

EU Farm to Fork Strategy - extracts re Environment and Biodiversity

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<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0381>

“Even though the EU’s transition to sustainable food systems has started in many areas, **food systems remain one of the key drivers of climate change and environmental degradation. There is an urgent need to reduce dependency on pesticides and antimicrobials, reduce excess fertilisation, increase organic farming, improve animal welfare, and reverse biodiversity loss.**”

The EU’s **goals are to reduce the environmental and climate footprint of the EU food system and strengthen its resilience, ensure food security in the face of climate change and biodiversity loss** and lead a global transition towards competitive sustainability from farm to fork and tapping into new opportunities.

This means:

- ensuring that the food chain, covering food production, transport, distribution, marketing and consumption, has a neutral or positive environmental impact,**

- preserving and restoring the land, freshwater and sea-based resources on which the food system depends; helping to mitigate climate change and adapting to its impacts;**

- protecting land, soil, water, air, plant and animal health and welfare; and reversing the loss of biodiversity;**

- ensuring food security, nutrition and public health – making sure that everyone has access to sufficient, nutritious, sustainable food that upholds high standards of safety and quality, plant health, and animal health and welfare, while meeting dietary needs and food preferences;**

- and preserving the affordability of food, while generating fairer economic returns in the supply chain, so that ultimately the most sustainable food also becomes the most affordable, fostering the competitiveness of the EU supply sector, promoting fair trade, creating new business opportunities, while ensuring integrity of the single market and occupational health and safety.**

The use of chemical pesticides in agriculture contributes to soil, water and air pollution, biodiversity loss and can harm non-target plants, insects, birds, mammals and amphibians.

The Commission has already established a Harmonised Risk Indicator to quantify the progress in reducing the risks linked to pesticides. This demonstrates a 20% decrease in risk from pesticide use in the past five years. The Commission will take **additional action to reduce the overall use and risk of chemical pesticides by 50% and the use of more hazardous pesticides by 50% by 2030.**

To pave the way to alternatives and maintain farmers’ incomes, the Commission will take a number of steps.

It will **revise the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive, enhance provisions on integrated pest management (IPM) and promote greater use of safe alternative ways of protecting harvests from pests and diseases.** IPM will encourage the use of alternative control techniques, such as crop rotation and mechanical weeding,

and will be one of the main tools in reducing the use of, and dependency on, chemical

pesticides in general, and the use of more hazardous pesticides in particular.

Agricultural practices that reduce the use of pesticides through the CAP will be of paramount importance and the Strategic Plans should reflect this transition and promote access to advice.

The Commission will also facilitate the placing on the market of pesticides containing biological active substances and reinforce the environmental risk assessment of pesticides.

It will act to reduce the length of the pesticide authorisation process by Member States. The Commission will also propose changes to the 2009 Regulation concerning statistics on pesticides to overcome data gaps and promote evidence-based policymaking.

The excess of nutrients (especially nitrogen and phosphorus) in the environment, stemming from excess use and the fact that not all nutrients used in agriculture are effectively absorbed by plants, is another major source of air, soil and water pollution and climate impacts.

It has reduced biodiversity in rivers, lakes, wetlands and seas.

The Commission will act to **reduce nutrient losses by at least 50%**, while ensuring that there is no deterioration in soil fertility.

This will **reduce the use of fertilisers by at least 20% by 2030.**

This will be achieved by implementing and enforcing the relevant environmental and climate legislation in full, by identifying with Member States the nutrient load reductions needed to achieve these goals, applying balanced fertilisation and sustainable nutrient management and by managing nitrogen and phosphorus better throughout their lifecycle.

The Commission will **develop with Member States an integrated nutrient management action plan to address nutrient pollution at source and increase the sustainability of the livestock sector.**

The Commission will also work with Member States to extend the application of precise fertilisation techniques and sustainable agricultural practices, notably in hotspot areas of intensive livestock farming and of recycling of organic waste into renewable fertilisers.

This will be done by means of measures which Member States will include in their CAP Strategic Plans such as the Farm Sustainability Tool for nutrient management, investments, advisory services and of EU space technologies (Copernicus, Galileo).

