

Brussels, 12 June 2023

Ms. Ursula von der Leyen  
President of the European Commission  
Rue de la Loi 200  
B-1049 Brussels

— Sent via Email; sent in copy to: Commissioners Frans Timmermans, Janusz Wojciechowski,  
Stella Kyriakides and Virginijus Sinkevičius —

## Yes to the Green Deal. No to the suspension of the CAP's environmental requirements

Dear President of the European Commission Ms. Ursula von der Leyen,

we, the below-mentioned organisations, are writing to you to ask to ensure a proper implementation of the Green Deal objectives and to maintain the high level of ambition, as presented to citizens in the beginning of your mandate. We particularly ask you to reject any additional request<sup>1</sup> to derogate to environmental requirements provided by the Common Agriculture Policy Regulation (EU) 2021/2115, as was done in 2022 and 2023.

The arguments used by agricultural lobbyists and their political allies to attack the European Green Deal and to demand a continued decimation of the already far too sparse ecological set-aside areas on Europe's farmland do not stand up to scrutiny:

- First, **food security in the EU is not threatened** by the war in Ukraine. The EU is still a net exporter of wheat, dairy and meat products<sup>2</sup>.
- Second, **intensifying production in the EU is not an effective way to fight hunger** in countries of the Global South. As we know, hunger is less a problem of availability than of access to food.<sup>3</sup>
- And third, **the narrative of a trade-off between food security and environmental protection is at odds with a broad scientific consensus**. Groundbreaking UN reports<sup>4, 5, 6</sup>, the UN Biodiversity Conference in Montreal<sup>7</sup> and numerous appeals from the Scientific Community<sup>8, 9, 10</sup> emphasise the importance of a preserved environment for food production.

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<sup>1</sup> Norbert Lins et al. (Mar. 2023): [Brief an Ursula Von der Leyen](#)

<sup>2</sup> European Commission, Brussels (04.01.2023): [COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Drivers of food security](#)

<sup>3</sup> Lakner et al. (2022): [Ukraine-Krieg und globale Lebensmittelversorgung](#)

<sup>4</sup> FAO (Feb. 2019): [The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture](#)

<sup>5</sup> IPBES (May 2019): [Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services](#)

<sup>6</sup> IPCC (Aug. 2019): [Climate Change and Land](#)

<sup>7</sup> UN environment programme (Dec. 2022): [UN Biodiversity Conference \(COP 15\)](#)

<sup>8</sup> Guy Pe'er et al. (Feb. 2020): [Action needed for the EU Common Agricultural Policy to address sustainability challenges \(signed by 3.600 scientists\)](#)

<sup>9</sup> Lisa M. Pörtner et al. (March 2022): [We need a food system transformation - In the face of the Russia-Ukraine war, now more than ever \("Potsdam Statement" signed by 660 scientists\)](#)

<sup>10</sup> Jeroen Candel et al (December 2022): [Scientists call for ambitious Sustainable Use of Pesticides Regulation \(signed by 730 scientists\)](#)

In the Potsdam Statement<sup>8</sup>, the EU's leading scientists have warned that “*efforts to abandon the sustainability targets of the Farm to Fork-strategy (including greenhouse gas emission reduction, reduction of nitrogen fertiliser and pesticide use, and protection of fallow land for biodiversity) do not shield us from the current crisis, they rather worsen it and make the crisis permanent*”.

In line with the Green Deal's Farm to Fork- and Biodiversity Strategies, scientists recommended reducing production of livestock and thus the cultivation of livestock feed (almost two thirds of the EU's cereals are currently used for animal feed<sup>11</sup>) and increasing the cultivation of cereals for food. At the same time, the goals of expanding biodiversity-enhancing structures in European agriculture should be pursued further.

Unfortunately, the EU derogation allowing to cultivate intensively fallow land has had exactly the opposite effect, as [a recent analysis](#) presented by NGOs shows: Ecological Focus Areas (EFAs) dedicated to biodiversity have been cut by an average of 40 percent in 21 EU member states, mainly for the cultivation of animal feed, including the use of pesticides and fertilisers.

The 2023 derogation prohibits the cultivation of fodder. Nevertheless, pollinators, farmland birds and other beneficial organisms, as well as soils and climate are highly impacted, and thus ultimately the farmers and the sustainability of agriculture. The contribution of such measures to food security, on the other hand, is minimal - while many other measures are much more effective<sup>12, 13</sup>.

As President of the EU Commission you have launched what is probably the most important European milestone project of this century: the Green Deal. In the face of the threats posed by the climate and biodiversity crises, we must fight for a bold and ambitious implementation of the Green Deal, that adequately rewards the environmental services of farmers and gives the people of Europe security and confidence in the future.

**In this endeavour, be sure of the support of civil society - and in particular the support of the signatories of this letter!**

We find it very concerning that the currently largest political group in the European Parliament in its so-called [Farmers Deal](#) calls for a continued suspension of nature protection measures in the CAP and, moreover, fundamentally rejects key elements of the Green Deal to restore nature and biodiversity.

Giving in to this short-sighted demand would be a mistake of historic proportions!

Let us instead remind the European People's Party (EPP) together of its core values, which it laid down in December 2020 in a strategy paper entitled [The Future of Christian Democracy](#). Among other things, it states there that “*we cannot continue to use the goods of the earth as we have done in the past*”, given that “*the ecological crisis is threatening what makes our world habitable*” and that “*man does not own nature, he inherits it, he must pass on its miracles to the next generations and strive to leave a world where life remains.*”

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<sup>11</sup> European Commission: [Cereals, oilseeds, protein crops and rice](#)

<sup>12</sup> Sebastian Lakner (Nov. 2022): ["Auswirkungen des Ukraine-Krieges auf die EU-Agrarpolitik"](#)

<sup>13</sup> Politische Studie im Auftrag von Martin Häusling und Sarah Wiener / EFA/European Greens (June 2022): ["Ukraine-Krieg und globale Lebensmittelversorgung: Auswirkungen und agrarpolitische Handlungsoptionen"](#)

Importantly, to achieve these goals, the EPP invokes “*decisions based on facts and science*”. It is therefore crucial to reiterate that Europe's leading scientists are very clear: **Ensuring a sustainable future for Europe's farmers and European food security requires a Common Agricultural Policy that is consistent with the objectives of the Green Deal's Farm to Fork- and Biodiversity Strategies and combines environmental change with fair prospects for farmers.**

The political pressure that the opponents of the Green Deal are building up may be strong. Their arguments are not. Given the historic challenges posed by the climate and biodiversity crises, it is our deepest responsibility to current and future generations to make our decisions in a way that helps address the crisis. The strategies of the European Green Deal must therefore remain the guiding principles of European policy.

Sincerely yours,

**116 environmental, scientific and social organisations, as well as farmers, trade unions and church groups from all over Europe**

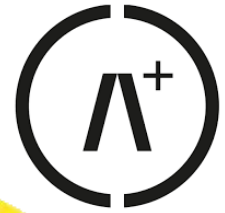




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