

## **Contributi alla Roadmap della Strategia Farm to Fork della Commissione Europea presentate dalle Associazioni aderenti a CambiamoAgricoltura.**

Tutti i contributi alla Roadmap sono disponibili liberamente per la visione al [sito della consultazione](#).

In questo documento viene riportato il testo dei contributo e gli eventuali documenti allegati alle stesse.

## **FederBio - Federazione Italiana Agricoltura Biologica e Biodinamica**

Il sistema agroalimentare europeo si basa su un modello di agricoltura industriale, legato a sistemi monocolturali e all'uso della chimica di sintesi, che ha avuto come obiettivo fondamentale l'aumento della produzione e l'abbassamento continuo dei prezzi dei prodotti agricoli.

In questi stessi prezzi, però, non vengono conteggiati i costi per i danni alla salute umana e gli impatti sull'ambiente causati dall'utilizzo dei prodotti chimici, costi che poi ricadono sull'intera collettività. Questo modello ormai si è dimostrato incompatibile con la salvaguardia della biodiversità, della qualità delle acque, della fertilità dei suoli, della stessa salute umana. Inoltre, è responsabile di un quarto delle emissioni globali, contribuendo così in modo rilevante al riscaldamento globale.

Anche la FAO, partendo proprio da queste considerazioni, ha affermato che il modello della rivoluzione verde può considerarsi superato, non rappresenta più l'innovazione necessaria per affrontare le sfide attuali e future.

Occorre, dunque, puntare verso una nuova visione dell'agricoltura e del cibo basata sull'approccio agroecologico di cui l'agricoltura biologica rappresenta il modello più avanzato ed efficiente in grado di rispondere a obiettivi d'interesse collettivo come il contrasto al cambiamento climatico, la tutela della biodiversità, della fertilità dei suoli agricoli e della salute pubblica.

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Da queste premesse riteniamo dunque che per un sistema agroalimentare europeo più sostenibile la strategia "Farm to Fork" debba includere obiettivi vincolanti, quali:

1) Ridare spazio alla natura nelle aziende agricole. È fondamentale assicurare all'interno delle aziende agricole una superficie minima per il mantenimento delle infrastrutture verdi (siepi, alberate, alberi secolari isolati o inseriti in piccoli boschi, stagni e piccole zone umide, fasce inerbite, prati stabili, ecc.) che sostengono la biodiversità degli agroecosistemi. Obiettivo minimo dovrebbe essere la presenza di almeno il 10% della Superficie Agricola Totale (SAT) dell'azienda agricola dedicata a questi spazi naturali.

2) Ridurre la dipendenza dalla chimica di sintesi. Sono necessarie politiche che promuovano modelli di produzione che richiedono un minore input di sostanze chimiche di sintesi, in particolare pesticidi, attraverso la diffusione di pratiche agricole sostenibili a livello ambientale, sociale ed economico e che rafforzano la difesa naturale degli agroecosistemi. L'agricoltura biologica e biodinamica rappresentano oggi i modelli di agroecologia più avanzati che vanno promossi con maggiore determinazione. Obiettivi realistici sono raggiungere il 40% della SAU (Superficie Agricola Utilizzata) certificata in agricoltura biologica entro il 2030, di

cui il 100% della SAU in biologico all'interno della Rete Natura 2000; ridurre del 50% la quantità di pesticidi sintetici entro il 2025 e dell'80% entro il 2030. L'obiettivo dovrebbe essere quello di una graduale ma totale eliminazione entro il 2035.

3) favorire il ripristino e mantenimento della sostanza organica e della biodiversità nei suoli, con pratiche agricole sostenibili come quelle previste dal metodo biologico. Il mantenimento della fertilità dei suoli, infatti, in agricoltura biologica rappresenta un presupposto fondamentale per consentire alle colture condizioni di vita più salubri ed equilibrate e, quindi, la rinuncia all'impegno di input chimici di sintesi. Il fondamento del metodo di coltivazione biologica è rappresentato proprio dal riciclo della sostanza organica, come protezione e incremento della fertilità dei suoli, in grado di trattenere grandi quantità di acqua prevenire l'erosione e accrescere il contenuto di carbonio che offre un importante potenziale di contrasto e mitigazione del cambiamento climatico.

4) Revisione delle produzioni zootecniche puntando sull'autosufficienza della produzione dei mangimi nella UE, riduzione del carico zootecnico in relazione alla SAU. Promuovere la conversione alla zootecnia biologica che non permette la produzione di carne, latte e uova ricorrendo a sostanze non naturali come ormoni, antibiotici e promotori della crescita. L'alimentazione deve rispondere ai fabbisogni degli animali e gli alimenti devono provenire da coltivazioni biologiche o derivare dalla loro trasformazione secondo gli standard previsti dal metodo biologico (no OGM).

## Legambiente

La strategia, per conseguire i risultati dichiarati, non può limitarsi a moderate correzioni di vistose anomalie presenti in un sistema agroalimentare che oggi è visibilmente impostato su una traiettoria sbagliata. Occorre perseguire, sia pure con le necessarie gradualità ma con una chiara scansione di obiettivi e scadenze, un cambio di paradigma verso un sistema alimentare sostenibile, basato sui principi dell'agroecologia, per come definito dalla FAO, e il superamento del modello di agricoltura industriale che ha accompagnato la definizione delle politiche agricole dalla nascita della comunità europea fino ad oggi. La traiettoria verso il modello agroecologico dovrebbe essere esplicitamente affermata e fatta propria dalla strategia, così come l'impegno a ridurre l'impronta ecologica del sistema alimentare ridefinendola all'interno dei 'planetary boundaries' entro il 2040, onde perseguire il dichiarato impatto ambientale 'neutro o positivo'.

L'agricoltura e gli orientamenti dietetici della popolazione rappresentano importanti leve su cui agire per perseguire risultati in termini ambientali. Per conformare contesti alimentari sani, inclusivi e sostenibili occorre istituire solidi meccanismi di monitoraggio e responsabilità, che consentano di verificare i progressi e i risultati di misure che devono andare oltre l'azione volontaria delle imprese e l'informazione ai consumatori. Deve essere impostato un approccio basato sul rispetto di regole, ponendo in capo alle autorità (nazionali ed europee) la responsabilità del perseguimento degli obiettivi.

E' per questo necessario stabilire obiettivi quantitativi, monitorandone il perseguimento, per guidare le politiche nella giusta direzione e al giusto passo. Entro un contesto di politiche coerenti, è necessario aumentare gli sforzi di comunicazione per incidere sulla consapevolezza e sui comportamenti di consumo alimentare dei cittadini, e promuovere una attività di educazione alimentare che deve mobilitare risorse dei sistemi sanitari, in quanto funzionale alla prevenzione delle patologie associate a cattivi stili di consumo alimentare. La centralità della sfida dell'allevamento sostenibile.