Agriculture is responsible for 10.3% of the EU's GHG emissions and nearly 70% of those come from the animal sector. They consist of non-CO2 GHG (methane and nitrous oxide).

In addition, **68% of the total agricultural land is used for animal production.** To help reduce the environmental and climate impact of animal production, avoid carbon leakage through imports and to support the ongoing transition towards more sustainable livestock farming, the Commission will facilitate the placing on the market of sustainable and innovative feed additives.

It will examine EU rules to reduce the dependency on critical feed materials (e.g. soya grown on deforested land) by fostering EU-grown plant proteins as well as **alternative feed materials such as insects**, marine feed stocks (e.g. algae) and by-products from the bio-economy (e.g. fish waste).

The market for organic food is set to continue growing and organic farming needs to be further promoted. It has a positive impact on biodiversity, it creates jobs and attracts young farmers. Consumers recognise its value. The legal framework supports the shift to this type of farming, but more needs to be done, and similar shifts need to take place in the oceans and inland waters.

In addition to CAP measures, such as eco-schemes, investments and advisory services, and the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) measures, the Commission will put forward an **Action Plan on organic farming**. This will help Member States stimulate both supply and demand for organic products. It will ensure consumer trust and boost demand through promotion campaigns and green public procurement.

It is clear that **the transition must be supported by a CAP that focuses on the Green Deal**. The new CAP, which the Commission proposed in June 2018, aims to **help farmers to improve their environmental and climate performance through a more results oriented model, better use of data and analysis, improved mandatory environmental standards, new voluntary measures and an increased focus on investments into green and digital technologies and practices**. It also aims to guarantee a decent income allowing them to provide for their families and withstand crises of all kinds.

The requirement to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of direct payments by capping and better targeting income support to farmers who need it and who deliver on the green ambition, rather than to entities and companies who merely own farm land, remains an essential element of the future CAP. The capacity of Member States to ensure this must be carefully assessed in the Strategic Plans and monitored throughout implementation.

The Commission's most recent analysis concludes that **the reform does indeed have the potential to drive forward the Green Deal, but that the key provisions of the proposals must be maintained in the negotiating process, and certain improvements and practical initiatives should be developed**.

The **new 'eco-schemes' will offer a major stream of funding to boost sustainable practices**, such as precision agriculture, agro-ecology (including organic farming), carbon farming and agroforestry.

Member States and the Commission will have to ensure that they are appropriately resourced and implemented in the Strategic Plans. The Commission will support the introduction of a minimum ring-fencing budget for eco-schemes.

The **Commission will also make recommendations to each Member State on the nine specific objectives of the CAP, before they formally submit the draft Strategic Plans. The Commission will pay particular attention to addressing the Green Deal targets, and those stemming from this strategy and the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030**. It will ask Member States to set explicit national values for those targets, taking into account their specific situation and the above

mentioned recommendations. Based on these values, the Member States will identify the necessary measures in their Strategic Plans.

Advisory services, data and knowledge sharing, and skills

Knowledge and advice are key to enabling all actors in the food system to become sustainable. Primary producers have a particular need for objective, tailored advisory services on sustainable management choices. The Commission will therefore promote effective Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS), involving all food chain actors. In their CAP Strategic Plans, **Member States will need to scale up support for AKIS and strengthen resources to develop and maintain appropriate advisory services needed to achieve the Green Deal objectives and targets.**

The Commission will propose legislation to **convert its Farm Accountancy Data Network into the Farm Sustainability Data Network with a view to also collect data on the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies' targets and other sustainability indicators.** The network will enable the benchmarking of farm performance against regional, national or sectoral averages.

Through tailored advisory services, it will provide feedback and guidance to farmers and link their experience to the European Innovation Partnership and research projects. This will improve the sustainability of participating farmers, including their incomes.

As part of the European data strategy, the common European agriculture data space will enhance the competitive sustainability of EU agriculture through the processing and analysis of production, land use, environmental and other data, allowing precise and tailored application of production approaches at farm level and the monitoring of performance of the sector, as well as supporting the carbon farming initiative.

The EU programmes Copernicus and European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODnet) will reduce the investment risks and facilitate sustainable practices in the fisheries and aquaculture sector.

EU Commission

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COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT,
THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE
COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

A Farm to Fork Strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system

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