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Cheaper than dogfood

Trust the Greens - fair prices for good food

Cheap food is a myth. In Europe and the US state subsidies have encouraged farmers and the food industry to produce more than their markets can absorb. Too much meat, cereals and sugar have reduced prices and income for farmers worldwide, and at the same time subsidised transnational trade companies. But this did not necessarily make food cheaper for consumers.

Two per cent of the price of a loaf of bread comes from the grain, while beef makes up only five per cent of the price of a burger. Dog food can be sold more expensively than chicken because people are ready to spend more on feeding their pets than feeding themselves. **Rational price relations** are clearly out of balance.

Making feed and food cheaper has created high risks. Feeding bones and meat scraps to cows was at the source of mad cow disease. Many pesticides and food additives have provoked contamination of ground water, allergies and cancer. Cheap food can and does lead to environmental degradation, torturous animal breeding conditions and the ruin of small farmers.

The Greens have achieved a major **shift in the Common Agriculture Policy**. The EU is now **investing less in subsidies and market intervention –** two factors that stimulated overproduction. Though under constant threat, more public money is available for rural infrastructure, which can support quality food and sustainable production practices. **Organic farming** and consumption is growing and growing.

But more work needs to be done in the member states and dumping practices need to be further combated. **Clear labelling of the origin of food and production practices** will create more choice. But the real values of a sustainable European food culture will only emerge if consumers are ready to pay more for good food and if farmers agree to invest more in improving the quality of their production.

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