

RAISING THE AMBITION ON GLOBAL ASPECTS OF THE EU FARM TO FORK STRATEGY

Civil society recommendations, September 2020

The Farm to Fork Strategy includes a section on the external dimension entitled "Promoting the Global Transition". The attention for the external dimension is crucial not only because the challenges the Strategy is seeking to address are global (climate change, biodiversity loss, public health impacts, animal welfare, living income for farmers, etc.), and require concerted responses from the international community; but also because Europe's agricultural and food system has impacts outside Europe which need to be addressed. Some content in other sections of the Strategy too is relevant to third countries, even if it is not explicitly acknowledged. However, global issues are considered from a too narrow point of view and only very briefly, which does not well reflect the importance and impact of the EU's agriculture and food policy outside its borders.

While the proposed Strategy goes in the right direction by addressing some of the urgent challenges in global and European agriculture and food systems, it remains driven by an approach aimed at making European agribusiness competitive on global markets. This contradicts the intention to reduce Europe's climate footprint¹ and is at odds with growing initiatives and demand for healthy and diversified food accessible through shorter supply chains.² The Farm to Fork Strategy does not open the door to reviewing international trade relations to make food systems sustainable and fair, including by addressing increasing market concentration as well as the food systems externalities. Nor does the global dimension include concrete proposals to realize the Right to adequate Food, implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas, or address measures to improve the working conditions of farm workers globally and the income of small-scale farmers that are part of international food supply chains or ensure that the precautionary principle is included for all food safety requirements.

This brief aims to unpack these issues and highlights how the external dimension of the Farm to Fork Strategy could be expanded to drive an effective and a much-needed global just transition towards inclusive and sustainable agri-food systems.³ We call on the EU to strengthen its approach towards global issues as the Strategy is discussed and approved by the European Parliament and the Council,

¹ Imports of goods and services represent more than 20% of the EU own territorial CO₂ emissions (see EP Briefing, Economic assessment of Carbon Leakage and Carbon Border Adjustment, April 2020). The data is not specific to agri-food imports (or exports), but highlights the importance of looking at the climate impact of international trade in food and agriculture to inform decisions about whether or not to encourage an export-oriented European model of agriculture.

² European Parliament, Briefing: Short food supply chains and local food systems in the EU, 2016, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/586650/EPRS_BRI\(2016\)586650_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/586650/EPRS_BRI(2016)586650_EN.pdf); Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on Promoting short and alternative food supply chains in the EU <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C:2019:353:FULL&from=EN> A 2019 Eurobarometer survey shows that the most important factor for Europeans when buying food is where the food comes from (53%), https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/Eurobarometer2019_Food-safety-in-the-EU_Full-report.pdf

³ About a broadly shared CSO vision of sustainable agri-food systems in Europe, see https://www.foeeurope.org/sites/default/files/agriculture/2017/csos_common_statement_on_european_agricultural_policies.pdf and <http://www.ipes-food.org/pages/CommonFoodPolicy>

as well as in the subsequent implementation of the Strategy. The analysis and recommendations below are developed towards this end, covering the following seven areas for action outlined in the Farm to Fork Strategy:

- 1. Using international cooperation to build sustainable food systems in partner countries**
- 2. Using the EU trade policy to raise ambition on food and farming**
- 3. Legislative proposal to ensure that all goods placed on the EU market are free from deforestation and human rights violations**
- 4. Legislation to strengthen the position of farmers, their cooperatives and producer organisations in the food supply chain**
- 5. Zero-tolerance on unsustainable fishing**
- 6. The EU promoting a global transition to sustainable food systems in international space**
- 7. Legislative framework for sustainable food systems**

1. Using international cooperation to build sustainable food systems in partner countries

The Farm to Fork Strategy commits to focus international cooperation on food research and innovation, with particular reference to climate change adaptation and mitigation; agro-ecology; sustainable landscape management and land governance; resilience; inclusive and fair value chains; and prevention of and response to food crises.