Prioritariamente, deve essere impostato un orizzonte di ristrutturazione del settore dell'allevamento, ritenendo desiderabile una forte riduzione degli apporti di alimenti di origine animale, unitamente ad una qualificazione di questi consumi. Per questo occorre, parallelamente alla modificazione di abitudini e consumi alimentari, perseguire la riduzione delle consistenze di capi allevati e dei volumi delle produzioni di origine animale, al fine di ridurre il contributo della zootecnia alle emissioni inquinanti e climalteranti, l'impatto su terre e risorse agroforestali di Paesi terzi, nonché di migliorare il benessere animale negli allevamenti, favorire le produzioni di qualità ottenute da animali allevati con modalità estensive, migliorare la redditività delle aziende zootecniche attraverso:

- la de-specializzazione e la multifunzionalità aziendale,
- l'adesione a disciplinari di produzione biologica e di benessere animale
- il ricorso a certificazioni che attestino la modalità di allevamento, l'origine e tipologia dei foraggi e la tracciabilità dell'intera filiera dei prodotti trasformati immessi al consumo.

Organicamente al raggiungimento di questi obiettivi, oltre a una riduzione del massimo carico zootecnico consentito, dovrebbe essere stabilito un target vincolante di autosufficienza per l'import-export di basi mangimistiche da Paesi terzi, da perseguire entro la conclusione del prossimo ciclo di programmazione della PAC (2027), e da collegare ad un obiettivo di riduzione delle superfici di seminativo investite nella produzione specializzata di mangimi, prevenendo la competizione con le superfici investite in colture destinate alla alimentazione umana.



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## **Strategia europea 'Farm to Fork'. Consultazione sulla Road Map**

Legambiente apprezza l'opportunità offerta dalla Commissione Europea con la consultazione sulla road map della strategia Farm to Fork. Sosteniamo fortemente l'obiettivo dichiarato di "transizione verso un sistema alimentare sostenibile, con un impatto ambientale neutro o positivo, in grado di adattarsi ai cambiamenti climatici e allo stesso tempo di contribuire alla loro mitigazione, garantire la sicurezza alimentare e creare un contesto che renda le diete sane la scelta più accessibili per i cittadini dell'UE".

Tuttavia, non riscontriamo evidenze a sostegno dell'affermazione secondo cui "è in corso la transizione verso sistemi alimentari più sostenibili". L'Agenzia Europea dell'Ambiente nei suoi report periodici, al contrario, rileva un aumento di emissioni di gas serra dell'agricoltura dell'UE, l'Organizzazione Mondiale della Sanità misura da decenni un aumento di patologie legate all'alimentazione, nonché di crescente prevalenza di sovrappeso e obesità in età pediatrica, e numerose ricerche dimostrano un trend in aumento dell'impronta ambientale del consumo di alimenti in UE.

Non possiamo poi fare a meno di evidenziare come la base produttiva alimentare **dipenda in ultima istanza dal suolo e dalla sua fertilità, una risorsa che l'Unione Europea ancora oggi non tutela adeguatamente**: l'Europa non dispone di una direttiva europea sul suolo nonostante siano numerosi gli allarmi sui crescenti fattori di degrado, dalla perdita di superfici per processi di urbanizzazione ai fenomeni di erosione, perdita di sostanza organica, desertificazione.

Vi sono ampie evidenze circa la necessità di una transizione globale verso sistemi alimentari sostenibili, per affrontare alcune delle minacce globali che sono parte delle sfide di sostenibilità (SDGs) impostate dalle Nazioni Unite per il decennio che ci attende. Insieme ad altre organizzazioni europee della società civile riunite ai tavoli promossi da EEB (European Environmental Bureau) e, in Italia, dalla Coalizione 'CAMBIAMO AGRICOLTURA', formata dalle organizzazioni attive nella discussione sulla riforma della PAC ([www.cambiamoagricoltura.it](http://www.cambiamoagricoltura.it)), riteniamo la strategia Farm to Fork un'importante opportunità per attivare una politica alimentare integrata, sostenibile, salubre e coerente per i cittadini, le imprese di trasformazione e distribuzione, gli agricoltori europei.

### **Temi generali e di governance**

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## La centralità della sfida dell'allevamento sostenibile

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## Obiettivi strategici di sostenibilità agroalimentare

Oltre al tema della ristrutturazione delle filiere zootecniche, centrale per il perseguimento degli SDGs definiti dalle Nazioni Unite, un ampio set di obiettivi strategici richiede di essere temperato:

- ridurre le **emissioni climalteranti** di origine agricola del 45% entro il 2030 e del 60% entro il 2050 (rispetto alla baseline 1990)
- perseguire uno **status di conservazione** favorevole per la biodiversità nelle aree rurali, entro il 2030
- raggiungere un buono **stato ambientale degli ecosistemi marini** entro il 2023 ove possibile, e al più tardi al 2030, riducendo ad un livello sostenibile le catture involontarie (bycatch) nelle attività di pesca
- migliorare l'efficienza dei **nutrienti in agricoltura** del 50% entro il 2030 (rispetto al livello del 2020)
- gestire il 50% della superficie agricola dell'UE attraverso **sistemi agroecologici** (compresa l'agricoltura biologica) entro il 2040

- ridurre le **emissioni di metano e ammoniaca** rispettivamente del 33% e del 25% (rispetto ai livelli del 2005) entro il 2030
- ridurre il consumo di **fertilizzanti minerali, pesticidi e antibiotici** del 50% e il livello dell'indicatore di rischio armonizzato di almeno il 30% entro il 2030 (da una base del 2020)
- ridurre del 50% entro il 2030 le **perdite e gli sprechi alimentari** (rispetto ai livelli del 2014)
- raggiungere il target '**land degradation neutrality**' entro il 2030

## Regole e criteri vincolanti

Una strategia efficace deve prevedere, oltre ai target, anche l'introduzione di regolamentazioni efficaci in quegli ambiti che oggi sono insufficientemente presidiati

- Mettere al bando i **sussidi dannosi** per il clima e per l'ambiente, a partire da quelli erogati attraverso la PAC (ad esempio, gli aiuti diretti per le grandi monoculture e per gli allevamenti intensivi)
- promuovere le scelte di acquisto orientate a **consumi alimentari sostenibili**, disincentivando quelle che invece peggiorano lo stato di salute della popolazione (es. zucchero e carni trasformate) o dell'ambiente (carni e alimenti di origine animale, prodotti vegetali non stagionali).
- impostare appropriati **limiti di densità per i capi allevati**, limiti stringenti e non derogabili per l'impiego di **nutrienti azotati**, prevedere il divieto generalizzato di trasformazione di **pascoli e prati permanenti**
- riempire il persistente vuoto legislativo in materia di **suolo**, predisponendo una **direttiva** che imponga la tutela delle superfici nel loro stato e uso produttivo, della loro fertilità, contrasti l'erosione, la perdita di sostanza organica e le altre forme di degrado del suolo
- introdurre uno schema di certificazione e/o di regolamentazione negli scambi con Paesi Terzi, che interdicca la possibilità di importare prodotti che derivino da **deforestazione, land grabbing** o violazione di **diritti umani** nei Paesi d'origine

