



10 PRIORITIES FOR THE FARM TO FORK INI REPORT

April 2021

As the European Parliament is preparing its reaction (own-initiative report) to the EU Farm to Fork Strategy, civil society organisations in the areas of environment, consumers, food systems, animal welfare, health, consumer co-operatives, farming, fisheries, development, social justice, climate, and forestry have come together to set out **10 key priorities** which they call on MEPs to endorse in their report.

With Europe still coping with the Covid-19 pandemic, this is a pertinent time to **build the foundations of a resilient, healthy, equitable, ecological, and overall sustainable food system** that can withstand future shocks. The signatory civil society organisations urge MEPs to support an ambitious Farm to Fork Strategy which can deliver this much-needed change.

Priority 1 Recognise the need for urgent and bold action

Related paragraphs in the draft EP own initiative report: Recitals A, B, C, E, §1, §2

The Farm to Fork (F2F) INI report must **echo the scientific consensus that the EU food system is currently not sustainable with respect to environmental, economic and social aspects**. The Parliament must therefore make a strong call for urgent policy and legislative action and high ambition towards sustainable food systems.

- The unsustainability of current food systems must be fully recognised in this report, in particular the well-documented negative **environmental impacts** of intensive agriculture and intensive animal farming, and the **human and economic impacts of unhealthy, unsustainable diets**. The **Commission's Chief Scientific Advisors** stated that 'business as usual' in the food system will significantly endanger natural resources, our health, the climate, and the economy.
- Scientists stated in their **Evidence report** to the Commission that the productivism paradigm of "food as a commodity" should evolve towards the conceptualisation of food as a common good, underpinned by the right to food. This report must seize the Farm to Fork Strategy as an opportunity to initiate governance reform and call for an ambitious legislative framework for Sustainable Food Systems, based on agroecology and a rights-based approach.
- **Climate change** and **unsustainable models of production** and **consumption** are the biggest threats to farmers' livelihoods and to our long-term food security. Economic and food security arguments must therefore not be used to question or delay action towards healthy and environmentally and socially sustainable food systems. As the EU continues to **deal with the pandemic**, now is the time to lay out a clear vision for a sustainable and resilient future for food and farming (cf. **CSOs letter** and **Op-Ed** on the Farm to Fork Strategy & Covid-19)

- Food prices must send the right signal by internalising the costs of social and environmental externalities of food production.

Priority 2

Endorse the Farm to Fork targets

Related paragraphs in the draft EP own initiative report: §3, §4

The report must **fully endorse the aspirational targets of the Farm to Fork Strategy** and call for their translation in legislation and prompt implementation.

- The Commission has stipulated that it will carry out impact assessments for any legislative action that comes out of the Farm to Fork strategy and before making these targets legally binding. As such, calling for impact assessments for voluntary targets is not only unnecessary but essentially just a delaying tactic.
- The Farm to Fork Strategy targets are grounded in a substantial body of scientific evidence for the need to act, as well as scientific and practical evidence for their technical feasibility:
 - **Fertilisers:** a 40% reduction would be needed to stop eutrophication and increasing nutrients use efficiency is a “low-hanging fruit” for climate action in agriculture.
 - **Pesticides:** a major source of chemical pollution of soils, water and air, as recognised by the F2F Strategy, and major driver of pollinator losses; a 50% reduction in use of pesticides is feasible with current knowledge and technology, as demonstrated by many practical examples. The revision of the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive must translate the F2F's pesticides reduction target into legislation.
 - **Organic farming:** a transition towards organic and agroecological practices, including through reaching 25% organic land by 2030, would bring many beneficial effects, including reducing Europe's global footprint, restoring biodiversity, a 40% reduction in agricultural GHG emissions and feeding Europe's population healthily and sustainably.
 - **Antimicrobials:** a One Health approach must be promoted that recognises the interdependence between the health and well-being of humans, animals and the planet, and addresses the root causes of dependency on antimicrobials, eliminating the use of antibiotics to compensate for poor husbandry;
 - **Food waste:** the reduction target must be made binding and apply through the entire supply chain, including the primary production and retail levels.

Priority 3

Unlock the transition to agroecology for nature and climate-friendly farming

Related paragraphs in the draft EP own initiative report: §3, §4, §6, §9

Intensive agriculture is the single largest driver of biodiversity loss in the EU and a significant contributor to climate change, pollution and land degradation. These issues must be tackled holistically and simultaneously. **The Farm to Fork Strategy INI report must call for a transition to agroecological and organic farming practices, as techno-fixes will not suffice.**

