



**To: Agriculture Ministers of EU Member States**

**Cc: Environment Ministers of EU Member States and Commissioner for Agriculture**

**Re: Input to the EU Agriculture and Fisheries Council Meeting, Brussels, 26<sup>th</sup> of May 2026**

Brussels, 21 May 2026

Dear Minister,

On behalf of the European Environmental Bureau, the largest network of environmental citizens organisations in Europe, I am writing to share our perspective on the upcoming exchange of views on fertilisers among Agriculture Ministers scheduled for 26<sup>th</sup> of May 2026 during the AGRIFISH Council meeting.

Yesterday, the European Commission published and presented its Fertiliser Action Plan. It is the EU's response to the price shocks affecting agricultural inputs, in particular synthetic fertilisers. This price volatility is a direct consequence of these inputs' dependency on fossil fuels, and therefore, vulnerability to geopolitical changes.

We would like to draw your attention to the underdeveloped dimension in this Plan: the transition to agroecological practices, which through the restoration of the natural functionality of ecosystems, greatly reduces the need for external inputs, strengthens farm's resilience and economic viability. More than a sidenote, sustainable land management practices should be the central pillar on which agricultural policy is built.

Rather than committing to reshaping what and how we produce and consume, with a focus on enhancing domestic fertiliser production, opening new markets, and financial relief, the Plan seems to enable measures that will keep farmers trapped in a costly system that causes damage to our environment, climate, and health. The proposed extension of the RENURE Act is a clear example of harmful and counterproductive measures that aggravate existing issues.

We take this opportunity to share the letter we sent together with over 70 organisations last week, asking for a Fertiliser Action Plan that tackles the problems at their root. We thank you for considering the points raised in the letter in the upcoming discussion and remain at your disposal for any further exchange.

Yours sincerely,

Patrick ten Brink,

Secretary General of the European Environmental Bureau

**European Environmental Bureau**

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**To:**

Teresa Ribera, Executive Vice-President of the European Commission for a Clean, Just, and Competitive Transition, Commissioner for Competition  
Christophe Hansen, Commissioner for Agriculture and Food  
Jessica Roswall, Commissioner for Environment, Water Resilience and a Competitive Circular Economy  
Wopke Hoekstra, Commissioner for Climate, Net Zero and Clean Growth  
Olivér Várhelyi, Commissioner for Health and Animal Welfare  
Maroš Šefčovič, Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security

**CC:** Elisabeth Werner, Director General of DG AGRI;  
Eric Mamer, Director General of DG ENV;

Brussels, May 11<sup>th</sup> 2026

**Subject: The EU Fertiliser Action Plan Must Herald the End of Fossil Input Dependency**

Dear Executive Vice-President Ribera,  
Dear Commissioner Hansen,  
Dear Commissioner Roswall,  
Dear Commissioner Hoekstra,  
Dear Commissioner Várhelyi,  
Dear Commissioner Šefčovič,

As representatives of civil society, farmer organisations and academia we are writing to share our concerns ahead of the publication of the EU Fertiliser Action Plan. The ongoing US-Israel war on Iran and subsequent fossil and fertiliser price spikes are yet another reminder that European agriculture is highly vulnerable to external shocks beyond the control of farmers. The current industrial food system has been deliberately shaped around synthetic chemical inputs, creating a structural dependency that ties agricultural productivity to fossil fuel production, and which has pushed the EU [beyond its safe operating space for nutrients](#), as well as destroying much of Europe's soils and biodiversity and fuelling climate breakdown.

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Nitrogen fertilisers are highly fossil fuel dependent, as their production relies on methane gas both as feedstock and energy source, tying their price tightly to that of fossil fuels. The EU imports around [90% of its gas](#) and [around 30% of its nitrogen fertilisers](#). When gas is particularly expensive, such as in 2022 after Russia invaded Ukraine, the share of nitrogen fertiliser imports rose to [around 45%](#). The EU's response to the 2022 price shock failed to increase the Union's autonomy, leaving our food system susceptible to volatile gas prices. At the same time, [Russia remains the EU's largest supplier](#), meaning the EU continues to contribute to Russia's war on Ukraine.

Despite this backdrop, the EU only seems focused on measures to improve the availability and affordability of fertilisers. This fails to address the root cause of the current crisis: the built-in dependency on synthetic fertilisers. Future shocks will continue to throw our food systems into crisis as long as farming is highly dependent on agrochemicals in general, and fossil-based inputs in particular.

Besides being a barrier to EU strategic autonomy, our agricultural system's fossil fertiliser dependence causes severe human health impacts and environmental challenges. These include water pollution and eutrophication (over a third of rivers, lakes and coastal waters are [reported as eutrophic](#) in the EU), biodiversity loss, deteriorating soil health, greenhouse gas emissions, ozone depletion and air pollution. A growing body of [research](#) has linked nitrate exposure to [colorectal cancer](#), thyroid disease, and neural tube defects.

The environmental impact is also staggering, with a recent [study](#) estimating the environmental and human health costs of nitrogen fertilisers in EU Member States at €70–320 billion per year. Such an amount suggests that the [social costs of nitrogen fertilisers in Europe now offset a large share of the gains](#) and that social benefits of reducing nitrogen fertiliser use would exceed private losses.

The triple crisis of biodiversity loss, pollution, and climate change is already threatening food production. Weakening environmental safeguards and cementing the reliance on synthetic inputs will only make this worse.

Solutions that do not rely on synthetic fertilisers already exist. Organic and agroecological farmers are paving the way for agricultural systems that minimise the use of chemical fertilisers, demonstrating that not only is it possible, it is also economically viable. By prioritising plant nutrition through the soil ecosystem and nutrient recycling, [organic farming relies on less external inputs](#), proving more resilient to recent crises. Scaling up these approaches, which also deliver public health and environmental benefits, requires political support.

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While some short-term measures are necessary, they are insufficient to build a resilient model, both economically and environmentally. The EU now needs to act preventatively to break free from the fossil food system trap. Farmers who are not dependent on synthetic inputs should be better supported through concrete provisions that can lead the whole sector towards more resilient practices - and a truly sustainable future.

### **The Fertiliser Action Plan should prioritise**

- Supporting farmers to transition to low-input practices, particularly through agroecology and organic farming. Legume production for improved biological nitrogen fixation and crop rotations can be rapidly implemented on a wide scale and should be adequately rewarded through public policy.
- Upholding existing environmental legislation, in particular through continued and effective implementation and enforcement of the Nitrates Directive.
- Improving nitrogen use efficiency via a systemic approach, combining a broad shift to less nitrogen-intensive diets, reduced food waste, and more sustainable agricultural practices.
- Developing and subsidising regional biofertiliser production and use as part of a transition away from fossil-fuel based inputs. Ensure accessible, fair and transparent implementation.

Finally, we would like to stress the importance of civil society and rightsholders' participation in these discussions: impacted communities and agroecological and small- and medium-scale farmers' voices are crucial to ensuring the development of measures that will deliver on these objectives. We remain at your disposal for any questions and concerns, and welcome the opportunity to continue this discussion in more detail during a meeting.

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