an EPA investigation in over a decade. In response, the EPA will establish a docket about the company’s request for public comment in late July.</p>
Administration	<p><b>June 18:</b> President Trump is attempting to reflect a softer political stance towards Iran, despite a recent alleged attack against two tankers in the Gulf of Oman. He suggested these attacks were “very minor” and suggested <a href="#">the U.S. may not go to war in order to protect international oil supplies</a>. President Trump claims that the United States relies less on oil from the Middle East because of the “tremendous progress in the last two and a half years in energy.” Air Force General Paul Selva said <b>the incident had little effect of the maritime transportation of oil and petroleum products through the Strait of Hormuz and the Persian Gulf.</b></p> <p><b>June 26:</b> The Environmental Protection Agency Administrator, <b>Andrew Wheeler</b>, met with <b>leaders from Canada and Mexico</b> as a part of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation in Mexico City. The leaders discussed a range of topics including <a href="#">combating marine debris, encouraging innovation to expand environmental protection and support sustainable growth</a>. All three nations agreed to <b>increase cooperation and efforts on trade and environment</b> to better protect the North American environment.</p>
States	<p><b>June 17:</b> Maine Governor, <b>Janet Mills</b>, has proposed a <a href="#">\$239 million bond package to invest in renewable energy, infrastructure, and workforce training</a>. The breakdown of bonds invested towards renewable energy includes <b>\$20 million in hazardous materials cleanup and drinking water treatment, \$10 million in efficient heating projects, and \$5 million in low interest loans for clean energy projects</b> for Maine homeowners. Maine voters would ultimately decide whether to approve these bonds during elections in November.</p>
<b>Transportation &amp; automotive</b>	
Congress	<p><b>June 12:</b> In response to a shortage of interstate truck drivers, <b>lawmakers</b> may include the DRIVE Safe Act (<a href="#">H.R. 1374; S. 569</a>) in the drafted surface transportation bill. The act would <a href="#">lower the driving age of drivers from 18 to 21</a> and create a training requirement with set hours and include new technology education. Labor and safety advocates warn of greater collision risks from an increased number of inexperienced drivers. The House and Senate are working to draft the surface transportation bill before the current authorization expires in late 2020.</p>
Administration	<p><b>June 18:</b> The FCC is signaling that it may consider <a href="#">new uses for airwaves</a> granted to Automakers in 1999 on the promise of delivering safety innovations to vehicles. After failing to deliver widespread breakthroughs in collision and traffic light technology, <b>the FCC is considering giving access to those frequencies to cable companies, like Comcast Corp.</b> that plan to use them for robust Wi-Fi links to subscribers.</p>
Other	<p><b>June 14:</b> <b>Rail tank cars</b> have received a preliminary nod from regulators to use as a <a href="#">transportation resource to move liquified natural gas</a>. New Fortress Energy, a public company as of January 2019, received an environmental assessment by the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) that found no issues within their application. Federal regulations allow liquified natural gas to move domestically in tank trucks or portable containers via truck or rail flat cars. <b>This new method of transportation will be destined primarily for foreign markets.</b></p> <p><b>June 18:</b> Brookings Institution held a public debate and discussion between John D. Porcari, a Democrat who served as Obama’s United States Deputy Secretary of Transportation, and DJ Gribbin, a Republican who constructed Trump’s</p>

	\$2 trillion infrastructure plan. The discussion centered around the need for a better conversation on infrastructure, the need for more funding, and the expedience of project approval.
<b>Digital economy</b>	
<b>Congress</b>	<p><u>June 14:</u> Senators Amy Klobuchar (D) and Lisa Murkowski (R) <a href="#">introduced a bill</a> calling for new regulations to boost privacy protections for consumers on health-related apps. The introduction of this bill is in response to the <a href="#">Washington Post report</a> on the pregnancy tracking phone app that had been found selling user data to employers. Under this legislation, the Secretary of Health and Human Services would publicize regulations for “new health technologies such as health apps, wearable devices like Fitbits, and direct-to-consumer genetic testing kits that are not currently regulated by current law.”</p> <p><u>June 10:</u> The House <a href="#">passed legislation</a> that would create “cyber incident response teams” within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The Act would establish these teams within DHS’s National Security and Communications Integration Center and would provide assistance to the victims following any cyber incident. The cyber teams would be used to assist both government and private sector companies after a cyberattack or other type of data breach. Rep. Michael McCail (R-TX), the bill’s sponsor, believes the bill will help foster “collaboration between the public and private sector.”</p>
<b>Administration</b>	<p><u>June 10:</u> Photos of U.S. travelers and license plates were <a href="#">recently stolen</a> from a database maintained by Customs and Border Patrol (CBP), a component within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). It was discovered that a subcontractor of the department had transferred copies of these images the subcontractor’s company network. The network was recently compromised by a “malicious cyber-attack” in which these images were stolen. CBP is still investigating and monitoring for any suspicious activity regarding the material taken in the incident.</p>
<b>States</b>	<p><u>June 17:</u> Florida will retain <a href="#">\$2.3 million in unspent grant money</a> aimed at stopping cyber attacks on the state’s voting system. This spending follows an FBI report that disclosed possible Russian hacking of voter information in 2 of Florida’s 67 county election offices in the 2016 presidential election. Gov. Ron DeSantis hopes to identify and fix any problems prior to the presidential primaries in March 2020, while also maintaining transparency to all constituents.</p>
<b>Agro-food</b>	
<b>Congress</b>	<p><u>June 13:</u> Under the House Appropriations Committee’s draft bill, the <b>Agriculture Department (USDA), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and other related agencies</b> <a href="#">would receive roughly \$24.3 billion in discretionary funding in FY 2020</a>. The Committee also included a measure that establishes mandatory funding for programs such as nutrition assistance and crop insurance, increasing the total appropriated amount to <b>\$155.3 billion</b>. This measure would also provide \$655 million in grants for drinking water in rural areas.</p>
<b>Administration</b>	<p><u>June 12:</u> Farmers are turning to innovative <a href="#">biotechnological methods to improve soil health</a> amidst recent harsh weather. Dr. David Wolfe (professor of Plant and Soil Ecology at Cornell University) testified to a House Subcommittee that many American farmers are beginning to see detrimental changes to their farms and products. In response, President Trump signed an executive order directing federal agencies to ease rules for approving genetically modified crops and other biotechnological changes.</p> <p><u>June 18:</u> Farmers may need a <a href="#">third round of federal aid in 2020</a> if the election cycle prevents the administration from landing critical trade deals that would reopen top export markets. The federal government sent aid to farmers after they struggled to stay afloat when China, the largest soybean buyer in the U.S., curtailed their soybean imports. Farmers are relying on markets like Europe and Mexico to buy their goods, but as the campaign season draws near and the USMCA deal stalls, this may prove to be a difficult task.</p>
<b>States</b>	<p><u>June 18:</u> Louisiana passed SB152 – <i>Truth in Labeling</i> and joins the list of <a href="#">states passing legislation to protect consumers from the mislabeling of products</a>. The new law will take effect on October 1, 2020. State lawmakers believe this bill is a step towards the adoption of a new set of standards for rice and other commodities by USDA and the FDA at the federal level.</p>

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