

20.3.2022

Dear Minister,

On behalf of the EU office of the international NGO Compassion in World Farming, we would like to express our deep concern about a concerted effort to water down the ambitions of the Farm to Fork Strategy and the Biodiversity Strategy in the name of food security. Due to the war in Ukraine, vested interests are proposing to sacrifice 10% of agricultural land, meant to be set aside for biodiversity purposes, to abandon the target of 25% of agricultural land under organic farming, as well as rules on pesticides. Other important objectives, such as improving animal welfare or combating antimicrobial resistance, are now under threat of being pushed to the sidelines.

The reasoning behind such efforts is based on false claims concerning the disruption of imports of agricultural resources such as feed, fertilizers and gas from Ukraine. The narrative of food security is used as means to profit from this crisis and continue with the business-as-usual model by actors representing economic interests. Two thirds of cereals in the EU are fed to farmed animals, with a mere fifth used for human consumption. Moreover, the EU exports more food than it imports; for cereals, the value of import is only half the value of export. Nearly a quarter of agricultural exports are animal products, that means many animals are raised and fattened for international markets, not domestic consumption. This can hardly be considered as a food security crisis but a feed crisis. The war causes disruption to the EU's meat and dairy production, which only points to the inefficiency and the misuse of valuable resources, because of our heavy reliance on animal products.

Intensive animal farming is not fit for the future, as it is too resource-intensive and puts an immense strain on the environment. Globally, animal farming takes up to 83% of agriculture land but provides a mere 18% of calories. While climate change is looming over us and puts added pressure on our agricultural production, we cannot afford to back away from our green commitments. On the contrary, we need to accelerate the policies under the Green Deal framework and transition to a more sustainable and healthy food system, centred around plant-rich diets instead of diets heavy on animal products, in line with the Farm to Fork Strategy. It is vital that we significantly reduce the numbers of animals we farm to bring our food system within the planetary boundaries and provide farmed animals with substantially better living conditions to secure their good welfare. Anything different would pose risks for public health, the environment and biodiversity.

As pointed out in the recent Potsdam Institute [statement](#), signed by over 300 scientists, we need to accelerate the shift towards diets less reliant on animal products, increase the production of legumes and strengthen the Farm to Fork Strategy, and reduce the amount of food waste. Otherwise, we will soon find ourselves in a real food security crisis. The Farm to Fork Strategy is not an obstacle but rather a key to create a crisis-proof and resilient food system. In the words of the European Commission Executive Vice President Frans Timmermans, we need to understand that it is “part of the answer, not part of the problem”.

**We, therefore, urge you to consider the crisis generated by the war with an eye to the future and we call on you to support the Farm to Fork Strategy and its objectives, rejecting any efforts to reduce its ambition.**

We must adopt long-term solutions capable of building a resilient and sustainable food system for the future.

Yours sincerely,  
Head of EU Office, Compassion in World Farming