

STRATEGIC DIALOGUE ON THE FUTURE OF AGRICULTURE IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

BACKGROUND

OPTA Europe (www.opta-eu.org) is the membership organization representing the interest of European Organic Processing and Trade companies. Its members account for a large share of total EU trade and processing of organic products and play an essential role in an efficient supply chain.

DETAILED COMMENTS

▶ **How can agriculture be supported within the boundaries of our planet and its ecosystem?**

Climate change and biodiversity loss are the two greatest environmental challenges facing us. Our global food system is a significant contributor to anthropogenic global warming and the primary driver of biodiversity loss, with agriculture alone being the identified threat to 86% species at risk of extinction. At the same time, farmers are at the forefront when dealing with the consequences, such as the intensification of draughts and floods and amplification of precipitation extremes.

This is by no means a new topic; for decades the scientific community has looked into it and listed the variety of options for adaption and mitigation, highlighting the urgent need to substantially transform agrifood systems by switching to agroecological practices and other agricultural approaches that work with natural processes such as organic, as well as adopting healthy and sustainable diets. See for example the various reports issued by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) [Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Working Group II Contribution to the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report](#).

Consistently with those findings, the 2020 Farm2Fork Strategy was the clear and well-articulated answer of the EU to the question posed, addressing comprehensively the food system (production, processing, distribution, consumption).

Instead of repeatedly asking the same question hoping to get the answer that certain would like to hear, we advocate for a robust and determined implementation of the Farm2Fork strategy, to help build a sustainable food system that works for citizens, farmers, climate and the environment.

By no means lowering the environmental obligations for farmers can be the EU answer to the question; that is contrary to what science tells us that is needed and will only keep raising the long-term collective cost of inaction. The EU agricultural system of the future needs first and foremost an ambitious and accelerated transition to agro-ecological practices, as stated in the Farm2Fork Strategy and backed by science.

Listen to science: switch to agroecology - we advocate a determined implementation of the Farm2Fork Strategy for a sustainable food system; this includes support to farmers to switch to agro-ecological practices (including organic farming).

▶ **How can a bright and thriving future for Europe's food system be promoted in a competitive world?**

As the biggest global food importer and exporter, the EU can use its power to raise the sustainability standards of trading partners to support the ecological transition. The EU is also the second world producer, importer and exporter of organic products; by increasing the trade of organic products and promoting organic standards worldwide, the EU will contribute to achieve the climate and environmental objectives, while improving the incomes of primary producers and creating business opportunities for those who have already undergone the transition to sustainable practices.

The agreements on trade in organic products that the Commission is currently negotiating with 13 countries, including like-minded trading partners such as the US or Canada are a not-

to-be missed opportunity to jointly promote organics worldwide and tackle the challenges affecting the sector globally.

Promote organics worldwide – by increasing the trade of organic products and promoting organic standards worldwide, the EU will contribute to achieve the climate and environmental objectives while improving the incomes of primary producers and reinforcing EU's competitiveness.

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