E' necessario inoltre un piano d'azione per la **riduzione di tutti i rifiuti di imballaggio**, con l'obiettivo di arrivare al dimezzamento della loro produzione entro il 2030, e promuovendo un design del packaging che ne favorisca il riuso e il corretto avviamento a riciclaggio, fornendo informazioni chiare ai consumatori e promuovendo, ove sostenibile, il ricorso al packaging riutilizzabile

per  
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## Lipu BirdLife Italia

Lipu, member of Italian platform CambiamoAgricoltura, together with BirdLife (of which it is the Italian partner), welcomes the decision of the EC to develop a Farm to Fork Strategy, and the intention to achieve coherence with the rest of the Green Deal, including the Biodiversity Strategy.

For the Strategy to accelerate the transition into more sustainable food systems, including through the CAP and CFP as set out in the Roadmap, environmental sustainability must be taken as the basis for all other aspects of sustainability—economic and social. Healthy ecosystems are the foundation for production on both land and at sea, yet they are at breaking point by the current system.

We must therefore transition urgently to a paradigm where planetary boundaries are the starting point for all economic activities. Scientific evidence shows that the CAP and CFP are not fit to deliver on this in their current form, in particular because they still finance harmful activities. We welcome the recognition of current EU agriculture as a key driver of biodiversity loss, an important source of GHG emissions and pollution of water, and the aim to achieve a food system with zero or positive environmental impact. We are also positive that the Strategy intends to tackle fertilisers and pesticide use, which would need quantified reduction targets to be successful. However, the roadmap omits the main measure that would make the difference for biodiversity on land - a target for at least 10% of green infrastructure at farm level. Science shows that this target would begin the recovery of farmland biodiversity, without which Europe is facing the collapse in a matter of years of the pollinators and other ecosystem services on which food production depends. Unfortunately, there is no clear action in the roadmap for addressing the key drivers of biodiversity loss at sea, in particular fishing and aquaculture. Fishing activities in the EU are extremely destructive, with 87% of the Mediterranean and 40% of the North East Atlantic to be overfished, as well as bycatching dolphins, whales, seabirds and sea turtles. The EU should aim to eliminate bycatch of sensitive species. Furthermore, aquaculture production drives further destruction at sea through the depletion of fish for aquaculture feed, bad spatial placement of farms at sea and allowing for open cage farming which weakens the genetics of fish populations. The EU should incentivise low impact activities such as EU wide environmental criteria for fish quota distribution. It should also support ocean restoration by closing at least 15% of its seas, including from fishing and aquaculture activities.

Further key areas missing from the Roadmap are:

-Environmental compliance assurance within the agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture sectors should be included in the Strategy – especially with the Birds and Habitats Directives, Nitrates Directive, Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive, Water Framework Directive, Air Quality Directive, and Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

-Strategy should ensure that the over -Environmental compliance assurance, primarily driven by demand for irrigation in agriculture, should be addressed as it is a key barrier to sustainability of food systems, with major negative impacts on wildlife.

-Strategy must address food consumption not just because of its health risk, but also because we are consuming resources beyond the earth's carrying capacity. Strategy must include a quantified reduction of consumption and production of meat, dairy and fish, seafood, as their consumption in the EU is far above environmental, and health limits. These targets should reduce meat and dairy consumption by 50%, and fish and seafood by 40%, by 2030. It should also incentivise a 30% target for organic production and consumption.

-Strategy should not automatically assume that specific technologies, such as precision farming, are sustainable because their impact can be positive or negative, depending on their deployment.

## A Farm to Fork Strategy that serves Nature

31/01/2019

Nature on land and at sea is in crisis. Recent global reports show that we are changing our planet beyond recognition and losing biodiversity at unprecedented rates, and the European Union is no exception. Climate change is interwoven with, and exacerbates, the catastrophic loss of biodiversity: we cannot address one issue without considering the other, as they are intrinsically linked. Habitat degradation from the way we manage our land and seas is a major cause of biodiversity loss and a key driver of climate change. Understanding these threats, we must act now.

The EU has a huge budget that could start funding this systemic change to a society that respects the rule of law and nature. Misguided incentives and investments in the EU lock us onto a path of destruction. We can no longer afford the status quo. This change must be transformative, and will need to overcome the economic growth paradigm. Change also needs to achieve social justice and socio-economic fairness.

Saving biodiversity is about saving species, their habitats, and their interactions. This can only happen with a coherent set of actions needed to deliver ambitious targets. A **farm to fork strategy** needs to recognise the unsustainability of current food systems and the fact that agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture are still a major driver of biodiversity loss, waste production, habitat degradation, and a key emitter of pollutants. It should drive the reduction of meat, dairy and fish consumption, in order to allow for nature restoration.

### Key elements to a “farm to fork” strategy

#### **Enforcement**

Lack of enforcement and implementation of already existing legislation, and unlimited intensification of production means in agriculture and fisheries, have led to a scenario where only 23% of protected species and 16% of protected habitats are in a good conservation status. The Farm to Fork Strategy should include specific commitments on stepping up in-field controls of environmental compliance in the agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

#### **Reference to Space for Nature: Minimum of 10% of obligatory farm-level green infrastructures**

Under the Biodiversity Strategy, the EU needs to make sure that farm-level green infrastructures (landscape elements such as trees, hedgerows, flower strips) are put in place throughout the countryside and at a scale that is meaningful for functional agro-biodiversity. The Farm to Fork Strategy should make reference to the need for consistency with this target that should be set under the Biodiversity Strategy.

#### **Make EU extraction of fish and seafood compatible with oceanic life**

Unsustainable extraction of sea products is among key drivers of biodiversity loss. To restore and recover, the EU must commit to fishing practices that do not harm biodiversity<sup>1</sup>. This includes banning destructive fishing practices and non-selective fishing gear and ensuring that fisheries are fully disclosed and surveilled with 100% monitoring and control of all fishing vessels. Top predators, as indicators for recovery of marine food chains, need to be allowed to recover their historical range.

<sup>1</sup> <https://ipbes.net/models-drivers-biodiversity-ecosystem-change#exploitation>

This is crucial to deliver sustainable fishing in combination with key measures that should be taken under the Biodiversity Strategy, such as establishing marine protected areas.