Our organisations fully support all these areas of intervention, as well as the intention to integrate these priorities into the programming for the budget 2021-2027 (Multiannual Financial Framework, MFF), taking into consideration human rights, gender, and peace and security. We also appreciate the commitment to consider distinct challenges in different parts of the world. The explicit reference to agroecology is very important to support farmers who already engage or would wish to engage in the transition. However, we deeply regret the absence of any reference

to smallholder farmers and small-scale food producers, and the need for interventions to be led by and to be focused on them.

- *The EU should ensure to use international cooperation to build sustainable food systems in partner countries. For this, the budgeted amounts in this area need to be high enough to allow meaningful interventions in partner countries. Food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture is a priority sector for EU support in over 60 partner countries under the current MFF (2014-2020), with an envelope of over 8,8 billion euros. The EU should not only maintain a similar level of engagement under the MFF 2021-2027, but even go beyond as the impact of Covid-19 on hunger in the Global South is expected to be massive.⁴ Support needs to target smallholder women farmers and smallscale food producers in particular.*

⁴ Oxfam (2020), The hunger virus: how COVID-19 is fueling hunger in a hungry world <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/hunger-virus-how-covid-19-fuelling-hunger-hungry-world>; Action Aid (2020), Right to Food, Farmers' Rights & COVID-19. Policy priorities and a call to action <https://actionaid.org/publications/2020/right-food-farmers-rights-covid-19#downloads>.

2. Using the EU trade policy to raise ambition on food and farming



Women Farmers in Buzi. Recent flooding in Sofala province, Mozambique, affected more than 70,000 people and one year after the devastation of Cyclone Idai, once again destroyed harvests and homes, 2020. Credit: Daniel Jukes/ActionAid.

2.1. Challenging the export orientation of EU agricultural policies

The Farm to Fork Strategy does not include a commitment to avoid inconsistencies between the EU objectives under this new Strategy and the EU's international trade policy. As currently negotiated, free trade agreements primarily serve the interests of large-scale commodity production, which generally translates into industrial monoculture to the detriment of small and medium farmers and the agroecological transition and local processing and transformation. It is now urgent to explore ways for trade agreements and rules to better reinforce the transition towards more sustainable agriculture and food systems, and support – rather than harm – local supply chains that retain value for farmers, farm workers and other actors of local food chains in developing countries as well as in Europe. We also regret the lack of reference to the need for

gender-sensitive impact assessments of trade and investment deals, which should take place both before and after a deal has been implemented (ex-ante and ex-post). Impact assessments can contribute to reduce the risk of undermining local food systems and food procurement prioritising local farmers' production and traditional and indigenous communities' food products.

EU exports continue to undermine producers and processors in a range of sectors and regions in the developing world. For example, the EU has been dumping lower price dairy products onto the West African and Southern African markets causing harmful impacts on local producers.⁵ EU poultry exports are also undercutting the livelihoods of African producers. The trend is not limited to dairy and meat: EU exports of processed cereals, horticulture, beans and pulses is putting long term investment in structural development and

⁵ Due to an important increase in population and a booming middle class in West Africa, the demand for dairy products is rising. Under-supported local dairy farmers cannot meet the rise in demand and cannot compete with powerful foreign companies that have increased their imports in the region. Local governments do not invest enough in developing and facilitating local production and markets. European companies have taken advantage of this situation, mainly since the EU lifted the quotas in 2015. A bulk of the imports consists of skimmed, re-fattened, milk powder. Importing this lower quality product is up to 30% cheaper than that of full cream milk powder, and supply and storage of milk powder is relatively easy and costs very little. The "Mon lait est local" campaign, initiated by West African dairy farmers and civil society groups in 2018, has raised awareness on the issue and promotes locally produced dairy products and milk as there is a high need in supporting the development of local markets and move away from the dependency on imported products. See more at the campaign website: <http://monlaitestlocal.africa/?lang=en>

employment creation in Africa at risk.⁶ Import surges reflect developing countries' insufficient ability to invest in domestic food production to feed their growing urban population. They also create unfair competition between developing world producers and the subsidized farming systems in Europe with whom they are expected to compete.⁷

