Joint open letter: EU food supply and solidarity response to the war in Ukraine

Thursday, 10 March 2022

Ms Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission

Mr Frans Timmermans
Executive Vice-President for the European Green Deal

Ms Stella Kyriakides
Commissioner for Health and Food Safety

Mr Janusz Wojciechowski
Commissioner for Agriculture

Mr Virginijus Sinkevičius
Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries

Dear President von der Leyen, Executive Vice-President Timmermans, dear Commissioners Wojciechowski, Kyriakides and Sinkevičius,

We are writing to you in the context of the terrible acts of aggression against Ukraine and the knock-on effects on the global food production and trade they entail. This tragic situation that is destroying towns and lives, will need our solidarity and support. We ask you to address this immediate crisis without undermining the environmental and social progress to which you committed in the European Green Deal. This letter comes as a reaction to the statement by Commissioner Wojciechowski that “if food security is in danger, then we need to have another look at the objectives of the Farm to Fork strategy and correct them”. We believe the contrary to be true: the crisis in Ukraine is yet another reminder of how essential it is to implement the Green Deal and its Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies. More than ever, the EU must shift towards healthy, socially and environmentally friendly farming practices, such as agroecology, organic farming, and agroforestry, which provide the only path to ensuring long-term food security, food sovereignty, and the overall sustainability of the food systems. We must turn away from intensive agriculture, industrial fisheries and aquaculture.

Watering down the Farm to Fork strategy and its policies will maintain Europe’s dependence on non-renewable energy sources like fossil fuels, and will go against what is needed right now to secure food for all. Europe must support farmers to undertake an agroecological transition, notably by ensuring they and farm workers have a fair income. Practices such as organic and agroecological agriculture - especially as practised by small scale family farmers in Europe – should be effectively supported, as they are key to food sovereignty, biological diversity, natural pest control and pollination. The transition towards agroecology should be combined with policies that on the one hand, foster a reduction in the production of animals farmed industrially towards small scale extensive and animal welfare-friendly practices, through a just transition respectful of the right to farmers to have a fair income and, on the other hand, promote healthier and more plant-based diets. Indeed, the most recent IPCC¹ report made it crystal clear that “while agricultural development contributes to food security, unsustainable agricultural expansion, driven in part by unbalanced diets, increases ecosystem and human vulnerability and leads to competition for land and/or water resources”.

Global food systems will continue to be afflicted by crises and uncertainties over the coming years and decades. By acting responsibly now, we will ensure that Europe is well-placed to face possible future crises.

This war will undoubtedly destabilise the cereal, oilseed and fertiliser markets. Russia and Ukraine provide a large part of the global cereal market and the EU imports much of its oilseed meal, oil and seeds\(^2\) and fertilisers\(^3\) from Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. The dependency of low income countries on these imports poses major challenges for their food security, which in turn increases the risk of social unrest and conflict. In Europe, the surge in prices risks affecting the most vulnerable – both farmers and consumers – who are already struggling to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. This calls for the Commission to support efforts aimed at securing the right to food and food sovereignty and, first and foremost, local food systems grounded in principles of agroecology and animal welfare, both in Europe and abroad.

Ploughing more farmland, as is currently being put forward\(^4\), to grow crops for biofuels and intensive animal farming by using even more synthetic pesticides and fertilisers would be absurd and dangerously increase ecosystem collapses, the most severe threat to social-ecological stability and food security. The European Union must tackle the current challenges by **accelerating the implementation of its strategies to reduce the use of synthetic pesticides and fertilisers**, to preserve its natural environment and the health of its citizens.

Both the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine have shed light on the weaknesses of the European food system, which requires concrete actions to ensure long-term sustainability. Current attempts by some lobby groups to use the war atrocities as an excuse to undermine the Farm to Fork Strategy are fully misplaced. In a world facing more recurrent shocks in the form of environmental crises or conflicts, we need policies oriented towards relocalising and democratising our food systems, building on traditional and ecological knowledge that support resilience.

