

New farm to fork strategy must make our food systems more sustainable, say MEPs

- More land for organic farming
- Binding reduction targets for pesticide use needed
- Animal welfare standards to be reviewed
- Farmers must earn a fair share of the profit of sustainably produced food

The EU food systems must reduce environmental and climate footprints while continuing to ensure food security, healthy diets and provide a fair income for farmers.

MEPs on the Environment, Public Health & Food Safety and Agriculture Committees adopted the report on a Farm to Fork Strategy on Friday by 94 votes to 20 and 10 abstentions.

They welcome the [strategy](#), presented by the Commission in May 2020, which they believe is important to offer fair, animal friendly, healthy, high quality and affordable diets to European consumers. There is a need for enhanced sustainability in all stages of the food chain and everyone from farmer to consumer has a role to play, they say. A shift in consumption towards more healthy diets is also needed. Overconsumption of meat and highly processed foods with high salt, sugar and fat content must be addressed.

Pesticides and protection of pollinators

Agriculture and environment MEPs believe that while the EU has one of the most stringent systems in the world, the approval process of pesticides has to be improved and implementation better monitored. Binding reduction targets for pesticide use is also needed. Member states should implement such targets in the reviews of their [CAP](#) Strategic Plans. The Commission should draft a plan for minimising synthetic inputs in agriculture and member states should carry out systematic monitoring of biodiversity on farmland, including pollinators. MEPs also [recently](#) demanded binding targets on biodiversity.

MEPs reiterate Parliament's call on the Commission to ensure that the revision of the Bee Guidance results in protection of bees to the level laid down in the EFSA bee guidance from 2013 in line with its [objection](#) of 23 October 2019.

Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions

MEPs say that agriculture and forestry play an important role in addressing climate change. GHG emissions must be reduced and natural carbon sinks improved. They believe the [“Fit for 55 in 2030 package”](#) must regulate and set ambitious targets for emissions from agriculture and related land use.

While MEPs see agro-forestry as a tool to reduce pressure on natural forests, they stress the importance of robust and strict criteria for biomass-based renewable energy production and calls on the Commission to bring forward science-based criteria as part of the review of the Renewable Energy Directive.

Animal welfare

According to MEPs, there is a need for common, science-based animal welfare indicators to ensure a stronger harmonisation in the EU. They also agree on the need for the Commission to evaluate the current EU legislation to see if changes are needed. They reiterate their call on the Commission to put forward a proposal to phase-out the use of cages in EU animal farming - possibly by 2027.

They add that, unless animal production standards in non-EU countries are aligned with those of the EU, imports of animal products from these countries should not be allowed.

Organic farming

MEPs agree that organic farming will be an important part of the EU's path towards more sustainable food systems and support the ambition of increasing EU's organic land by 2030. The development and growth of the organic sector must be accompanied by market-driven and supply chain developments.

Support for farmers

Farmers have a lower income compared to other operators along the food supply chain and to the rest of the economy. MEPs therefore call on the Commission to reinforce efforts -including through the adaptation of competition rules - to strengthen their position in the food supply chain, so they can earn a fair share of the profit of sustainably produced food.

MEPs also believe that young farmers will have a key role in accomplishing the transition to sustainable farming.

Finally, MEPs believe that public procurement rules should also be modified to encourage sustainable food production, including of traditional and typical foods with geographical indications.

Quotes

Following the vote, [Herbert Dorfmann](#) (EPP, IT), rapporteur for the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, said: “Farmers can play a significant role in the fight against climate change but responsibility for a more sustainable agricultural must be a joint effort where also consumers have a key role to play. Farmers in Europe are already doing a great job so when we rightly ask them to further reduce their use of pesticides, fertilisers and antibiotics, we need to support them to ensure economic viability so production is not just moved outside the EU. Ensuring availability of food at reasonable prices must continue to be a priority.”

[Anja Hazekamp](#) (The Left, NL), rapporteur for the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, said: “The EU has a major say on how and where our food is produced. Current EU agri- and trade policies are driving environmentally harmful farming models and paving the way for imports of unsustainable products. This has to change. This report proposes concrete measures to bring our food system back within planetary boundaries, ensuring the wellbeing of people, animals and the environment. This should be done by stimulating local food production and by moving away from unsustainable farming models, such as intensive livestock farming and crop monocultures with high pesticide use. A clear call is made to no longer allow imports of animal products that do not meet EU-standards, such as malicious horsemeat, and halting the ratification of the EU-Mercosur agreement.

Next steps

The report on the Farm to Fork strategy is expected to be debated and voted during one of the plenary sessions in October.

Further information

[Link to draft report, opinions and amendments](#)

[Compromise amendments \(all adopted\)](#)

[EP research: “‘Farm to Fork’ strategy: Striving for healthy and sustainable food”](#)

[European Commission: “Farm to Fork strategy draft action plan” \(20.05.2020\)](#)

[Press release: Parliament supports European Green Deal and pushes for even higher ambitions \(15.01.2020\)](#)

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