- *It is necessary to challenge the continuing expansion of trade volumes as the ultimate goal of EU trade policy: Trade policy should contribute to an economic model that improves people's life and the planet's well-being. To this extent, the EU funds for marketing EU agricultural and food products should be fully directed towards promoting short food supply chains and local farmers markets in support of local food systems in the EU rather than being used to promote EU agri-food products abroad. Any current promotion activities abroad must demonstrate that they have no adverse effect on EU small farmers nor on livelihoods of smallholders in developing countries, taking account of EU policy coherence for development commitments.*
- *The EU should add provisions that point to the EU's legal obligation to adhere to the precautionary principle including on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures to ensure highest protection for human health and the environment.*
- *The Farm to Fork Strategy should open the door to reviewing existing investment treaties and trade agreements to make sure they do not harm local food producers but rather strengthen short supply chains that retain value for farmers and farm workers in both Europe and in developing countries.*
- *In any amendments or new negotiation of a trade agreement the inclusion of ISDS provisions should be rejected, existing agreements with ISDS should be terminated ensuring that 'survival clauses' do not allow cases to be*

brought subsequently. The use of ISDS should be permanently restricted in all its forms.

- *The EU should revise its trade policy regarding intellectual property rights, investor protection (in particular in case of land deals) and public procurement imposed on partner countries to respect and promote the rights of their small-scale farmers and food producers, and the Right to Food of their population. This revision should be part of the implementation exercise of the global dimension of the F2F Strategy.*
- *The Strategy says that the EU will "integrate Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development in all its policies". This commitment should also apply to trade and investment policy and the EU should therefore set up an observatory to monitor and signal potential and actual negative impacts of EU food exports on small-scale food and agricultural producers in developing countries, and negative impacts of EU food imports on small-scale producers in Europe.*

2.2. Effective TSD Chapters

The Farm to Fork Strategy proposes to have **ambitious trade and sustainable development (TSD) chapters** in all EU bilateral trade agreements and to improve their implementation and enforcement with the appointment of a Chief Enforcement Officer in DG TRADE.

First, such TSD chapters already exist in all recent EU trade agreements⁸ but are not legally enforceable.⁹ Second, TSD chapters **do not address the adverse impacts of the agreement itself** on human rights and the environment (for example, certain provisions in trade agreements harm farmers' seed and land rights, or drive the expansion of monoculture harming forest-dependent peoples and can undermine the right to regulate of governments). The

⁶ Compilation by Dr Paul Goodison (www.epamonitoring.net) for ACT Alliance EU on evolution of trade and future issues in EU-agro-food sector and trade relations, presented at the GFFA - Global Forum for Food and Agriculture, on 16 January 2020, Berlin, Expert Panel Discussion 4 on Soy from Brazil, chicken scraps to Africa – which rules on sustainability and protection do multilateral and bilateral trade agreements with developing countries need?, organised by Bread for the World and German Forum on Environment and Development ([link](#)).

⁷ IPES-Food, Towards a Common Food Policy, http://www.ipes-food.org/_img/upload/files/CFP_FullReport.pdf

⁸ See repository of resources on EU trade and sustainable development issues at the website of the University of Warwick: <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/research/centres/chrp/governance/resources>.

⁹ Fern (2020) Pushing EU Trade in the Right Direction?, <https://www.fern.org/news-resources/pushing-eu-trade-in-the-right-direction-2143/>

chapters are therefore **not a sufficient response** to the many challenges related to the adverse impacts of trade and investment policies.¹⁰

Lead firms, usually based in wealthy countries including many EU member states, retain most of the value and wealth created in supply chains. Developing countries are stuck at the bottom of the value chain and often compete against each other for investment by keeping wages low and relaxing labour regulation.¹¹ In the agri-food sector in particular, increased market concentration and power imbalances are striking.¹²