- Agroecology is recognised by the [FAO](#), [IPBES](#), [IPCC](#), [UN](#) and [international experts](#) as an important **solution** to deliver on all dimensions of sustainability, including achieving food security, making it the best pathway to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). **It must be promoted** in the F2F INI report as the direction of travel for EU food systems.
- While precision farming and digital technologies may be helpful tools if democratically organised and managed, they are **not sufficient to achieve** sustainable food systems. The report must not place excessive focus on those technological solutions and instead promote nature-based solutions such as organic and other agroecological practices, agroforestry, and ecosystems restoration which can simultaneously address the climate and biodiversity crises and reduce pressure on natural resources.
- The EU agriculture sector must urgently help mitigate and adapt to climate change to safeguard farmers' long-term viability. Transitioning to **agroecology can deliver on all counts**. In addition to the F2F and Biodiversity Strategies' targets, the report must call for legally-binding targets to reduce emissions from agriculture and related land-use. The "bio-economy" is no silver bullet, and risks locking farmers into unsustainable production models (e.g. investments into large biogas plants relying on intensive animal farming) or increasing pressure on land and biomass use. "Bio-economy" projects should only be carried out in a way that also supports biodiversity and respects the carrying capacity of the local environment.

Priority 4

Make the healthy and sustainable food choice the easy one

Related paragraphs in the draft EP own initiative report: Recital D, §16, §18, §19

The Farm to Fork Strategy INI report must recognise the need for a **food environment that helps citizens to make healthy, ethical and sustainable food choices**. Action, including regulation, is needed at all levels to change the food environment (incl. food availability, presentation, marketing and pricing) and make the healthy and sustainable food choice the easiest option. Food environments should help enable dietary patterns higher in vegetables, fruits, whole grains, pulses and nuts, and lower in highly-processed foods high in fats, sugar and salt, and red and processed meat.

- The shift to a sustainable food system cannot rely solely on individual choices by consumers. Consumer information and education, albeit necessary, **is not enough and will not deliver the shift in diets which experts say is required** for good human and planetary health.
- Reliance on self-regulation and voluntary pledges, for example through a 'Code of Conduct', will not bring the necessary change. Binding rules are needed, notably on **food marketing to children** and food reformulation.
- **Eight in ten EU consumers** agree that food prices should send the right signal and reflect the 'true costs' for society (i.e. including environmental, and health impacts associated with food production and consumption). The healthy and sustainable food choice must become the most affordable one too.
- Improved consumer information on-pack on nutrition, origin and method of production for animal products is welcome. Robust nutrient profiles **must be set** to prevent unhealthy food from claiming it is healthy.

Priority 5

Launch a transition to less and better animal farming and meat, dairy and eggs consumption

Related paragraphs in the draft EP own initiative report: §4, §5, §11, §14, §20, §21

The report must acknowledge the fundamentally unsustainable nature of industrial animal farming and call for policies driving a **transition to extensive animal farming and less and better animal proteins**, more fruit, veg and pulses in our diets.

- The intensive rearing of farm animals at high stocking density - whether cows, pigs or poultry - is a major source of **harmful air** and **water pollution**, through **emissions of ammonia and methane** and nitrates runoff; a huge driver of biodiversity loss **in Europe** and **abroad** due to overgrazing and unsustainably high demand for feed; and closely linked with the emergence of **antimicrobial resistance** and **new diseases**.
- Animal proteins have a place in our diet, but Europeans consume on average **more than twice the recommended amount of meat**. Overconsumption of red and processed meat contributes to diet-related diseases such as **cardiovascular diseases (inc. strokes)** and **cancer**. The report must call for a reduction in animal proteins consumption, and for setting clear reduction targets. Technological solutions are by no means sufficient to bring animal farming within a **“safe operating space”**: almost all EU countries must strongly cut livestock numbers to reach sustainable production levels. The report should therefore not focus on techno-fixes (e.g. feed additives or high-tech housing) which could lock in farmers into another decade of harmful intensification.

Priority 6

Align EU agri-food policies with the European Green Deal

Related paragraphs in the draft EP own initiative report: §4, §8, §14, §21, §26

The success of the EU Green Deal (EGD) depends on the alignment of sectoral policies with its objectives, in particular agriculture. The F2F INI report must send a clear signal that **all EU policies must support the Farm to Fork Strategy's targets and commitment to sustainable food systems**.

- The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which amounts to a third of the EU budget, must contribute to EGD objectives. The report must call on the Commission to only approve CAP Strategic Plans if they demonstrate an **adequate contribution to Green Deal objectives** and their aggregated effort is sufficient to deliver on Union-wide targets. The CAP must (and can) cover the short-term costs incurred by farmers in implementing the F2F objectives, while in the longer-term **economic benefits** from reduced input costs and increased farm resilience can be expected.
- Similarly, EU and other public funds (public procurement, the promotion policy for agricultural products, the school scheme, the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund) should be geared towards the objectives of the Farm to Fork Strategy, supporting, and not contradicting, efforts to reduce the consumption of animal products and increase the consumption of fruit, vegetables, pulses, and organic food.
- The report must not downplay the urgency and importance of achieving sustainability in all policies, for example by prioritising economic criteria such as 'competitiveness' (which is counterproductive as it contributes to a vicious circle of ever lower prices). Instead, policy action is needed to ensure decent incomes for all farmers and other food sector workers.

