



José Bové: "The EU should give people a taste for local food"

The EU should serve up a strategy to promote local and sustainable farming, according to Green MEP José Bové, who is a farmer in his native France. He has written a report in response to a Commission communication on how to promote agricultural products, which was adopted by the Parliament's agriculture committee on 18 September. We spoke with Mr Bové about how this could be achieved

What should the EU set out to achieve with its promotion of agricultural products?

It's important that we develop an agriculture that is both sustainable and local and that European consumers get an appetite for the produce of local farmers. Today there is a national and an international market, but there is also local farming, which provides a livelihood to millions of farmers who create unique quality products, but who need to be promoted more widely.

My report represents the Parliament's first undertaking on this topic. Now it's up to the Commission to come up with a plan. After that I hope we will be able to work out the promotion and the budget.

The Commission communications talks about promoting the tastes of Europe. How do you see this?

It's the combination of a farmer, his land and the product that creates different flavours. A cheese produced in Ardèche does not taste the same as a cheese produced in Romania. In Europe we should rediscover this diversity.

For years we have had to put up with mass-market products. But there is something else we should not forget about, namely health issues. If we have diversity instead of mass-market products, there will be more plants and animals resistant to different diseases. This means farmers won't have to resort to chemical antibiotics.

In your report you propose to reinforce the links between citizens and farmers? How should this be done?

The promotion should focus on local markets and anywhere where local products are being sold. There is already a lot of experience with this, it just needs to be promoted more and better. For example, in some towns there are shops that sell local produce that have become an alternative to supermarkets. Cutting out the middleman would allow farmers to have more control over the distribution chain and earn more.