- *The EU should integrate environmental and social objectives in a comprehensive and holistic manner across all trade agreement provisions, beyond TSD chapters, and ensure that no provisions in the agreement undermine the objectives and standards enshrined in the TSD chapter.*
- *The EU should ensure effective and gender-sensitive assessment of human rights and environmental impacts of trade agreements, both before and after a deal has been implemented (ex-ante and ex-post), with sufficient time built into the process to allow for a deal to be amended.*
- *The EU should strengthen the enforcement mechanism of the TSD chapters. Civil society from Europe and partner countries can play a meaningful and effective role in raising instances of human rights violations and environmental destruction.*
- *The EU should support decent working conditions and a living income for all farm workers across the supply chains by adopting a robust mandatory due diligence legislation and by ensuring that all products placed on the EU market are free from deforestation and human rights violations.*
- *Recommendations of civil society on priorities must be duly reflected in the annual action plans*

of the TSD chapters drafted by the Commission; and regular updates should be presented to the European Parliament. Implementation must be inclusive and transparent, and should not only be delegated to UN agencies, but also include farmer-led and civil society-led projects.

2.3. Obtaining commitments from third countries to meet European standards when they export agri-food products to the EU

The Farm to Fork Strategy says that the EU trade policy should contribute to obtain ambitious commitments from third countries on animal welfare, the use of pesticides¹³ and the fight against antimicrobial resistance. The Strategy further stresses that "imported products must continue to comply with relevant EU regulations and standards".

Unfortunately, EU rules do not apply to all imported goods (e.g. most animal welfare standards) and the Strategy, by insisting on the continuity of the existing approach and on "relevant" standards, does not commit to remedy this situation. The Strategy indicates, however, a need to tighten the rules regarding imports of products with pesticides prohibited in Europe. It also notes the coming into force of the new regulation on veterinary medicinal products, which will partly apply to imports (prohibition to use antibiotics to promote growth or increase yield, as well as antibiotics listed as essentials).

- *The EU should ensure that products imported to, and exported out of, the EU by trade partners fully respect EU standards in the field of animal welfare, the use of pesticides and the fight against antimicrobial resistance. Monitoring should be efficient to ensure compliance.*
- *The EU should provide development assistance to support farmers from*

¹⁰ UNCTAD (2017) The New Way of Addressing Gender Equality Issues in Trade Agreements: Is it a True Revolution?, https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/presspb2017d2_en.pdf; see also CONCORD, Women's Rights and Trade, Time for a Radical Shift, 2018, https://concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/CONCORD_Trade_Gender_2018_online.pdf; ActionAid (2018) Towards Gender-just Trade, https://www.actionaid.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/from_rhetoric_to_rights_towards_gender-just_trade_actionaid_policy_briefing.pdf

¹¹ CONCORD and WIDE+ (2018) Women's Rights and Trade. Time for a radical shift, https://concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/CONCORD_Trade_Gender_2018_online.pdf.

¹² CONCORD (2016) Sustainable Development. The stakes could not be higher, page 19: https://concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/SustainableDevelopment_publication_2016_web.pdf

¹³ This ambition should translate into prohibiting exports of pesticides banned in the EU. See Public Eye (2019) Highly hazardous profits; and <https://www.publiceye.ch/en/topics/pesticides/banned-pesticides-on-our-dinner-plates>

developing countries to meet those standards when they export to Europe.

The strategy also proposes to “determine the best way of setting minimum mandatory criteria for sustainable food procurement” to boost sustainable farming and healthy diets in institutional catering. This should be supported by provisions on public procurement in trade agreements that explicitly allow giving preference to local and seasonal (fresh)

products and ensuring foreign companies can't challenge such provisions under the investor-state dispute settlement mechanisms.

- *We therefore recommend amending trade agreements to support local sourcing and enhance policy space to build domestic agricultural production capacity and protection of local food markets, in Europe and in partner countries.*

3. Legislative proposal to ensure all products placed on the EU market are free from deforestation and human rights violations



Naume Mpofu and also with some of the women she trains in her community. The Zimbabwe Resilience Building Fund programme is training farmers to produce short season small grain varieties to ensure farmers have food in the face of droughts, 2020. Credit: Takaitei Bote/ActionAid.