We strongly hope that you will consider our above recommendations with due care and diligence, and we remain at your disposal for a meeting to further exchange on these matters.

Yours sincerely,

**European & International organisations**

Ariel Brunner, Senior Head of Policy, BirdLife Europe and Central Asia

Teresa Anderson, Climate Justice Lead, ActionAid International

Lili Balogh, President, Agroecology Europe

Kajsa Pira, Policy officer, AirClim

Oliver Moore, Editor, ARC2020

Francesco Panella, President, BeeLife European Beekeeping Coordination

Monique Goyens, Director General, BEUC

Clara Behr, Head of Policy and Public Relations, Biodynamic Federation Demeter International

---

\(^2\) CDG Arable Crops Cereals, Oilseeds and pulses, 07 March 2022.

\(^3\) EU Agricultural Market Briefs, 2019. Fertilisers in the EU. Nr 15/June 2019

\(^4\) FNSEA **communication**, 03 March 2022
Anaïs Berthier, Head of EU Affairs, ClientEarth
Sophie Nodzenski, Senior Campaigner, Changing Markets Foundation
Mikhail Durkin, Executive Secretary, Coalition Clean Baltic
Philip Lymbery, Global CEO, Compassion in World Farming
Nina Holland, Researcher, Corporate Europe Observatory
Reineke Hameleers, CEO, Eurogroup for Animals
Zoe Lujic, Director, Earth Thrive
Ilya Trombitsky, Executive Director, Eco-TIRAS International Association of River Keepers
Todor Ivanov, Secretary General, EuroCoop
Patrick Worms, President, European Agroforestry Federation
Jeremy Wates, Secretary General, European Environmental Bureau
Coordinating Committee, European Coordination Via Campesina
Nikolai Pushkarev, Senior Policy Manager for Healthy Environments, European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)
Virginia Enssle, Project and Policy Officer, Fair Trade Advocacy Office
Carina Millstone, Trustee, Feedback EU
Pierre Sultana, Director of the European Policy Office, FOUR PAWS / VIER PFOTEN
Jagoda Munic, Executive Director, Friends of the Earth Europe
Jorgo Riss, Executive Director, Greenpeace European Unit
Almudena Garcia Sastre, EU Policy and Advocacy Officer, FIAN European sections
Eric Gall, Deputy Director, IFOAM Organics Europe
Shefali Sharma, Director, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy Europe
Olivier De Schutter, Co-chair, IPES-Food
Arnaud Apoteker, General Delegate, Justice Pesticides
Martin Dermine, Health and Environment Policy Officer, Pesticide Action Network Europe
Jasmijn de Boo, Vice-President ProVeg International, ProVeg International
Marta Messa, Director, Slow Food Europe
Fabian Holzheid, Political Director, Umweltinstitut München e.V.
Isabel Alvarez Vispo, President, Urgenci
**National organisations**

**Austria**
Franziskus Forster, Policy Officer, ÖBV-Via Campesina Austria

**Belgium**
Benjamin Clarysse, Policy and project coordinator, Bond Beter Leefmilieu
Amaury Ghijselings, Advocacy Officer Food Sovereignty, CNCD-11.11.11
Fien Louwagie, spokesperson, EVA vzw
François Grenade, Policy officer, Iles de Paix
Sylvie Meekers, General manager, Inter Environnement Wallonie
Thérèse Snoy, President, Grands Parents pour le Climat
Bart Vangansbeke, President, Natuurpunt
Vanya Verschoore, coördinator, Reset.Vlaanderen vzw
Benoit De Waegeneer, Policy and Information Coordinator, SOS Faim