#### **Address the EU's unsustainable use of water**

Over-abstraction of water is a key problem in Europe, threatening nature and our ability to produce food in the long run. This will only get worse with climate change. Agriculture is by far the largest user of water as a sector, and the Fitness Check of the Water Framework Directive has identified the lack of coherence with the CAP as a key barrier to its implementation. The Farm to Fork must therefore prioritise addressing unsustainable water use in agriculture, and how to implement and enforce the WFD in the sector.

#### **Reduce by 50% the consumption of meat and dairy in the EU**

Unsustainable food consumption is one of the most important drivers of biodiversity loss. The environmental impact of intensive livestock production on biodiversity is immense in terms of the land and water footprint, greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants, yet the EU actively subsidises meat and dairy production through the CAP. Only by dramatically reducing meat and dairy consumption, will there be the land available for the nature restoration we urgently need, whilst still being able to feed our populations. EU must therefore put in place policies encouraging this reduction, including a plan for ending active support for these sectors under the CAP.

#### **Reduce by 40% the consumption of fish and seafood in the EU**

Consumption of fish and seafood needs to be brought down to sustainable and healthy levels. Most Member States recommend eating about 300g of fish per person/per week, for a healthy and balanced diet. However, current average EU consumption of fish and seafood is 500g per person/per week. The EU must therefore put in place policies encouraging this reduction.

#### **Reach 30% organic agricultural production**

Organic agricultural production can be beneficial for biodiversity if done in the right way<sup>2</sup>, and is the only type of “sustainable” production that has EU legislation backing it. Demand for organic production is growing and outstrips current supply in Europe, plus in many countries funding for conversion to organic in the CAP is insufficient to meet farmers’ demand. Therefore, an EU level target should be set to steer agriculture on the right path and unlock appropriate funding to meet this objective.

#### **50% reduction in food waste**

In the EU, the best available estimates show that around 20% of food produced is lost or wasted. Tackling food waste would save land, water and other inputs as well as saving 3.3 billion tonnes of greenhouse gases emitted to the planet's atmosphere. The EU should therefore commit to a binding target of cutting food waste by 30% by 2025, and 50% by 2030, from farm to fork at Member State level. This means that it should include not just retailer and consumer food waste, but also food wasted at the primary production, manufacturing and distribution levels.

#### **Make EU aquaculture sustainable and independent from wild-caught fish**

Aquaculture can have severe impacts on species and habitats, such as cause eutrophication of the systems, disturb foraging areas for seabirds and mammals, and degrade seabed ecosystems. Member States need to carefully plan where aquaculture is placed in particular by accounting the sensitivity of

<sup>2</sup> <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0216009#pone-0216009-t001>

species and habitats, and the risk of damaging nature. Furthermore, the EU should ensure that aquaculture is not further driving overfishing, by making aquaculture production independent from wild-caught feed. Instead, the EU should drive low impact aquaculture such as extensive aquaculture in inland wetlands that can be very beneficial to biodiversity, integrated multi-trophic aquaculture<sup>3</sup> and recirculating systems.

#### **Achieve zero soil erosion and degradation on agricultural land**

The EU's soils are in a poor state, largely due to intensive agriculture practices and climate change will further exacerbate the problem, threatening food supply and damaging biodiversity. The EU ought to introduce obligations for MS to protect their soils, so that soil issues are integrated into the EU environmental acquis, the CAP conditionality and national legal frameworks.

#### **Drastically reduce use of pesticides in agricultural landscapes**

Pesticides are among the most damaging environmental pollutants for biodiversity, including at sea. The EU Sustainable Use Directive, aimed at the reduction of risks and negative impacts of pesticide use, is mostly not implemented, and the EC needs to start taking enforcement actions across the board. These actions should target to reduce the average number of pesticide applications per hectare by at least 30% from a 2020 baseline, by 2030<sup>4</sup>.

#### **Achieve full nutrient balance at farm level**

Excess in nutrient loads in the environment is a big problem for biodiversity on land, as well as for freshwater and marine ecosystems. The EU needs to put in place a system of controls that halts the discharge of sources of eutrophication to marine and terrestrial ecosystems and that ensures compliance with EU legislation on water and fertilisers. No excess nutrients should be leaking outside of the farm system.

<sup>3</sup> Integrated multi-trophic aquaculture (IMTA) involves the integrated cultivation of fed species together with extractive species (marine invertebrates and/or algae) that feed on detritus from the fed species. This conversion of particulate waste and dissolved waste into secondary raw materials addresses key environmental impact concerns related to open-water systems.

<sup>4</sup> The EU is still developing a Harmonised Risk Indicator, however, this target should ensure that both, the number of applications, and the toxicity of the pesticide are reduced. Studies show that such a reduction would not reduce yields: <https://www.nature.com/articles/nplants20178>

## Slow Food

Slow Food strongly believes that a comprehensive transition towards sustainable food systems is needed, to address some of the existential threats we face. Together with other civil society organisations, Slow Food believes that the Farm to Fork Strategy represents an important opportunity to deliver a coherent response to food-related challenges and pave the way towards an integrated, sustainable food policy for the European Union (EU) by:

- Developing an inclusive and transparent governance and regulatory framework for policy coherence and transformation;
- Supporting a transition to food production that safeguards the environment, the climate, and our health;
- Driving a transition to sustainable, healthy diets by creating enabling food environments;
- Establishing a socially and economically just food system;
- Ensuring the welfare and health of farmed animals;
- Promoting participatory research and knowledge exchange for sustainable food systems;
- Driving global action for sustainable food systems;

In response to the consultation of the European Commission on the Farm to Fork Strategy we want to focus our attention on the following elements:

- The need to fundamentally change paradigm and move beyond the “feeding the world” narrative
- The importance of three principles that echo Slow Food’s mission to ensure everyone has access to good, clean and fair, namely:
  - o Protect and promote agrobiodiversity
  - o Promote the development of agroecology
  - o Establish fair supply chains and fair working conditions for all farmers, farmworkers, food artisans and in particular for migrant farm workers, youth and women

Please see the document attached for our full response to this consultation.