The Farm to Fork Strategy announces this upcoming legislative proposal, which is a very positive step as Europe's consumption levels significantly contribute to deforestation worldwide. However, additional measures are needed to reduce the overall consumption of such products, animal feed being a case in point. The Farm to Fork Strategy recognises that “moving to a more plant-based diet with less red and processed meat and with more fruits and vegetables will reduce not only risks of life-threatening diseases, but also the environmental impact of the food system”. However, the only proposal to meet that challenge is “a review of the EU promotion programme for agricultural

products to support the most sustainable, carbon-efficient methods of livestock production”. This is utterly inadequate to make sure we consume less and better meat in Europe.

- *The EU should produce a dedicated action plan towards less and better consumption and production of meat, dairy and eggs in the EU, to shift away from industrial farming. This action plan should set binding targets and put forward a set of measures to reduce industrial animal production, support better animal farming, and create enabling food environments - a combination of surroundings, opportunities and conditions that influence*

people's food and beverage choices - for the uptake of more healthy, plant-rich diets.

- *The EU should develop strong legislation to ensure products placed on the EU market such as soy, palm oil, rubber, maize, beef, leather and cocoa are free from deforestation and human rights violations. The legislation should result in companies exercising due diligence such as risk assessment (continuously assess the forest and ecosystem risk in their supply chains and take action on risks and impacts identified) and ensure ongoing obligations of monitoring and duty of vigilance.*
- *A combination of measures, including bilateral agreements with producers' countries, such as Ivory Coast and Ghana for cocoa, could help ensure better prices are paid for sustainable products.*
- *Forests and forest outputs contribute to local livelihoods and food security in many tropical countries. It is therefore important that the EU continues to support policies that promote community-based forest management and equitable access of small forest holders to local, regional and global markets.*

The contribution of forests to the livelihoods of local forest users (i.e. indigenous, and local communities, chainsaw millers) is important. Harvesting timber in contravention of the law has thus major impacts on the livelihoods of indigenous and local people living in forests, for example through the loss of resources like fuel wood for cooking, medical plants and animal proteins, with women bearing a significant brunt of unlawful felling of trees. The governance and market failures which drive illegal logging are much the same as those that drive deforestation. The constraints to tackling deforestation are the same as those we face in tackling illegal logging: unclear and contested tenure of land and forests, lack of institutional capability, weak regulatory capacity, and corruption.

- *The FLEGT action plan requires multi-stakeholder processes that build a shared commitment; systems for monitoring, reporting and verification that are credible and can strengthen good governance. The EU's continued support to FLEGT should be part and parcel of any solution to promote a sustainable transition to just food systems through sustainable and equitable use of land and natural resources.*

4. Legislation to strengthen the position of farmers, their cooperatives and producer organisations in the food supply chain

We welcome the announcement of legislative initiatives in 2021-2022 to enhance cooperation of primary producers to support their position in the food chain. Indeed, the ability of the global food industry to drive down prices and conditions to align with the cheapest and least-regulated practices around the world has been facilitated by trade liberalisation and the failure to introduce effective supply chain governance. While the impacts differ in nature and severity, small-scale farmers and producers in developing countries suffer from the practices of highly-concentrated multinational agri-food industries with huge price-setting power. Their interests have been insufficiently defended.

- *The legislation should cover not only EU-based producers but also protect producers*

and farmers in developing countries when they work with European companies.

- *When clarifying competition rules for collective initiatives that promote sustainability in supply chains, the EU should make sure such initiatives actually translate in clearly substantiated sustainability benefits, and that there are no human rights or environmental standards violations along the value chain.*

The current focus of EU competition law on consumer welfare draws attention away from the impacts of concentration on production and processing activities, as well as environmental or public health impacts. Whether a farmer has been paid fairly is currently deemed to have little impact on the (economic) welfare of consumers. In this

context, not a single agri-food merger has been blocked despite unprecedented consolidation across the sector over recent years, with major consequences for farmers' autonomy and livelihoods¹⁴, including in developing countries.

- *EU competition law and policy should play a stronger role in supporting the transformation of our food system, taking into account impacts of concentration on production and processing activities, public health and the environment.*

5. Zero tolerance on unsustainable fishing

Wild caught fisheries and aquaculture is a key driver of biodiversity loss¹⁵, but seafood production is almost completely ignored in the Farm to Fork Strategy.

