

Greenpeace EU briefing – 10 March 2020

Food for a healthier life and planet

Greenpeace priorities for the EU's Farm to Fork Strategy

Industrial food systems are breaching the planet's environmental boundaries, driving diet-related diseases and failing to deliver decent livelihoods for farmers, in the EU and beyond.

There is growing scientific consensus on the need to reduce the excessive consumption and production of meat, dairy and eggs, supported by vast amounts of research – including from the [IPCC](#), the [EAT-Lancet commission](#) and the [RISE foundation](#).

Animal farming in the EU uses roughly [two thirds of agricultural land](#) in Europe and much of it depends on large-scale production and import of feed, such as soy, which is driving forest destruction, human rights abuses and [aggressive pesticide use](#). Industrial animal farming is a huge contributor to the EU's greenhouse gas emissions and is the main source of nitrogen pollution. An increasing majority of EU **crop production** heavily relies on monocultures pumped with synthetic pesticides and fertilisers – destabilising ecosystems while locking farmers into a costly relationship with the corporations that sell these seeds and chemicals.

Even when Europeans want to buy more organic, or to eat less meat, or avoid chemical residues in their food, **policies and subsidies make unsustainable choices cheaper** and more accessible in many places.

EU policies, and in particular the **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)**, favour large-scale industrial farming which is detrimental to nature, climate and our health. The CAP has failed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, pollution, and the use of pesticides and fertilisers.

The upcoming Farm to Fork Strategy is an opportunity to set a new direction for European food systems. It must aim for environmentally sustainable production and consumption based on less and better meat and dairy products, and plenty of healthy, seasonal fruits and vegetables.

Public policies – from farming subsidies to marketing rules – play a big role in directing consumer choices and an even bigger role in shaping farming practices. Greenpeace is asking the European Commission to **propose legislation to shift European farming and diets** away from overproduction and overconsumption of meat and dairy. To achieve this, we are asking for legally binding reduction targets, backed up by EU laws.

Greenpeace is calling on the European Commission to:

- **Formally acknowledge the detrimental impacts of the current levels of consumption and production of meat, dairy and eggs** in the EU, as shown by overwhelming scientific evidence.
- Set binding targets to **reduce EU's meat and dairy consumption at least 70% by 2030 and 80% by 2050** compared to current levels.
- Assess and put forward a comprehensive set of **measures to encourage consumption towards of less meat and dairy, and more plant-rich diets**, and a shift to ecologically produced meat including:
 - public procurement policies
 - new rules on marketing and advertising of meat, dairy and eggs
 - European dietary guidelines
 - the removal of perverse incentives for animal farming and meat and dairy consumption
 - introduction of fairer pricing of meat, dairy and eggs – that account for the true cost to the environment (see examples from [Germany](#) and [the Netherlands](#))
- Set a legally binding **maximum livestock density limits** – a maximum number of animals a farm can have per hectare – to be respected by all farms in the EU.
- Set binding targets to reduce the quantity of **synthetic pesticides** by 50% by 2025 and by 80% by 2030. The objective should be a full phase-out by 2035.
- Strengthen the [EU directive](#) on the use of pesticides and set **legal requirements** for the application of [Integrated Pest Management \(IPM\) principles](#), including criteria for what needs to be done (e.g. long crop rotations, cover crops, buffer strips and hedges) and what cannot be done (e.g. seed coating, calendar spraying, use of herbicide-tolerant crops).
- Strengthen **animal welfare rules** to respect the needs and rights of farm animals and ensure strict enforcement of the existing and future EU regulations on animal welfare.

Needless to say, the EU cannot lower its existing food standards, including its genetic engineering laws. These standards must be fully applied also to genome-edited organisms, as [ruled by the European Court of Justice](#).

It's time for the EU to shift to a sustainable farming and food system that works with nature, not against it.

The impacts of animal farming in numbers

Over **70%** of all EU agricultural land is used to feed livestock

Between **€28-32 billion** of CAP subsidies go to livestock farms or farms producing feed for animals every year

The animal farming sector accounts for **12-17%** of the EU's total greenhouse gas emissions.

Between **81-87%** of EU agricultural ammonia air pollution and nitrogen water pollution are caused by livestock farming.

The average per capita consumption of meat in the EU is **twice the global average** and three times the global average consumption of dairy products – and way higher than recommended by the World Health Organization.

Dietary risk from unhealthy food accounted for **10 million deaths** globally in 2016, while tobacco risk was responsible for 7 million deaths in the same year.

All EU figures for the EU-28. Sources: [Greenpeace 2019, Feeding the Problem](#), [PBL 2011, The Protein Puzzle](#), [Westhoek et al. 2015, Nitrogen on the Table](#), [Bellarby et al. 2012, Livestock greenhouse gas emissions and mitigation potential in Europe](#), [Greenpeace livestock vision towards 2050](#)

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