

## EU 'farm to fork' strategy: State of play

The 'farm to fork' strategy is about building sustainable EU food systems, in line with the EU's Green Deal. Launched in May 2020, its elements are moving at different speeds, with much debate on its objectives and priorities. The EU institutions are helping to shape the various elements of the strategy.

### EU progress towards implementing the strategy

On 20 May 2020, the EU Commission adopted a [communication](#) on 'A farm to fork strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system', with priorities and challenges linked to each step in the food chain. The strategy [announced](#) both legislative and non-legislative initiatives, mostly listed in its [action plan](#).

The Commission has so far delivered on some 'farm to fork' strategy initiatives, including:

- the 2020 [recommendations](#) to EU countries on their common agricultural policy (CAP) strategic plans;
- the 2021 [contingency plan](#) to ensure food supply and food security in times of crisis;
- the EU [code of conduct](#) on responsible food business and marketing practices, in force as of July 2021;
- new rules on the facilitation of the marketing of plant protection products (pesticides) with [biological active substances](#) and the collection of [pesticide statistics](#) adopted in 2022;
- rules on the collection of [data on sustainable farming practices](#), adopted in 2023.

Other Commission initiatives, including a legislative framework for sustainable food systems ([FSFS](#), containing a [sustainability labelling framework](#)), announced for [2023](#), have not yet materialised. The timetable for some initiatives (for instance, 2021 for the [organic production](#) action plan and [better nutrient management](#) action plans) was set in the [EU biodiversity strategy](#). Other initiatives require multiple actions over a longer period. Examples of such initiatives include improving [producers' position](#) in the food chain, which involves implementing EU rules on [unfair trading practices](#) and the CAP rules on [agricultural markets](#).

The following tables list ongoing (Table 1) and pending (Table 2) 'farm to fork' strategy initiatives.

Table 1 – Ongoing 'farm to fork' strategy initiatives

Initiative	State of play
Plant protection products (PPPs)	In 2022, the Commission put forward a <a href="#">proposal</a> on the sustainable use of PPPs, but Parliament <a href="#">rejected</a> it, and the Commission <a href="#">announced</a> its withdrawal in 2024.
Corporate sustainability	In 2022, the Commission <a href="#">proposed a directive</a> on corporate sustainability due diligence. Parliament and the Council agreed a <a href="#">provisional text</a> that awaits formal adoption.
Carbon farming	In 2022, the Commission adopted a <a href="#">proposal</a> on rules on certifying carbon removals on farms, which is currently being negotiated by Parliament and the Council in trilogues.
New genomic techniques (NGTs)	The Commission put forward a <a href="#">proposal</a> on the NGTs in 2023. Parliament <a href="#">adopted</a> its position in 2024 and the Council has yet to find a common position.
Animal welfare	In 2023, the Commission put forward a <a href="#">legislative proposal</a> on the welfare of animals during transport, but not on other animal welfare aspects (see Table 2).
Marketing standards	In 2024, Parliament and Council reached a <a href="#">provisional agreement</a> on the proposal on marketing standards for certain <a href="#">agricultural products</a> (the 'breakfast directives'), and are also working on the 2023 proposals on <a href="#">plant</a> and <a href="#">forest</a> reproductive material.
Food waste	In 2023, the Commission proposed legally binding targets to reduce <a href="#">food waste</a> , a lot less ambitious than in the strategy. The co-legislators are currently discussing it.



Table 2 – Pending 'farm to fork' strategy initiatives

Initiative	State of play
Sustainable food systems	Subject of a <a href="#">public consultation</a> in 2022 and announced in the Commission work programme for <a href="#">2023</a> , this leading farm-to-fork initiative has yet to be put forward.
Food labelling	No proposals have been submitted for the <a href="#">revised rules</a> on front-of-pack nutrition labelling, origin indication for certain products, and 'use by' and 'best before'-date marking, <a href="#">announced</a> for 2022. Similarly, the proposal on the <a href="#">sustainability labelling</a> for food products, announced for 2024, has yet to be submitted.
Animal welfare aspects	The announced legislative proposals on three aspects of animal welfare – <a href="#">keeping of animals</a> , <a href="#">slaughter</a> and <a href="#">labelling of animal products</a> – have not yet been submitted.
Nutrient profiles	<a href="#">Legislation</a> on nutrient thresholds (announced for 2022) has not yet been put forward.
Food contact materials	New rules on <a href="#">recycled plastic</a> intended to come into contact with food entered into force in 2022, but the overhaul of EU <a href="#">food contact material</a> laws, planned for 2023, is still awaited.
Promotion policy	Following an <a href="#">evaluation</a> , the Commission said it aimed to enhance the role of EU <a href="#">promotion campaigns for agri-food products</a> in sustainable production and consumption in 2022. The <a href="#">proposal</a> has yet to be published.
Marketing standards	The proposal on marketing standards for <a href="#">fish and seafood products</a> is still outstanding.
Food procurement and school scheme	The Commission announced it would propose minimum criteria for <a href="#">sustainable public procurement of food</a> in 2023, but has not yet done so. The <a href="#">review</a> of the legal framework for the <a href="#">EU school scheme</a> is now expected by the end of March 2024.
Feed additives	Current feed additives rules were expected to be <a href="#">revised</a> in 2021. The revision was initially postponed for 2023 and is now not expected to take place before the <a href="#">end of 2024</a> .

## The debate around the strategy

Generally greeted as a long-awaited move towards a more sustainable [food system](#), the 'farm to fork' strategy nevertheless came under criticism as it was not accompanied by an impact assessment, even though [various studies](#) warned that some of the elements risked having a negative effect on agricultural production. The Commission assured that impact assessments would be available for individual initiatives. In the wake of the [pandemic](#) and [Russia's war on Ukraine](#), a debate has emerged around whether the sustainability goals harm or improve food security. In January 2024, the European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change [criticised](#) the Commission's failure to deliver some of the initiatives. The Board considered that for agricultural emissions to decrease, more adequate financial incentives for farmers are needed. Currently, none of the remaining initiatives are included in the Commission's [tentative agenda](#).

## What's next?

The debate on the sustainability of the EU's farming and food system is now shifting to the [strategic dialogue](#) on the future of EU agriculture, launched by the Commission in January 2024. Meetings planned with a wide range of stakeholders as part of this dialogue will explore ways to ensure a fair standard of living for the farmers, while keeping within climate targets, using technological innovation and promoting a 'thriving future' for the EU food system.

*This is an update of an 'at a glance' note first published in October 2021.*

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