- *The EU fishing industry and external fleet need to transit towards low-impact fisheries by ending overfishing, banning destructive fishing practices, and eliminating bycatch of sensitive species. Comprehensive monitoring and control are needed.*
- *All aquaculture must refrain from marine-derived feed ingredients, in particular stemming from fishmeal factories in West Africa to the detriment of livelihoods of women and coastal communities.¹⁶ EU fish consumption must decrease and more 'quality*

fish' consumption from the EU's own waters must be privileged.

The broader international dimension of Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) is not addressed in the F2F, but fishery is part of a sustainable food system.

- *The future EU Fisheries Fund (EMFF) should not support measures that contribute to maintain overcapacity and overfishing, including by EU fleet fishing in third countries' waters.*
- *EU funds spent under fishing agreements should be used exclusively for supporting the establishment of a transparent, environmentally, and socially sustainable fisheries policy in third countries, with particular attention to the needs of local fishing dependent coastal communities.*

6. The EU promoting a global transition to sustainable food systems in international spaces

We welcome the reference in the Strategy to relevant UN processes, and highlight that the global governance of food and agriculture should involve a strong support to the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and its Civil Society Mechanism (CSM). The CFS has been reformed to become the most democratic, inclusive and participatory international platform to deal with

food security and nutrition. It provides policy guidance to governments and other institutions to achieve the realization of the right to food.

- *The EU should ensure that international fora discussing food and agriculture take up the CFS policy decisions and recommendations and apply the CFS principles of inclusiveness*

¹⁴ IPES-Food (2019). Towards a Common Food Policy for the European Union. The policy reform and realignment that is required to build sustainable food systems in Europe.

¹⁵ The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) 2019 Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, <https://ipbes.net/global-assessment> FAO (2020) The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2020 (pages 108-109).

¹⁶ See <https://www.cffacape.org/publications-blog/european-industries-must-disinvest-in-west-africas-booming-fishmeal-and-fish-oil-sector>. Changing Markets (2019, 2020) Fishing the feed, see <https://changingmarkets.org/portfolio/fishing-the-feed/>. Press Release by artisanal fishers association NAAFO and CAOPA in The Gambia, 23/09/2019, Impact Africa, at [link](#). Greenpeace (2019) A Waste of Fish.

through being democratic, transparent, and providing space for meaningful agency by CSOs and producer and consumers' organisations as legitimate rights holders, without being captured by vested interests and the corporate sector.

- *The EU should engage in radical food systems transformation, based on human rights principles and the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development and strong public policies that support the multiple dimensions of food systems. It should encourage and prioritise the ongoing efforts to adopt ambitious guidelines on food systems and nutrition, on gender equality and women's empowerment and to support scaling up agroecological practices globally. In particular, the EU and its member*

states should contribute to ensure that the CFS policy recommendations on Agroecological and Other Innovative Approaches be adopted at the end of 2020, to promote agroecological approaches that contribute more to sustainable food systems from an environmental, social and human rights perspective.

- *The EU should seek to ensure that the UN Food Systems Summit of 2021 builds on the voices of smallholder women food producers and family farming. The EU should avoid any risk of corporate capture and conflicts of interests and ensure that the Summit reconfirms the mandate of the CFS as the foremost inclusive international and intergovernmental policy platform on food security and nutrition.*

7. Legislative framework for sustainable food systems



Mr. OPIRA Santo an apiary farmer and Chairperson of Coo Rom Climate Resilient Sustainable Agriculture Youth Group in Coo Rom village, Ogom Sub County, Pader District, 2020. Credit: ActionAid Uganda.

The Strategy commits the European Commission to table a Sustainable Food Framework by the end of 2023. 'Sustainable Food' could encompass the Right to Food, environmental sustainability, nutritional intake, climate-resilience and food safety laws.

- *The announced EU Sustainable Food Framework should include a strong international dimension, not shy away from*

addressing complex issues and provide a vision that fosters long term structural changes. The Framework should look at all stakeholders and actors in the food system, including small-scale food producers and other relevant actors in developing countries, with the aim to ensure that they also benefit from the EU transition towards Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems.