



The European Parliament,
Brussels
29 April 2020

To: Executive Vice President Timmermans
Cc: Commissioners Kyriakides, Wojciechowski and Sinkevičius

Re: Reducing industrial meat and dairy in the Farm to Fork strategy

Dear Executive Vice President, dear Commissioners,

We are writing to you concerning the imminent publication of the Commission's Farm to Fork Strategy. Considering the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, we think such a strategy is needed more than ever. The Farm to Fork strategy should be part of a Green recovery plan for Europe, to meet the challenge of ensuring that all Europeans can have a healthy and balanced diet, at a price that is affordable for them and properly rewards our farmers, and that is produced in a way that preserves nature and helps us to deal with the climate emergency.

However, we are concerned that the drafts we have seen do not address one of the largest problems our food system is currently posing for public health, nature protection, climate action, and thriving rural communities: the over-consumption of meat and dairy, and the related increasing industrialisation of their production.

This is an even greater concern now that the world is in the middle of a global pandemic caused by an animal-borne disease. An increased risk for such outbreaks has already firmly been [linked to the continuing destruction of natural habitats](#), as people are in greater contact with wild animals and the diseases they carry. Scientists have also [warned that intensive, industrialised animal farming](#) provides more chances for new diseases to develop and jump to humans.

The global food system is also responsible for up to [37% of greenhouse gas emissions](#) and is one of the biggest drivers of biodiversity loss, globally and in Europe, as has been repeatedly highlighted by the scientific advice from the [IPCC](#), the [EEA](#) and many others. Science has identified that the growing consumption of animal products, expanding conversion of land to feed livestock and direct emissions from animal farming are the main drivers of these adverse impacts of the food system. Animal farming accounts for [12-17% of the EU's](#) greenhouse gases.

Diets that are mostly plant-based, with a limited intake of meat and dairy, [are widely recommended](#) for the sake of public health, including prevention of cancer and diabetes. At the same time, more plant-based diets 'present major opportunities for adaptation and mitigation while generating significant co-benefits in terms of human health' [according to the IPCC](#).

The current industrial animal farming system does not work for small farmers or rural communities either. [Eurostat has shown](#) that 72% of European livestock products come from Europe's largest farms, while the total number of livestock farms fell by 2.9 million, nearly a third, between 2005 and 2013. The major trend in the European livestock sector is an ever-increasing concentration of meat and dairy production in fewer and larger farms.

As part of the Green Deal, the Farm to Fork strategy has an important role to play in the recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. Various EU policies and subsidies are currently supporting and shaping production and consumption of animal farming and products. The Common Agricultural Policy subsidises large industrial animal farmers, regulates animal welfare, promotes and advertises meat and dairy products. The Farm to Fork strategy presents a unique opportunity to start the transition towards truly sustainable food systems, including by reducing industrial animal farming, and its contribution to climate change, environmental pollution and mistreatment of animals.

We are calling on you to use the Farm to Fork Strategy as a chance to recognise the need to reduce the scale of unsustainable, industrial animal farming in Europe and to shift diets away from animal products towards more plant-based diets. To show political leadership and ambition we call on the Commission to recognise this explicitly, and not only to hide behind terms such as 'more sustainable diets'. We ask you to say it clearly: Europe consumes and produces too much meat and dairy, produces too much industrially, and we intend to reverse this trend and incentivise farmers to transition to new, more plant-based food systems.

Sincerely,

MEP Bas EICKHOUT, Greens/EFA
MEP Francisco GUERREIRO, Greens/EFA
MEP Tilly METZ, Greens/EFA
MEP Sirpa PIETIKÄINEN, EPP
MEP Michal WIEZIK, EPP
MEP Mohammed CHAHIM, S&D
MEP Sylwia SPUREK, S&D
MEP Katalin CSEH, Renew Europe
MEP Martin HOJSIK, Renew Europe
MEP Manuel BOMPARD, GUE/NGL
MEP María Eugenia RODRÍGUEZ PALOP, GUE/NGL
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