

Commission Communication – EU Farm to Fork Strategy

The Farm to Fork strategy is at the heart of the European Commission's Green Deal, which sets out the path to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by the year 2050. The strategy aims to make EU food systems fairer, healthier, and environmentally friendly. This is grounded in the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as the EU's own commitment towards fostering a just transition towards a climate-neutral economy.

Some of the main issues identified within the strategy include mitigating the environmental impact of food production, reducing packaging and food waste levels, and improving consumer knowledge on nutritional information. This is expected to culminate in proposals and policy revisions concerning nutrient levels, labelling, and food waste reduction targets, amongst others.

This strategy is also being framed in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which highlights the increasing importance of robust and resilient food systems which can offer a secure supply of food at an affordable price for consumers.

Building the food chain that works for consumers, producers, the climate, and the environment

Stimulating sustainable food processing, wholesale, retail, hospitality, and food services practices

The Farm to Fork strategy recognises that food processors, wholesalers, retailers and hospitality businesses have a large role to play in reducing the environmental impact of food and improving the dietary choices of EU citizens. The strategy includes several proposals and objectives which aim to push the EU food industry towards this sustainable path:

- Development of an EU code of conduct for responsible business and marketing practices, with the objective of increasing the availability of sustainable and affordable food options.
- Commitments from business on reformulating food products in line with guidelines for healthy and sustainable diets and to reduce packaging and their environmental footprint more generally, among other objectives.
- Improve the corporate governance framework, including a requirement for businesses in the food industry to integrate sustainability into their corporate strategies.
- Restrict the promotion of foods high in fat, sugars, and salt to facilitate the shift towards healthier diets.
- Scaling-up and promotion of circular business models especially for SMES, such as making use of food waste.
- Revision of food contact materials legislation to improve food safety while supporting the use of sustainable packaging, reducing food waste, and promoting reusable or recyclable materials.

- Revision of marketing standards to provide for supply of sustainable agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture products and reinforce the role of sustainability criteria.

Ensuring sustainable food production

The Farm to Fork strategy involves a comprehensive effort to improve the sustainability of Europe's food system, involving all actors. In this respect, significant emphasis is placed on the role of food producers (i.e. farmers). Some actions proposed by the strategy are the following:

- Promote and financially support new green business models by farmers, such as carbon sequestration to remove CO₂ from the atmosphere.
- Tapping the circular bio-based economy, including the production and use of biofertilisers, as well as biogas as a form of renewable energy.
- Reduce the use of polluting and hazardous pesticides by 50% by 2030.
- Reduce Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions linked to livestock farming by supporting more sustainable practices, sustainable feed, and promoting EU-grown plant proteins.
- Promote organic farming as an activity which has a positive environmental impact, adds value, and creates jobs.
- Shift towards sustainable fish and seafood production, including financial support for sustainable seafood farming.
- Clarifying competition rules for collective initiatives that promote sustainability in supply chains.

Ensuring food security

The COVID-19 pandemic, as well as annual natural occurrences (e.g. floods) have shed light on how crises may affect the availability and affordability of food in Europe. While food levels in Europe have remained sufficient, the pandemic has created disruptions along the food supply chain in terms of logistics, labour supply, consumer patterns and so on. In the Farm2Fork strategy, the Commission proposes the following:

- Ensuring that the principles within the European Pillar of Social Rights are respected, especially with regards to critical workers such as those in the agri-food business.
- Step-up the EU coordination and response to crises affecting food systems and developing a contingency plan to ensure food supply.

Promoting sustainable food consumption and facilitating the shift to healthy, sustainable diets

Through this strategy, the European Commission seeks to reduce obesity rates in Europe by shifting diets away from red and processed meats towards fruit and vegetables. This not only promises to make EU citizens healthier but would also reduce the environmental impact of our food system.

Reducing food loss and waste

The European Commission has repeatedly stated that reducing food loss and waste is key not only in terms of reducing food's environmental impact, but also due to the social and economic implications that food waste presents. In this respect, the EU has committed itself to the UN target of reducing per capita food waste by half by 2030.

Enabling the transition

Research, innovation, technology, and investments

The European Commission will be providing significant funding to help aid in this transition. through Horizon 2020 for innovative projects supporting R&I in food, bioeconomy, natural resources, agriculture, fisheries, aquaculture, environment, and the use of digital and nature-based solutions. Funding will also be channelled through the European Regional Development Fund.

Promoting the global transition

The European Commission recognises that a real transition towards a sustainable food system requires a concerted effort between the whole international community. The EU will push to develop alliances on this issue with its trading partners, with a view of also including commitments from third countries on aspects such as animal welfare and pesticide use in EU trade agreements. The Commission will also propose measures to reduce EU imports of food products which contribute towards deforestation and forest degradation, as well as unregulated or illegally caught fish.

Full text of the Commission Communication:

https://ec.europa.eu/food/sites/food/files/safety/docs/f2f_action-plan_2020_strategyinfo_en.pdf

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