



For a Successful EU Farm to Fork Strategy



The long-term success and sustainability of the EU Farm to Fork Strategy will rely on how effectively it addresses the imbalances in the food supply chain and upholds respect for workers' dignity.

Kristjan Bragason
EFFAT General Secretary



Background

In the framework of the [Communication on the EU Green Deal](#) issued on 11 December 2019, the Commission has published its preliminary plans for the Farm to Fork (F2F) Strategy, which will be presented at the end of March 2020. The F2F Strategy will contribute to reaching the EU Green Deal's goals and it will set out the objectives and actions necessary to secure a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system. The Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) will be key tools to support the Strategy. The F2F Strategy will have strong connections with the new Circular Economy Action Plan, the 2030 EU Biodiversity Strategy, the Forestry Strategy and the Zero Pollution Strategy.

EFFAT'S KEY MESSAGES

- EFFAT notes positively that social fairness has been presented as a key guiding principle of the EU Green Deal with a central role to be played by the EU Pillar of Social Rights. EFFAT also welcomes the ambitious environmental goals of the F2F Strategy. EFFAT acknowledges the urgent need to act immediately with renewed intensity and a clear roadmap to build sustainable and forward-looking food and farming systems. At the same time, EFFAT regrets that in its preliminary form, the Strategy doesn't aim to address the difficult conditions of workers employed along the food chain.
- Working and employment conditions in the agriculture, food and hospitality sectors are difficult and negatively affected by the imbalances along the food chain and by the external shocks and challenges that come with the global economy. The long-term success of the EU F2F Strategy will rely on how effectively it considers the impact – even indirect – its implementation can have on workers. A dedicated social chapter should be part of the F2F Strategy.
- Delivering on the EU Green Deal and the F2F Strategy is bound to be disruptive for the EFFAT sectors, leading to potential job losses as well as new business models and skills requirements. Food processing, agriculture and hospitality are not included among the sectors covered by the Just Transition Fund as proposed. The commitment to ensure a transition that leaves no-one behind should be supported by appropriate funding and should apply to all sectors concerned.
- The F2F Strategy need the support of workers, otherwise it will fail in its objectives. Trade Unions must be properly involved and consulted at each and every level in the formulation and implementation of the announced policies. The Commission should encourage further social dialogue in the EFFAT sectors as one lever for effective implementation of the F2F Strategy.
- The F2F Strategy must address the distortions of competition in the food supply chain which are responsible for land abandonment and precarious work, further eroding the economy and cohesion of rural communities. The F2F Strategy should also provide concrete measures to deal with the challenges affecting the food processing industry and the hospitality sectors.
- The F2F Strategy must contribute to the Commission's declared ambition to implement the United Nation's 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) will be a key tool to deliver on the objectives of the F2F Strategy. It is long past time to strengthen the social dimension of CAP with measures that protect agricultural workers.
- Promoting responsible food consumption must also mean raising consumer awareness about the damaging effects on human and workers' rights of excessively low food prices.



Actions to be taken for a successful and truly sustainable F2F Strategy

Based on these guiding principles, the following actions and initiatives are urgently needed to ensure the long-term success and sustainability of the F2F Strategy:

1. Strengthening the coherence and governance coordination of all EU policies with potential impact on the food chain.
2. Adopting a Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) that protects agricultural workers:
 - Direct payments to farmers must be conditional on the respect of applicable working and employment conditions
 - Direct access to vocational training, CAP-financed courses and long-life learning must be available for all agricultural workers
 - Compensation to farmers must also consider the actual employment performed. A calculation based solely on the quantity of eligible hectares is not sufficient
 - Cost of wages and social security contributions should be factored into the newly proposed capping of direct payments
3. Tackling imbalances affecting vulnerable actors throughout the food chain:
 - Ensuring a swift transposition of the Unfair Trading Practices Directive
 - Including mandatory environmental and social criteria within EU competition law
4. Agricultural workers need protection against the use of harmful pesticides and fertilisers.
5. Tackling shareholder value maximisation along the food chain.
6. Aligning the EU agenda on international trade with the objectives of the EU Green Deal and the F2F Strategy.
7. Introducing mandatory human rights due diligence at EU level.
8. Digitalisation should leave no-one behind.
9. Enhancing responsible food consumption to challenge workers exploitation
10. Don't forget about the "Fork"- Workers in the hospitality sector matter.
11. To be "Just", the transition needs proper funding

Specifically, on the announced EU Forest Strategy, EFFAT recommendations for action include the following:

1. Quality job creation must be placed at the centre of the upcoming EU Forest strategy
2. The EU Forest Strategy should boost the job creation potential of the bioeconomy

The pages that follow outline in a more extensive manner EFFAT's proposals and recommendations for action to the EU Commission to deliver a successful and sustainable long-term F2F Strategy. In addition, the document includes EFFAT's suggested approach with respect to the announced EU Forest Strategy.



Explanation of EFFAT proposals for action

1. Strengthening the coherence and governance coordination of all EU policies with a potential impact on the food chain

The F2F strategy must develop a coherent long-term vision for the food chain from agriculture, food production, processing, distribution, retail, and consumption (including the hospitality sector). Social policies must be fully integrated into this new vision.

Aspects of food policy are currently dealt with in isolated compartments and not fully addressed as an interconnected system. While current policy frameworks may have been successful in addressing specific problems, they do not provide the coherence needed to deal with the range of challenges that global and EU food systems are expected to face in the future.

