

FEEDING FEARS



What Europe's policy-makers need to do to truly achieve food security

The Kremlin's brutal invasion of Ukraine is inflicting misery on so many, as they are killed, injured or forced to flee their homes. The invasion will have even further-reaching impacts too, as we see that global and European food and farming systems are out of balance and far from resilient to external shocks. It is clearer than ever that we must fundamentally reconsider the way in which we produce, consume and trade agricultural products. The urgent need to rethink our food and farming systems is of course not new, as it was already evident when the Covid-19 pandemic hit, and the impacts of the combined climate and biodiversity crises – partly driven by the current food system – became apparent.

The recent disruption of Russian and Ukrainian exports of cereals, oilseeds, fertilisers and fossil gas (used in the manufacturing of synthetic fertilisers that underpin modern industrial farming) makes it clear that Europe's farming sector is dangerously dependent on external inputs and imports. In order to maintain its over-production and exports of animal products, Europe relies on cereal and oilseed imports from Russia and Ukraine,¹ on Russian fossil gas and phosphate, and potash from Belarus. Europe, now more than ever, must transform its food and farming system and shift to ecological, local, seasonal and plant-based diets, making the system sustainable and resilient.

The rich and powerful industrial farm lobby, and its influential representatives in national and EU institutions, are using the war in Ukraine and the international disruption it has caused to feed unfounded fears about worsening food insecurity in Europe. Their objective is to put on hold, and ultimately dismantle,

the health, climate and environmental targets and objectives enshrined in the European Green Deal and the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies.

The fallout of the crisis in Ukraine makes it clear that business-as-usual farming is not an option. It is time to speed up the necessary transformation of the food system by ending the current unsustainable use of natural resources, phasing out the dependency on external inputs, reducing food waste, substantially decreasing production and consumption of animal products and minimising the use of land for bioenergy. Failing to transform the system and ensure long-term sustainability will also hurt farmers – who are the first victims of higher and more volatile input costs, on top of facing the consequences of climate breakdown and biodiversity collapse.

THE PRESENT CRISIS MAKES IT CLEAR THAT BUSINESS-AS-USUAL FARMING IS NOT AN OPTION.

1. According to the EU Commission draft 'Delegated Regulation providing for exceptional adjustments aid to producers in the agricultural sector', Ukraine alone supplies 52% of EU maize imports, 19% of soft wheat, 23% of vegetable oils and 22% of oilseeds.

In light of the above **Greenpeace** is putting forward the following demands:

1 SUPPORT THE WORST AFFECTED PEOPLE IMMEDIATELY

A serious humanitarian crisis is unfolding in Ukraine, and its implications are being felt across the world. European countries must do everything in their power to guarantee that everyone's right to food is fulfilled, and to halt any possible food price rises related to the shortage of goods resulting from the war in Ukraine.

2 INVEST IN FOOD, NOT FEED

Over 60% of European cropland is dedicated to feeding animals, many of which are kept in industrial-scale factory farms. In addition, 62% of cereals used in Europe² are dedicated to feed animals, while only 22% is dedicated to human consumption. Much of the land currently devoted to animal feed production could be used to produce food for people, including in countries that are vulnerable to food insecurity.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS NEEDED:

- Deploy humanitarian aid to people directly affected by the conflict, within Ukraine as well as in third countries hit by the disruption of the Russian and Ukrainian agricultural markets, in particular in North Africa, Middle East and some Asian countries;
- Ensure that humanitarian aid activities strengthen the resilience of the affected food systems and local communities' food sovereignty;
- Put in place mechanisms that prevent food price spikes, in particular by preventing and addressing financial speculation, which could inflate food prices, as well as by avoiding any protectionist trade measures, which would exacerbate food shortage risks and spikes in food prices.

ACTIONS TO PROMOTE LONG-TERM RESILIENCE:

- Redesign current trade rules and trade agreements, currently causing high social and environmental costs for people and the planet, in a way that supports sustainable living and resilient food supply chains.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS NEEDED:

- EU governments should immediately divert part of the grain and farmland currently destined for animal feed to food production. This would mean starting by halting the renewal of poultry and pigs;
- Setting up an immediate moratorium on any new factory farm or enlargement of existing ones;
- EU crisis funds should be used to help farmers face immediate challenges and to transition away from the current unsustainable production model, rather than entrenching the current overproduction of meat and milk.

ACTIONS TO PROMOTE LONG-TERM RESILIENCE:

- Set European targets for a 70% reduction of livestock production by 2030, and 80% by 2050, compared to current levels, in line with the scientific evidence on the health, environmental and climate impacts of current production levels;
- Introduce financial schemes to reward farmers for cutting herd numbers, in particular for shifting from large-scale operations to extensive, grass-based farming;
- Mobilise financial investments to encourage farmers to transition towards the ecological production of fruits and vegetables.

² European Commission, estimated cereal use in the EU in 2020-2021 <https://circabc.europa.eu/sd/a/92653d37-7fff-40c1-8d5e-b6bb3625c04a/EU%20cereals%20market.pdf>

3 PUT FEWER ANIMAL PRODUCTS AND MORE VEGGIES ON OUR PLATES

Europeans consume twice as much meat as the global average, requiring vast amounts of farmland and imported feed. And, while the agribusiness industry is using food security fears to promote increased production, there is already enough food available to feed everyone; food insecurity is a problem of access, not quantity. Europe needs a comprehensive set of measures to shift consumption to more plant-rich diets, with a transition to ecologically-produced animal products.