Priority 7

Promote precaution and farmers' rights before technological innovation

Related paragraphs in the draft EP own initiative report: Recital E, §3, §7, §8, §15, §25

The INI Report must adopt a **precaution-first approach to innovation and focus on holistic solutions, such as agroecology**, rather than on "techno-fixes" that ignore the systemic problems of our food system.

- The report must call for new GMOs (or "Innovative Plant Breeding", "New Genomic Techniques" or "New Breeding Techniques") to **remain regulated** under the EU GMO regulations as decided by the **European Court of Justice in 2018**. The regulations ensure pre-market safety assessment and approval, traceability, and labelling which allow freedom of choice to both farmers and citizens.
- Research must involve farmers and in particular small-scale primary producers, on an equal level with researchers through a participatory process, and must focus on the application, uptake and scaling of agroecology, in order to get out of a vicious cycle of reliance on short-term techno-fixes.
- The report should not focus the debate on technological product-based innovation (such as GM technologies) which entrenches a top-down, one-way model of knowledge creation and increases the concentration of power through patents in the seed sector, in clear contradiction with farmers' rights to seeds.

Priority 8

Commit to a socially just economy

Related paragraphs in the draft EP own initiative report: §3, §8, §9, §13

The F2F INI report must call on the Commission to **strengthen measures focusing on the rights, working and employment conditions and social protection of farm labourers and food sector workers** (including migrants and other seasonal workers), and to ensure coherence between policy areas on this issue.

- The social sustainability of our food system has been so far neglected. It is now imperative to take into account the negative impact our current food system has on social and labour rights, including the hidden impact on the global south, through the establishment of **mandatory due diligence** as a legal standard for food business operators and retailers' responsibility in purchasing practices.
- Many farm workers and fishworkers, in the EU and globally as a result of EU trade policy, **are subjected to** exploitation, poor wages, precarious work and inhumane working and housing conditions. The report must call for the respect and enforcement of collective labour agreements, national and EU laws and International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions; including through a new **"social conditionality"** in the CAP making subsidies conditional on respect for the applicable working and employment conditions, as stated in the European Parliament negotiating position on the CAP Regulations.
- Supporting the development and up-scaling of social and solidarity economy initiatives, such as Community Supported Agriculture and consumer co-operatives, **is important** to tackle **consolidation and concentration of power** in supply chains which have detrimental effects on labour conditions and distribution of value.
- The report must stress the need for a Just Transition towards food systems that are fair to workers, inclusive, democratically-controlled and secure universal access to quality food.

Priority 9 Step up for higher animal welfare

Related paragraphs in the draft EP own initiative report: Recital B, §4, §5, §10, §11, §18

In the EU, an estimated **9 billion** land farmed animals and up to 1.2 billion **farmed fish** are slaughtered each year, with the majority reared in poor conditions in intensive systems. This report must urge the EU to step up for **animal welfare through regulation, robust labelling, and ambitious targets in line with citizens' expectations.**

- The revision of animal welfare legislation is welcome. This revision should be wide and improve animal welfare legislation, including the need for comprehensive horizontal rules to protect animals in farming (incl. Increasing the protection of animals during transport, review of the general "farming Directive" 98/58, a ban on the use of cages following the success of the ECI "End the Cage Age"), combined with species-specific requirements for species not yet covered (e.g. fish, rabbit).
- The report must call on the Commission to develop a harmonised multi-tiered animal welfare labelling system clearly and concisely indicating the methods used for the production during the rearing, transport and slaughter and underpinned by science-based animal welfare indicators, including minimum EU standards and exceeding them. Products from minimum EU legislation up to premium levels (e.g. Organic) should be included under this label, including imported products. with farmers' rights to seeds.

Priority 10 Promote Global transition

Related paragraphs in the draft EP own initiative report: §26

Considering the considerable impacts of Europe's agricultural and food system outside its borders, the global dimension of the Farm to Fork Strategy is **too weak**. This report must expand its external dimension to **drive an effective and a much-needed just global transition towards inclusive and sustainable agri-food systems.**

- To ensure real impact, fair competition for EU producers and to abide by the principle of Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development, the environmental and social impacts of imported food products must be recognized and addressed. The EU should ensure that products imported to the EU fully meet EU regulations and standards (e.g. in the field of animal welfare, the use of pesticides and the fight against antimicrobial resistance). The EU should provide development assistance to support farmers from developing countries to meet those standards when they export to Europe.
- Trade policy should contribute to an economic model that improves people's life and the planet's well-being. All EU trade agreements must be brought in line with the objectives of the European Green Deal and include enforceable clauses on commitment to the Paris Agreement, "non-regression" on environmental, biodiversity and social democracy, and 'do no harm' principles.