

Brussels, 14th April 2020

OPEN LETTER

To:

Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans
Commissioner Stella Kyriakides
Commissioner Janusz Wojciechowski
Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius

CC: Anne Bucher, Director-General of DG SANTE (Health & Food Safety); Wolfgang Burtscher, Director-General of DG AGRI (Agriculture & Rural Development); Daniel Calleja Crespo, Director-General of DG ENVI (Environment); to Mr Bernhard Friess acting Director General for DG MARE (Maritime Affairs and Fisheries)

Re: CSOs open letter on the importance and urgency of publishing the Farm to Fork strategy: no further delays, keep April 2020 as publication date.

Dear Executive Vice-President,
Dear Commissioners,

There has never been a more pertinent moment for the Commission to show that it is actively steering the EU towards a greener future, of which sustainable and resilient food systems are an essential part. The undersigned civil society and producers' organisations reiterate their support to ambitious Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies and, in line with the SAPEA report¹, highlight the urgency to act without any further delays. **The simultaneous publication of the two strategies would articulate a strong, united and coherent environmental, climate, public health and social agenda, setting a clear vision for the Common Agricultural Policy and the food system.**

The undersigned organisations have strongly welcomed the announcement of a Farm to Fork strategy as it has the potential to **build the foundations of a resilient, healthy, equitable, ecological and overall sustainable food system that is able to withstand future shocks, and create enabling food environments to advance healthy and sustainable diets for all.** In a [letter](#) dated 12 December 2019, civil society highlighted 7 key policy areas the Farm to Fork strategy should focus on in order to properly address the urgent challenges our food systems are facing. The undersigned organisations have also provided detailed recommendations via the public consultation closing on 20 March 2020, **stressing the urgency for the EU to act in light of the climate, biodiversity loss, social, global and public health crises we are facing.**

Covid-19 has strikingly brought to light some of the dysfunctions of our current globalised and unsustainable food systems, based on long and specialised chains, with a strong dependency on foreign and migrant workers in poor working conditions, while small-scale producers face difficulties in accessing local markets. In the spotlight are also the reduced resilience of people with pre-existing health conditions, including diet-related, to cope with infection; the link between the increased emergence of zoonoses and intensive animal farming; and the lack of regard for other species which has consequences worldwide. On the other hand, the exponential surge in local demand and alternative distribution channels prove the resilience of these food and farming models. **In light of the above, the Covid-19 crisis**

¹ SAPEA, Science Advice for Policy by European Academies. (2020). A sustainable food system for the European Union. Berlin: SAPEA. <https://doi.org/10.26356/sustainablefood>

significantly highlights the urgent need for a Common Food Policy that is forward-looking, precautionary, resilient, social and health orientated, with an ambitious Farm to Fork strategy.

As society emerges from this pandemic, the climate, human health, animal welfare, biodiversity loss and social crises will still be here, posing major collective challenges, alongside a new and deep economic crisis. Farmers, consumers and civil society are anxious about the many uncertainties that lie ahead. While emergency measures may be required today, these do not diminish, but rather support the need for a clear vision for the future of food, fisheries and farming.

We look to the European Commission to provide guidance and a clear perspective of the road forward, meeting citizens' expectations across Europe, by publishing the Farm to Fork strategy by end of April 2020.

Signatories:

