



GREENPEACE



Ursula von der Leyen

European Commission President

Maroš Šefčovič

Executive Vice-President for the European Green Deal

Brussels, 13 October 2023

Joint letter on sustainable food systems and a strategic dialogue on the future of agriculture

Dear President, Dear Commissioner,

We, the undersigned representatives of four leading environmental organisations, are writing following the recent announcement of the Commission's launch of a 'strategic dialogue on the future of agriculture'.

As you stated in your State of the Union address, we must – and can – produce sufficient healthy and sustainable food for EU citizens while also protecting our planet. We also agree on the need to overcome the current polarisation of the political debate on food and farming.

We strongly believe, like hundreds of civil society [organisations](#) and [food systems experts](#), that the Farm to Fork Strategy and its cross-cutting food systems approach remain the best way to achieve these important political objectives. The Commission has repeatedly recognised the importance of such an approach. We are therefore alarmed by the apparent move away from the world-leading approach and ambition of the Farm to Fork Strategy and back to a narrow focus on agriculture, which would do huge disservice to European people, our environment, and our farmers.

In the current context of politically driven and polarising pushback against the all-important commitments made by your Commission under the EU Green Deal, it is absolutely key that the political debate and agenda around food policy remains geared towards achieving social, environmental and economic sustainability along the whole food value chain and involves all food system stakeholders in the search for solutions.

The legislative initiatives announced in the Farm to Fork Strategy and, in particular, the legislative Framework for Sustainable Food Systems, provide a solid basis for the transition to a sustainable food system, a transition which the Commission reiterated in its recent [Communication "Towards a more resilient, competitive and sustainable Europe"](#) is "a prerequisite to ensure future food security & resilience".

As such, work on these files cannot be delayed and should provide the frame of reference for stakeholder engagement and policymaking in all areas related to the food system.

While citizens continue to suffer from the negative health impacts of current diets and farmers, industry, and consumers alike see their business and lives increasingly disrupted by the precipitating effects of climate change and biodiversity degradation, EU action on food systems cannot lag.

We therefore call on you to ensure that the new strategic dialogue:

1. Does not delay the publication of proposals announced in the Farm to Fork Strategy, including the legislative framework on Sustainable Food Systems and the revision of animal welfare legislation, which must be brought forward urgently
2. Is coordinated and managed by the Secretariat General, with equal involvement of the Directorates General for Environment, Public Health and Food, Climate Action, and Agriculture
3. Keeps a clear focus on the transformation of the food system as a whole, not just looking at the agriculture sector in isolation, in full alignment with the transition process set forth by the Farm to Fork Strategy and the legislative initiatives announced in it
4. Is science-based and as such takes as starting point the scientific consensus on the need to transform the EU's food system to bring it within planetary boundaries
5. Is transparent and inclusive, involving all relevant stakeholders equally and meaningfully.
6. If it involves 'citizens panels', best practice should be followed in the design and implementation of the consultation process.

We stand ready to engage in an open, participatory, and inclusive dialogue on the necessary transformation of the EU's food system structured around the above building blocks, without which the credibility and legitimacy of the Strategic Dialogue would be seriously undermined. We look forward to the discussions with Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič and working with you and your team on the important dialogue and associated policy files to get the needed progress.

Your sincerely,

Patrick ten Brink, Secretary General, European Environmental Bureau

Ariel Brunner, Deputy Director, BirdLife Europe and Central Asia

Magda Stoczkiewicz, Programme Director, Greenpeace European Unit

Ester Asin, Director, WWF European Policy Office