## **Response to the EU consultation on the Farm to Fork Strategy**

Brussels, 16 March 2020

Slow Food strongly believes that a **comprehensive transition towards sustainable food systems is needed**<sup>1</sup>, to address some of the existential threats we face. Together with other civil society organisations, Slow Food believes that **the Farm to Fork Strategy represents an important opportunity to deliver a coherent response to food-related challenges and pave the way towards an integrated, sustainable food policy for the European Union (EU) by:** <sup>2</sup>

- Developing an inclusive and transparent governance and regulatory framework for policy coherence and transformation;
- Supporting a transition to food production that safeguards the environment, the climate, and our health;
- Driving a transition to sustainable, healthy diets by creating enabling food environments;
- Establishing a socially and economically just food system;
- Ensuring the welfare and health of farmed animals;
- Promoting participatory research and knowledge exchange for sustainable food systems;
- Driving global action for sustainable food systems;

In response to the consultation of the European Commission on the Farm to Fork Strategy we want to focus our attention on the following elements:

- The need to fundamentally change paradigm and move beyond the “feeding the world” narrative
- The importance of three principles that echo Slow Food’s mission to ensure everyone has access to good, clean and fair, namely:
  - **Protect and promote agrobiodiversity**
  - **Promote the development of agroecology**
  - **Establish fair supply chains and fair working conditions for all farmers, farmworkers, food artisans and in particular for migrant farm workers, youth and women**

### **Changing the narrative**

In order to achieve an integrated Farm to Fork strategy ambitious enough to meet the objectives of the EU Green Deal, we need to see a radical change in the narrative, away from one of needing to “feed the world”. Indeed, framing the question of food security in terms of net volumes of food reflects the systemic and self-reinforcing logic of industrial food systems of increasing production (primarily of energy-rich, nutrition-poor crops) at all cost. The growth in productivity achieved by the industrial food system has not translated in global food security by any measure. Instead, we must shift towards a narrative that allows us to face head

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<sup>1</sup> JULY 2019: CSOs joint letter to the newly elected President of the European Commission Ms. Ursula von der Leyen, calling for an integrated EU food policy and a new European Commission Vice-President responsible for ensuring the transition to sustainable food systems. ([link](#))

<sup>2</sup>DECEMBER 2019: CSOs Open Letter on the Farm to Fork strategy to Achieve Sustainable Food Systems ([link](#))

on the crucial questions EU citizens need answers to: how farming livelihoods will be secured; how to provide healthy, diverse diets; how to farm in a way that respect the Sustainable Development Goals; how to improve equity and social well-being. Tweaking practices will not provide long-term solutions. What Europe needs are diversified agroecological food systems, based on farming agrobiodiversity, with lower dependency on external inputs, stimulating social relationships and short-supply chains, to build long-term healthy agroecosystems and secure livelihoods.

## To do this, Slow Food believes the Farm to Fork Strategy must:

### I. Protect and promote agrobiodiversity

#### Why this is important

Biodiversity loss is one of the greatest environmental threats currently plaguing the planet. The loss of biodiversity does not only involve wild species, but also **agrobiodiversity**, namely the animal breeds and plant varieties which, since the birth of agriculture 10,000 years ago, have gradually and consistently been domesticated to be grown or raised to produce food.

Thanks to the selection performed by farmers over the centuries, local varieties and breeds have adapted to the local environment, becoming stronger, more resilient and demanding less external inputs, such as fertilizers, water, pesticides, veterinary care, than their conventional equivalents.

However, over the last 50 years, industrial agriculture has invested in an ever-smaller number of hybrid varieties and commercial animal breeds, selected and created to increase productivity, to the detriment of diversity and the connection to the collective knowledge and flavors of individual places. According to FAO estimates, **75% of agricultural crop varieties have disappeared and 20% of animal breeds reared for food, meat or milk, face extinction.** Monocultures as well as the introduction of GMOs and the widespread use of synthetic pesticides have heavily contributed to the loss of agricultural crop varieties.

Farmers, herders and fishers who cultivated biodiversity and defend it play a crucial role. For millennia, they have been working in harmony with ecosystems, not in competition with them.<sup>3</sup>

**The EU must take important measures to support the farmers, herders and fishers who are protecting agrobiodiversity, promoting the ecosystem services provided by biodiversity, protecting the cultural heritage and supporting healthy local economies.** In addition, supporting agrobiodiversity directly contributes to increasing the **diversity in diets**, essential to ensuring nutrition quality in diets.<sup>4</sup>

#### Slow Food's fight against agrobiodiversity loss

While agricultural biodiversity is certainly not the only component needed in a sustainable food system, a sustainable food system cannot exist without agricultural biodiversity.<sup>5</sup> Agroecological models based on

<sup>3</sup> Slow Food biodiversity [https://n4v5s9s7.stackpathcdn.com/sloueuropa/wp-content/uploads/150220-Factsheet-biod\\_ENG\\_bassa.pdf](https://n4v5s9s7.stackpathcdn.com/sloueuropa/wp-content/uploads/150220-Factsheet-biod_ENG_bassa.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> EAT-Lancet report (2019) [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(18\)31788-4/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(18)31788-4/fulltext)

<sup>5</sup> Biodiversity International (2017)

[https://www.biodiversityinternational.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/online\\_library/Mainstreaming\\_Agrobiodiversity/Summary\\_Mainstreaming\\_Agrobiodiversity.pdf](https://www.biodiversityinternational.org/fileadmin/user_upload/online_library/Mainstreaming_Agrobiodiversity/Summary_Mainstreaming_Agrobiodiversity.pdf)



biodiversity have also proven to ensure food security while providing numerous ecosystem services such as providing habitat and resources for pollinators and increased soil biological diversity, which in turn can increase nutrient status of soils.<sup>6</sup>

Slow Food aims to protect agrobiodiversity through an online catalogue of traditional breeds and varieties, as well as by supporting farmers, fishers and food artisans who protect agrobiodiversity. Research carried out on these projects demonstrates positive impact in terms of social, environmental and economic sustainability.<sup>7</sup>

### **To protect agrobiodiversity, the Farm to Fork strategy must:**

- **Reward producers who cultivate and farm agrobiodiversity**, who preserve the traditional agricultural landscape (e.g. old vineyards), know-how (e.g. milling and slaughtering) and architecture (water mills, mountain dairies, old wood ovens etc.)
- Ensure the registration of seed varieties in **public registers** to safeguard endangered crops and make them available;
- Ensure that the conventional breeding of plants and animals is kept **free from patent claims**: re-think European patent law in biotechnology and plant breeding and set clear regulations that exclude conventional breeding, genetic material, animals, plants and food derived thereof from patentability;
- Support the swift implementation of the ruling by the European Court of Justice of 2018, clarifying that **new techniques of genetic engineering fall under EU legislation on GMO**, and ensure that Gene edited varieties go through usual risk assessment procedure, are traceable and are labelled;
- Uphold the Parliament resolutions of October 2016 and October 2017 **against the Commission's authorisation of genetically modified organisms (GMOs)** and on efforts to facilitate the banning of GMO cultivation by Member States in line with the objective of protecting biodiversity, nature and soil;
- Support the development of a dedicated **legally binding framework covering the main soil threats**, including biodiversity loss, erosion, organic matter decline and contamination; integrate soil related UN Sustainable Development Goals into EU policies.

