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Study | 13.07.2021

Break out of the silo

Impacts of the agro-industrial food system on food security and farmers' income - a review

As documented by the recent publication of the EAT-Lancet commission, food production is today the single largest cause of global environmental change: agriculture occupies about 40% of global land, and food production is responsible for up to 30% of global greenhouse-gas emissions and 70% of freshwater use; conversion of natural ecosystems to croplands and pastures is the largest factor causing species to be threatened with extinction; overuse and misuse of nitrogen and phosphorus causes water pollution and damages natural habitats across the world.

In order to address these issues, the European Commission has published in May 2020 a key component of the European Green Deal dedicated to making the EU Food system fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly: the “Farm to Fork Strategy”.

The main objective of this new strategy is to accelerate the transition towards a sustainable European food system that should:

- have a neutral or positive environmental impact,
- help to mitigate climate change and adapt to its impacts,
- reverse the loss of biodiversity,
- ensure food security, nutrition and public health, making sure that everyone has access to sufficient, safe, nutritious, sustainable food,
- preserve affordability of food while generating fairer economic returns, fostering competitiveness of the EU supply sector and promoting fair trade.

This strategy is unique as it is the first time for the EU food policy to have a comprehensive strategy, encompassing all stages of the food system and putting consumers and producers in the centre.

It sets out 27 concrete actions to transform the EU’s food system by 2030, in order to meet the following goals, inter alia:

- a reduction by 50% of the use and risk of pesticides,
- a reduction by at least 20% of the use of fertilizers – including animal manure,

- a reduction by 50% in sales of antimicrobials used for farmed animals and aquaculture,
- reaching 25% of agricultural land under organic farming, of which the current level is 8%.

This strategy has triggered several reactions expressing concern at the economic and social implications of the Commission's targets and their possible impact on competitiveness, productivity and food supply. Speaking at a recent EURACTIV event, Christiane Lambert, the newly elected chair of farmers association COPA declared that "Without an impact assessment, no decision can be made. And if negative aspects come up, they must be reviewed in the strategy".

As the results of the impact assessment evaluation of the **Farm to Fork strategy** conducted by the European Commission are under way, **this study** aims at providing a sound knowledge base of scientific evidence on the current socio-economic, health and environmental impacts of the current EU agricultural models.

It draws upon a combination of official public data and recent academic literature on the subject. Its outputs detailed hereafter can serve as an objectified backdrop to put in context the consistently upcoming demands for an impact assessment of the Farm to Fork strategy as a whole.

- READ THE FULL STUDY HERE

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Contact person



Emmanuel Kujawski

Stakeholder Engagement Officer

Attached documents

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