EEB
European
Environmental
Bureau

Beyond net-zero emission in agriculture

Summary

The global food system is responsible for 26% of anthropogenic greenhouse gas (GHG emissions). Our food and agriculture systems are not only contributing to climate change, but also to the biodiversity collapse, deterioration of ecosystems, alarming rates of species loss as well as air, soil and water pollution. Given the unprecedented drought in parts of Europe, our farmers became the first-hand victims of global warming.

At a time when European citizens, and in particular the youngest, are increasingly assertive and aware of the environmental issues the EU institutions must assume their responsibilities and tackle these crises. The EU Green Deal represents EU's political commitment to become the first ever climate-neutral continent by 2050. Regrettably, the new EU Climate Law weakens this aspiration and the 55% reduction of the net GHG emissions by 2030 compared to 1990 levels, is a far cry from the minimum 65% indicated by scientists as necessary to limit the global warming to 1.5°C by the end of the decade.

To set the EU on track to achieve the Paris Agreement, all economic sectors must cut their carbon dioxide emissions to reach climate neutrality. The EU must also manage its land and natural resources more sustainably to provide nature-based climate solutions. Climate policy efforts cannot be seen in isolation from efforts to restore our ecosystems and transitioning our farming model towards agroecological practices is a win-win for both the climate and biodiversity crises.

The "*European Environmental Bureau (EEB) pathway*" shows the feasibility to reach net-zero emissions for agriculture by mainstreaming agroecology along with a shift towards a healthier and sustainable diet. It also addresses other interdependent challenges of our food systems, including restoring biodiversity, feeding Europe and the world and ensuring the resilience of the farmers. With the deep interconnections between the different GHG sources and sinks influenced by agriculture, the European Commission should integrate the GHG emission from agricultural activities and related land in the new governance. To do so, the EEB recommends the following six essential elements to be introduced in the "Fit for 55" package:

1 Enabling targets in the future EU climate governance

Set binding EU-level and national GHG agriculture targets whether under the ESR and the LULUCF regulation or in the future under an Agriculture, Forestry and Land Use (AFOLU) regulation. Emissions from agriculture activities should be reduced to 350 MT CO2eq (-20% based on 2005 levels) and 150Mt CO2eq (65% based on 2005 levels)) respectively by 2030 and 2050. Agriculture-related land use emissions should go down to net-zero by 2030 and should become a sink of -150 Mt CO2eq by 2050.

2 Enabling flexibility within the agricultural sector

Unavoidable emissions from agricultural activities could be balanced by the same amount of sink from agricultural lands, once emissions from agricultural activities reached their residual value (150 Mt CO2eq).

3 Enabling institutional framework

A joint body composed of several representatives from different directorates, institutions, independent experts and representatives of the private sector and civil society, should ensure coordination, mainstreaming and monitoring of climate change and mitigation policy across sectoral policies.

4 Enabling sectoral roadmap

European Commission is also encouraged to implement a sectoral roadmap identifying best practices aiming to realize the targets.

5 Enabling sectoral policies

Sectoral legislations must be reviewed to support the implementation of climate objectives, the transition towards agroecological practices and promote a healthier and more sustainable diet.

6 Enabling financial mechanisms

Funds shall be geared towards scaling-up agroecological practices and the promotion of healthy and sustainable diets that are higher in plant-based foods and include considerably less and better produced meat, dairy and eggs. European Commission must develop a robust methodology supported by scientific evidence to monitor climate spending.

Read the full position paper

A better future where people and nature thrive together