## **II. Promote the development of agroecology**

### **Why this is important**

Business as usual in food production has shown its limits. Slow Food believes agroecology is the way to achieve economic, environmental and socio-cultural sustainability in our food systems. It is necessary to address these challenges simultaneously since all the various elements are interconnected.

Agroecology is the application of the science of ecology (the science of how nature works) to the study, design, and management of sustainable food systems, the integration of the diverse knowledge systems generated by food system practitioners, and the involvement of the social movements that are promoting the transition to fair, just, and sovereign food systems (FAO, 2018; Gliessman, 2015). In other words,

<sup>6</sup> Biodiversity International (2017)

[https://www.biodiversityinternational.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/online\\_library/Mainstreaming\\_Agrobiodiversity/Summary\\_Mainstreaming\\_Agrobiodiversity.pdf](https://www.biodiversityinternational.org/fileadmin/user_upload/online_library/Mainstreaming_Agrobiodiversity/Summary_Mainstreaming_Agrobiodiversity.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Slow Food study on Presidia project <https://www.slowfood.com/sloueuropa/wp-content/uploads/Ricerca-presidi-Europa-ENG.pdf>



agroecology is understood as a science, practice, and as a social movement, in line with the internationally agreed-upon Nyéléni definition.<sup>8</sup>

Agroecology represents an important turn in this direction, compared to other sustainable farming models:

- it is based on local plant varieties and animal breeds and draws on their **ability to adapt** to any changes in environmental conditions;
- it **avoids the use of synthetic chemical products** and other technologies that have a negative impact on the environment and human health;
- it uses resources efficiently (nutrients, water, non-renewable energy etc.) to **reduce dependence on external inputs**;
- it promotes traditional technical skills, promotes participatory and cohesive systems by **creating farmers' networks**, and incentivizes the sharing of innovations and technologies;
- it **reduces the ecological footprint** of production, distribution and consumer practices, thus reducing water and soil pollution as well;
- it boosts the adaptability and resilience of the production and livestock farming system by maintaining the diversity of the agroecosystem, **and can provide higher animal welfare standards**;
- it promotes farming systems based on **social cohesion** and a sense of belonging by reducing land abandonment and migration.

## Evidence

There is a growing body of evidence on the success of agroecological practises throughout the world, including in Europe. At a local level, the life cycle assessment of Slow Food products grown under agroecological practises have proven to generate significantly less CO2 emissions than their industrial counter parts.<sup>9</sup> Case studies from various continents show that agroecological systems deliver additional mutually reinforcing benefits including greater resource efficiency, improvements in community livelihoods and nutrition, increased resilience to shocks, biodiversity enhancement.<sup>10</sup> Finally, other studies such as “Ten Years for Agroecology” performed by IDDRI show that the scaling up of agroecology is possible and find that wholesale transition to agroecology would:<sup>11</sup>

- feed the European population healthily
- reduce Europe’s global food footprint
- result in a 40% reduction in agricultural greenhouse gas emissions
- help to restore biodiversity and to protect natural resources

<sup>8</sup> Nyeleni Declaration <https://www.foodsovereignty.org/forum-agroecology-nyeleni-2015-2/>

<sup>9</sup> INDACO Study – GHG emission comparison between Slow Food products and industrial products [https://n4v5s9s7.stackpathcdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/ING\\_Indaco\\_schede-1.pdf](https://n4v5s9s7.stackpathcdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/ING_Indaco_schede-1.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> IPES-Food Report “Breaking away from industrial food and farming systems” (2018) [http://www.ipes-food.org/\\_img/upload/files/CS2\\_web.pdf](http://www.ipes-food.org/_img/upload/files/CS2_web.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> IDDRI Ten Years for Agroecology study (2018) <https://www.iddri.org/en/publications-and-events/blog-post/agro-ecological-europe-2050-credible-scenario-avenue-explore>

## To promote the development of agroecology, the Farm to Fork strategy must:

### 1. Support farmers in their transition to agroecological food production

- Reorient the **CAP to give support to small agroecological farms**; support for agroecological transition through **independent Farm Advisory Services**;
- Ring-fence 40% of the total **agricultural research budget for agroecological** and organic practices, in recognition of the importance of knowledge-based innovation;
- Aim to have at least **50% of land being managed under agroecology and organic** agriculture by 2050, with focus on small and medium farms;
- **On livestock:**
  - o Acknowledge that there is an **overproduction of meat products**, and an over **reliance on industrial livestock farming** with high costs for our environment, our health, animals' welfare, and meat industry workforce's livelihoods;
  - o Create a **dedicated action plan towards less and better production and consumption** of meat, dairy and eggs in the EU, to shift away from industrial farming and towards circular, extensive livestock production as part of mixed farming systems;
  - o Support **maximum livestock density levels** (number of animals a farm can have per hectare) to be implemented throughout the EU;
  - o Commit to **phase out the use of cages** in animal farming;
  - o Increase availability of **local/mobile slaughterhouses**;
- Aim for an **80% reduction of synthetic pesticide use by 2030** by strengthening tools under the CAP to support agroecology and organic agriculture, and strengthening the Sustainable Use Directive. Such a reduction in synthetic pesticide use can be achieved primarily through the following measures:
  - o **Food losses and waste** are curbed: 20% of the total food produced in Europe is wasted (Fusion 2016); reducing food losses and waste by readjusting food production to meet food demand would contribute to reduce, among other things, synthetic pesticide use;
  - o Agroecological practices, like **Integrated Pest Management**, become mainstream (support to agroecological farmers and to farmers transitioning to agroecology)

### 2. Make agroecological food accessible to all Europeans

- Aim for a 20% raise in numbers of CSAs (**Community-supported agriculture**) schemes in Europe by 2030;
- Make sure the necessary **infrastructure is present for peasant and agroecological models**: access to local markets and slaughterhouses, simplified and commensurate hygiene rules;
- Aim for at least 50% of local, seasonal products in **public procurement** by 2025.

### III. Establish fair supply chains and fair working conditions for all farmers, farmworkers, food artisans and in particular for migrant farm workers, youth and women

#### Why this is important

The industrial food system is based on highly unequal power relations as very powerful actors from the private sector continue to dictate the terms of the system. This power imbalance has exacerbated the precarity of farm workers, especially of migrant workers, women and youth farmers. Higher concentration of land ownership among fewer farmers, the concentration of power over farming inputs (e.g. seeds) and the consolidation of power among few major food processors and retailers all point to highly unequal power relations in the food system.<sup>1213</sup> These inequalities are further exacerbated for disadvantaged groups including women, youth and migrant workers who often find themselves at the margin of the food system.

The situation of women, youth and migrant workers and farmers cannot continue to be ignored. Food can be an excellent instrument to redress power imbalances, integrate minorities and disadvantaged groups, like migrants and refugees.

The Farm to Fork Strategy must work to better integrate them by establishing fair supply chains and working conditions.

#### Slow Food examples

Slow Food believes in the inclusion of minorities in the design of sustainable food systems.

Through the “**Recipes of Dialogue**” project, Slow Food provides citizens from different backgrounds with the practical tools to transform their culinary heritage into skills that they can use to become self-reliant and to grow the economy in the food sector. This is done through training sessions on how to start and run a food business that can promote the history of a migrant community, biodiversity, and the seasonality of local produce, elements that are key to ensuring that migrant communities can successfully integrate with their surrounding area and its existing residents.<sup>14</sup>

Regarding youth, the **Slow Food Youth Network** works to engage young people to co-construct local food systems and to educate themselves on the challenges we are facing today. For example, the **Slow Food Academy** is an interactive and versatile teaching programme with the goal to bring to young professionals a deeper understanding of the complexity of food systems and policies and of the various actors that shape them.

In all its projects, Slow Food highlights **the essential contribution of women to sustainable food systems**, whether they are farmers, cooks, artisans, consumers or activists.

<sup>12</sup> IPES-Food Report “Unraveling the food-health nexus (2017) [http://www.ipes-food.org/\\_img/upload/files/Health\\_FullReport\(1\).pdf](http://www.ipes-food.org/_img/upload/files/Health_FullReport(1).pdf)

<sup>13</sup> IPES-Food Report “Towards a common food policy for the EU” (2019) [http://www.ipes-food.org/\\_img/upload/files/CFP\\_ExecSummary\\_EN.pdf](http://www.ipes-food.org/_img/upload/files/CFP_ExecSummary_EN.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Slow Food Project “Recipe for Dialogue” <https://www.slowfood.com/food-the-recipe-for-dialogue/>

**To establish fair supply chains and working conditions, the Farm to Fork strategy must:**

**1. Support the integration of youth, women and migrants**

- Promote the **training of young farmers and young entrepreneurs** in the food system on agroecological farming and sustainable food systems with secondary school and university courses, short courses, lecture courses by farmers themselves and knowledge exchange;
- Facilitate the **setting up of new businesses by young people** by simplifying or speeding up red tape and envisaging incentives such as direct funding, tax relief, favourable insurance schemes etc.;
- Create a strategy specifically designed to improve the working conditions of **women and young farmers** which should aim to facilitate the setting up of new businesses by young people and women, by cutting red-tape and proposing incentives;
- **Fight the exploitation of the labour force** which often concerns migrant workers.

**2. Promote the establishment of fair supply chains**

- Review the rules that regulate supply chains to **give all producers fair bargaining power**, and promote the creation of market channels for small and medium scale producers including farmers markets and direct selling;
- Support the achievement of a **UN binding treaty** to hold transnational corporations to account for human rights violations and end their impunity;
- Ensure **that EU laws enshrine the duty of corporations to respect human rights** and the environment throughout their operations worldwide;
- Ensure that the principle of **Policy Coherence for Development** is fully implemented, minimising contradictions and building synergies between different EU policies to benefit developing countries and increase the effectiveness of development cooperation.

We thank you in advance for considering our comments and remain at your disposal for any question you may have.

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## WWF Italia

Sustainable agriculture is the key to producing food within the carrying capacity of the planet, maintaining the ecosystem services on which it depends, such as fertile soils rich in organic matter, availability of clean water and conservation of habitats and species, such as insects pollinators. These ecosystem services are essential to ensure the quantity and quality of our food and to support the development of rural economies and local communities. However, at present, most markets do not recognize the value of ecosystem services and do not pay sustainable production enough to guarantee an adequate income for farmers. We can really talk about sustainable agriculture when these three objectives are met:

1) Give space to nature on farms. It is essential to ensure within the farms a minimum area for the maintenance of green infrastructures (hedges, trees, secular trees isolated or inserted in small woods, ponds and small wetlands, grass belts, stable meadows, etc.) that support biodiversity of agro-ecosystems. The minimum target should be the presence of at least 10% of the total agricultural area (SAT) of the farm dedicated to these natural spaces.

2) Reduce dependence on synthetic chemistry. Policies that promote production models that require a lower input of synthetic chemicals, in particular pesticides, are needed through the spread of agricultural practices that do not require the use of synthetic chemicals and strengthen the natural defense of agro-ecosystems. Organic and biodynamic agriculture today represent the most advanced agroecology models that must be promoted with greater determination. Realistic goals are to reach 40% of the SAU (Used Agricultural Surface) certified in organic agriculture by 2030, of which 100% of the UAA in organic within the Natura 2000 network and to reduce the use of pesticides by 80% within 2030.

3) Restoring and maintaining the fundamental cycles of nitrogen, phosphorus, carbon and water. These are the biogeochemical cycles of the biosphere on which agricultural production depends and which agriculture itself has profoundly and dangerously altered, far beyond the limits of the resilience of the biosphere. It is necessary to run for cover by promoting good agricultural practices capable of bringing these bio-geochemical cycles into balance, reducing the use of mineral and chemical fertilization, promoting the restoration and maintenance of organic matter and biodiversity in soils, with virtuous practices such as crop rotations with the obligation of at least one legume.

EU institutions and national governments should responsibly address the environmental and social challenges that depend on agriculture, in particular to meet national, European and international commitments such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement. Furthermore, the Farm to Fork Strategy must indicate the goal of self-sufficiency in feed production as a basic criterion on which to set up European breeding. This is because we are now largely dependent, for Italian and European intensive animal husbandry, on imports of soy (GMO) from the American continent, with significant impacts both on the concentration of lands in those countries (and therefore with impacts on the production of food for local communities) than on deforestation. To this must be added an increasing dependence on imports also for maize (today 50% of Italian zootechnical maize is imported). Feed independence presupposes a strong downsizing of the animals reared in an intensive regime. And therefore a dietary and market orientation aimed at reducing (and qualifying) the consumption of food of animal origin.

# Less and better food of animal origin in the Farm to Fork Strategy

To: Vice President Timmermans

Cc: Commissioners Kyriakides, Wojciechowski and Sinkevičius

The sustainability of food systems is crucial to the aims of the European Green Deal; from tackling the climate crisis and preventing environmental destruction to protecting the health and well-being of citizens.

**We are therefore alarmed** that one key issue has been so far absent from the Commission's communications on the Farm to Fork Strategy: **the inherent unsustainability of a big part of Europe's current animal farming systems and the overconsumption of meat, dairy and eggs.** This omission jeopardises the strategy's credibility and viability to achieve its objectives of making EU food a "global standard for sustainability".