4 CUT CHEMICAL FERTILISERS

The current conflict in Ukraine clearly shows that Europe is dangerously reliant on imports of fertilisers (phosphate and potash) as well as on fossil gas for the production of nitrogen fertilisers, which are often controlled by a handful of multinational corporations or authoritarian governments. The intensive use of synthetic fertilisers not only leads to high greenhouse gas emissions and pollutes the natural environment, but also leaves farmers vulnerable to price increases, driving up the cost of food and leading to food insecurity in lower-income nations.



IMMEDIATE ACTIONS NEEDED:

- Make fruits and vegetables cheaper for consumers by reducing the VAT on these products;
- Reduce the number of animal-based meals served in public and private canteens and increase instead the availability of plant based alternatives;
- Launch promotional campaigns and provide immediate incentives for citizens to reduce their meat consumption.



ACTIONS TO PROMOTE LONG-TERM RESILIENCE:

- Adopt consumption reduction targets for meat and dairy products of at least 70% by 2030 and 80% by 2050 compared to current levels, in line with healthy dietary requirements;
- Introduce dietary guidelines at national and European level, encouraging a shift in diets towards plant-based alternatives;
- End the use of public funds for the promotion of meat and dairy products, and instead support the ecological production of fruits, vegetables and pulses;
- Introduce advertising restrictions and regulations limiting the marketing of meat products in line with other categories like tobacco, junk food and alcohol to curb unhealthy overconsumption of meat and other animal products;
- Adopt labelling systems that provide consumers with clear and reliable information on the health, nutritional and environmental impacts of any food product on the market.



IMMEDIATE ACTIONS NEEDED:

- EU governments must phase out imports, production, trade and investment in gas and related infrastructure from Russian fossil fuel companies, together with other fossil fuels.



ACTIONS TO PROMOTE LONG-TERM RESILIENCE:

- EU countries must commit to reducing their dependence on synthetic fertilisers through specific action plans and enhance the production of organic fertilisers, in this way supporting the transition to agro-ecological practices with a lower dependence on fertilisers.

5 STOP BURNING FOOD FOR FUEL

The EU uses vast expanses of farmland to produce food and feed crops that are burned as energy. Twelve percent of cereals like wheat or maize, which are mostly used to feed animals (respectively 40% and 80%), goes to energy and industry. More than half of most vegetable oils, such as rapeseed oil, used in the EU is turned into biodiesel for cars. Germany alone uses more than a million hectares of farmland to grow maize for biogas. Wasting food as fuel was never good for the climate, nature, or for global food security – and in the current crisis they are making price increases and food shortages even worse.

6 STOP WASTING FOOD

In the EU, 88 million tonnes of food waste are generated every year. While millions of euro of public funding are used through the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) to incentivise the production of food and feed, a big part of this goes directly to waste. There are many causes of food waste, but overproduction is a key piece of this damaging equation. By reducing food waste, the EU could increase food sovereignty, rather than blindly boosting production levels, often at the expense of the climate and the environment.



IMMEDIATE ACTIONS NEEDED:

- Ban the use of food and feed crops for any forms of bioenergy and put all subsidies and incentives for it (e.g. blending obligations) on hold.



ACTIONS TO PROMOTE LONG-TERM RESILIENCE:

- Review the EU's renewable energy directive to stop counting crop-based biofuels and biogas, including from oilseed rape, sunflower and maize, towards the EU's renewable energy targets.



IMMEDIATE ACTIONS NEEDED:

- The EU must put forward binding targets and the necessary measures to commit to a 50% reduction by 2030 of all food waste from farm to fork.

7 DON'T FALL FOR FALSE SOLUTIONS

There have already been too many ill-advised knee-jerk reactions to the professed impacts of the war in Ukraine on the food sector. Farm industry lobbyists and policy-makers have already petitioned to put the European Green Deal on hold, expand intensive farming to lands currently set aside for nature, and relax the EU's rules on the use of GMOs and pesticides. This is despite the fact that it is clear that industrial farming, dependent on extensive land use beyond the EU's borders and a handful of giant corporations, isn't the way to resilience.



IMMEDIATE ACTIONS NEEDED:

- Don't roll back the meagre commitments that have already been made to increase the sustainability of European agriculture, but rather get ready to speed up the urgently needed transition.



ACTIONS TO PROMOTE LONG-TERM RESILIENCE:

- Gear up efforts to cut EU farming's dependency on toxic chemicals and set binding targets to reduce the quantity of synthetic pesticides by 50% by 2025 and by 80% by 2030, including a ban on glyphosate-based herbicides;
- Commit to a full phase-out of synthetic pesticides use by 2035;
- Make sure that GMOs produced with new techniques are subject to the same regulations as older GMOs, in line with the ruling of the European Court of Justice;
- Do not weaken any of the (already flawed) environmental provisions enshrined in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

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