**Croatia**
Natalija Svrtan, CEO, Earth Trek

**Czech Republic**
Anna Kárníková, Director, Hnutí DUHA - Friends of the Earth Czech Republic

**Denmark**
June R. Bresson, Campaigner food, agriculture and nature, NOAH - Friends of the Earth Denmark
Niklas Sjøbeck Jørgensen, Policy Advisor, Green Transition Denmark

**France**
François Veillerette, spokesperson, Générations Futures
Khaled Gaiji, President, Friends of the Earth France

**Germany**
Thomas Radetzki, Board, Aurelia Stiftung
Olaf Bandt, Chairman, BUND e.v. (Friends of the Earth Germany)
Johanna Bär, Managing Director, Bündnis für eine enkeltaugliche Landwirtschaft e.V.
Dominik Groß, Officer for Human Rights and Environmental Protection in Food Supply Chains, Christliche Initiative Romero e.V.
Anne Siegert, Referee nature conservation communication, Deutsche Umwelthilfe e.V.
Sascha Müller-Kraenner, Director, Deutsche Umwelthilfe e.V. (Environmental Action Germany)
Andrea Lichtenecker, Executive Director, Naturfreunde Internationale
Gabriela Strobel, Speaker of the Board, Pestizid Aktions-Netzwerk e.V. (PAN Germany)
Niels Dr. Kohlschütter, Managing Director, Schweisfurth Stiftung
Fabian Holzheid, Political Director, Umweltinstitut München
Peter Röhrig, Managing Director, Bund Ökologische Lebensmittelwirtschaft (BÖLW)

Greece
Konstantinos Foteinakis, President, Naturefriends Greece

Georgia
Davit Sidamonidze, International coordinator, The Greens Movement of Georgia/FoE Georgia

Ireland
Philip Kaerney, Chair, An Taisce - the National Trust for Ireland
Caroline Lewis, Director, Friends of the Irish Environment

Italy
Federica Luoni, Agriculture policy officer, Lipu BirdLife Italy
Francesco Romizi, EU Affairs manager, ISDE, Associazione Medici per l'Ambiente
Christiam Facchetti, President, Naturefriends Italy

Latvia
Andrejs Briedis, Chairman of the Council, Latvian Fund for Nature

Lithuania
Lina Paškevičiūtė, Chair, Aplinkosaugos koalicija (Lithuanian Environmental Coalition)
Domantas Tracevičius, Director, VšĮ Žiedinė ekonomika

Netherlands
Bernd de Bruijn, Head Policy & Strategy, Vogelbescherming Nederland (BirdLife in The Netherlands)
Hank Bartelink, Director, LandschappenNL
Marjolein Demmers, Director, Natuur & Milieu
Patrick Nuvelstijn, Coordinator International & European Affairs, Natuurmonumenten
Magriet Mantingh, Chair, Pesticide Action Network Netherlands

Poland
Aleksandra Pępkowska-Król, Project implementation specialist, Ogólnopolskie Towarzystwo Ochrony Ptaków

Portugal
Francisco Ferreira, President, ZERO - Associação Sistema Terrestre Sustentável
Jorge Palmeirim, President, LPN - Liga para a Protecção da Natureza

**Scotland**
Pete Ritchie, Director, Nourish Scotland

**Slovenia**
Iztok Erjavec, Chief Idea Officer, Institute InTeRCeR
Senka Šifkovič, project assistant, Umanotera, The Slovenian Foundation for Sustainable development

**Spain**
Tamara Rodríguez, Head of agriculture program, SEO/BirdLife Spain
Elisa Oteros-Rozas, Coordinator Area of Agroecology, Food Sovereignty and Rural World, Ecologistas en Acción
Concepción Fabeiro Cortés, President, Sociedad Española de Agricultura Ecológica y Agroecología (SEAE)
Andrés Muñoz, Food Sovereignty Campaigner, Amigos de la Tierra
Julia Martinez, Executive Director, Fundacion Nueva Cultura del Agua

**Switzerland**
Franco Ruinelli, Senior Committee Member, Naturfreunde Schweiz