The heavy toll that industrial livestock production takes on the environment [1], on human health [2], on animal welfare [3] and on rural communities [4] is well established amongst the scientific community [5].

**We are calling on the Commission to explicitly recognise and address the need to reduce and improve the production and consumption of meat, dairy and eggs in the Farm to Fork Strategy,** in line with overwhelming scientific evidence.

Farm animals have a place in sustainable food and farming systems, as part of extensive, circular, and mixed farming models, with a higher potential for animal welfare. But this type of sustainable farming with animals is increasingly struggling to make ends meet and are being replaced by industrial animal farming [6]. Farmers producing sustainably deserve to get a fair price for their work, and they need support when faced with a highly concentrated animal processing and retail sector, where a few international corporations are consolidating control over prices and production.

Given the urgency of the climate and ecological crisis and growing health concerns, changes to our food system cannot be left to consumer choice alone. The industrialisation of animal farming has been supported by policies and incentives – and politicians have the responsibility to reverse this trend.

**We call on the European Commission to develop, as part of the Farm to Fork Strategy, a dedicated action plan towards less and better consumption and production of meat, dairy and eggs in the EU.**

This action plan should set binding targets and put forward a set of measures to reduce industrial livestock production, support better animal farming, and create enabling food environments - a combination of surroundings, opportunities and conditions that influence people's food and beverage choices - for the uptake of more healthy, plant-rich diets. Several concrete policy proposals to achieve this have already been put forward, for example in the [joint NGO letter on the Farm to Fork Strategy in December 2019](#).

We remain at your disposal for clarifications and any further dialogue on this matter.

Sincerely,

**Isabella Pratesi**  
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## References:

[1] See for example: IPCC, [Special Report on Climate Change and Land](#) (2019), FAO, [State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture](#) (2019), EEA, [The European environment - state and outlook 2020](#) (2019)

[2] For example: [The EAT–Lancet Commission on healthy diets from sustainable food systems](#) (2019); [Review on Antimicrobial Resistance, Tackling Drug-Resistant Infections Globally: final report and recommendations](#) (2016);, Lelieveld et al., [The contribution of outdoor air pollution sources to premature mortality on a global scale](#), Nature (2015).

[3] For example: Compassion in World Farming (CIWF), 2017. [End the Cage Age: Why the EU must stop caging farm animals](#). CIWF, 2017; CIWF, 2017. [Towards a healthy, sustainable, humane food and farming system](#); CIWF, 2014. [Ending Factory Farming: Animal Cruelty. Factsheet](#).

[4] Eg. Food and Water Europe 2013, [Spain, towards pig factory farm nation?](#); Global Environmental Health and Sustainability, Joan A. Casey et. al 2015, [Industrial Food Animal Production and Community Health](#).

[5] [Open letter from civil society to the European Institutions 2018](#), LESS AND BETTER: A CALL FOR POLICY ACTION ON ANIMAL FARMING

[6] Eurostat 2013, [Farm Structure Survey 2013](#)

14 March, 2020

## **European Green Deal needs to cut pesticides and switch to agroecology**

To: Executive Vice President Timmermans

Cc: Commissioners Kyriakides, Wojciechowski and Sinkevičius

We are writing to you as supporters of the European Citizens Initiative *Save Bees and Farmers*<sup>1</sup> which has been already supported by over a quarter of a million EU citizens.

The significant decline of bees and pollinators in Europe and worldwide, together with the wider collapse of biodiversity we are currently witnessing has rightly raised alarm in the scientific community and general public. Experts have declared that “business as usual” cannot remain an option<sup>2,3</sup>. It is now finally widely accepted that our food production model is a major driver of this ecology collapse, largely because of the massive use of synthetic pesticides it relies upon.

Furthermore, synthetic pesticides have important consequences on human health, linked to illness among rural communities as well as among consumers via pesticide residues that are present in food, as well as pesticide drift in the air and runoff in soil and groundwater. Among others, exposure to pesticides is linked to cancer, Parkinson's disease, and reproductive impairments.

A third major consequence of industrial agriculture is the sharp decline in social and economic diversity amongst farmers and rural communities. Over the past 10 years, a farm has disappeared in the EU on average every 3 minutes. This is leading to depleted rural areas and a huge loss of resilience, valuable knowledge and traditions.

The European Union has supported these phenomena with public money for decades through its Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) as well as with regulations, trade agreements and a research policy favouring industrial agriculture and food production. Our coalition now asks for the European Commission and the Member States to make a fundamental change in how the aforementioned instruments are used.

These issues are at the core of why the European Commission is developing the Farm to Fork and accompanying Biodiversity Strategies. Indeed, a way out exists to transform our model of chemical-intensive agriculture to a model that is more knowledge-intensive and that is based on working with nature rather than against it: this alternative has been developed by organic agriculture as well as many other farmers, based on agroecological principles. Scientific research shows that feeding the EU and the world based on synthetic

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<sup>1</sup> [www.savebeesandfarmers.eu](http://www.savebeesandfarmers.eu)

<sup>2</sup> Climate change and land. IPCC special report. 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services. IPBES. 2019



pesticide-free agriculture is possible<sup>4,5</sup>, it is a political choice as non-chemical alternatives to pesticides already exist. Furthermore, field evidence shows that implementing agroecology allows farmers to increase their profits<sup>6</sup>.

We are therefore calling on you to ensure the demands of *Save Bees and Farmers* are embedded in these forthcoming strategies. In particular, they must without compromise:

1. start the **phase-out of synthetic pesticides from EU agriculture**, by setting a target to **cut use by 80% by 2030** and a **phase out by 2035**.
2. set ambitious targets to **restore biodiversity**, especially in agricultural areas. Agriculture and biodiversity are not mutually exclusive, but must benefit each other.
3. **support farmers in the transition** towards a nature-friendly agriculture. CAP reform proposals must be strongly upgraded to support farmers financially and technically by prioritising small scale, diverse and sustainable farming based on agroecology.

We look forward to the publication of ambitious and credible Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies that are fit for purpose, lead us away from the catastrophe we are facing, and meet the expectations of citizens and farmers. Time is running out for both nature and small-scale farming and we call on these to be central to your efforts.

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<sup>4</sup> [Strategies for feeding the world more sustainably with organic agriculture](#). Muller A *et al.* Nat Commun. 2017.

<sup>5</sup> An agroecological Europe in 2050: multifunctional agriculture for healthy eating. Findings from the Ten Years For Agroecology (TYFA) modelling exercise. IDDRI edition. 2018

<sup>6</sup> The economic potential of agroecology: Empirical evidence from Europe. Van der Ploeg *et al.* Journal of rural studies. 2019