EFFAT believes that the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can support in the drive towards a more comprehensive approach that encompasses different policy areas (agriculture, health, environment, trade, development, innovation, education, social policy, etc.) and governance levels (EU, national, local).

EFFAT Demands

EFFAT calls for enhanced policy coherence and governance coordination. EFFAT urges the establishment of a framework within which the Commission's relevant DGs (including DG Employment) – in close collaboration with the sectoral Social Partners – are involved in the development and practical implementation of the F2F Strategy.

2. A Common Agriculture Policy that protects Agricultural workers

According to the Commission, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) will be instrumental in delivering on the objectives of the F2F strategy. The Commission proposals for the CAP post 2020 include a commitment for at least 40% of the overall budget to be put toward climate action. EFFAT believes that the ongoing reform process should also be the occasion to make the CAP more social.

In addition to landowners and their families, over 10 million workers are employed in the European Agriculture sector. With their daily work, they not only produce agricultural products, but they also contribute to the environmental sustainability of the agriculture sector, tackling, inter alia, hydrogeological instability, land degradation and soil erosion. Their work is vital for the preservation of rural areas.

It must be remembered that the CAP was also created for agricultural workers in order "to ensure a fair standard of living for the agricultural community, in particular by increasing the individual earnings of persons engaged in agriculture" (Article 39 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union). However, in practice, the CAP has largely failed in supporting agricultural workers. Today, some 4 million agricultural workers, many of them migrant workers, operate in conditions characterised by illegal employment, exploitation, and precarious working, whether as seasonal workers, day labourers or other insecure statuses. The level of undeclared work is extremely high and exploitation, gangmasters practices, and other forms of modern slavery are recurrent. The sector also ranks first among European sectors for workplace accidents and illness.



EFFAT Demands

For EFFAT, it is clear that the way in which CAP funding is allocated can play an important role in addressing these challenges. EFFAT is calling for a social agricultural policy that distributes European subsidies only to farms that comply with applicable working and employment conditions and/or employer obligations resulting from relevant collective agreements and International, EU and national social and labour law. Compliance must be insured in particular with respect to conditions of employment, working conditions, awareness of terms and conditions of employment, remuneration, working time, health and safety, gender equality, free movement of workers, equal treatment, posting of workers, conditions of stay of third-country nationals, protection in the event of termination of employment, temporary agency work, information and consultation of workers, prohibition of child labour and protection of young people at work, social protection, social security coverage, training.

Additional EFFAT demands include

- Mandatory access for agricultural workers to training, CAP-financed courses and life-long learning (2nd pillar).
- That payments to farmers proposed by the Commission take into consideration the total number of workers employed on each farm, the total amount of worked hours and the total sum of wages and social security contributions. A calculation based only on the quantity of eligible hectares is insufficient.
- Incorporation of the real cost of wages and social security contributions into the newly proposed capping of direct payments.

3. Tackling imbalances affecting vulnerable actors throughout the food chain

For the F2F Strategy to be successful, it must confront the imbalances and distortions in the food chain by providing protection to its most vulnerable actors, namely agricultural, food processing and hospitality workers, as well as small farmers. Moreover, if the pressure from retailers and food giants goes unchecked, and a viable income is not ensured for agricultural workers, rural areas will continue to be abandoned and farmers will continue to opt for unsustainable farming practices to increase their margins. In some EU Member States, this is already having a relevant impact in terms of soil degradation and air and water pollution.

EFFAT Demands

In order to tackle the imbalances and distortions of competition affecting the food chain, in addition to our demands on CAP (point 2 above), EFFAT calls for:

A swift transposition of the Unfair Trading Practices Directive (UTPs)

The UTPs was adopted in 2019 to tackle unfair trading practices in agricultural supply chains and support suppliers of agricultural products in getting a fairer deal from their trading relationships. The UTP Directive is an important step in the right direction, but it is crucial to transpose and enforce it properly at national level. EFFAT calls on the EU Commission to set up an expert group including Social Partners to facilitate the proper transposition and implementation of the Directive at national level.



The inclusion of mandatory environmental and social criteria within EU competition law

Major power imbalances have been created in the food chain by the ongoing and intensifying process of consolidation. Corporate concentration is occurring throughout the entire industrial food system.

It starts with seeds and agrochemicals, fertilizers, animal pharmaceuticals, livestock genetics and farm equipment, extending far beyond agriculture, affecting commodity traders, food and beverage processors, and retailers. In this context, dominant food industry players as well as retailers have massive negotiating power and can drive down prices and working conditions in supply chains.

The Merger Regulation 139/04 stipulates that, in order to be authorised, a concentration at EU level must not “significantly impede effective competition in the common market or...in particular as a result of the creation or strengthening of a dominant position”. But this is not sufficient. EFFAT believes that when it comes to concentrations, the concept of competition at EU level should be considered fair also when labour law and collective bargaining agreements are respected as well as when employment and social progress are safeguarded (as per article 3.3 of the TUE) as a consequence of any process of corporate consolidation.

Therefore, EFFAT calls for:

- Environmental and social criteria to be integrated into EU competition law and the Merger Regulation 139/2004.
- Lowering at EU level the threshold of what constitutes a ‘dominant market share’.

4. Agricultural workers need protection against the use of harmful pesticides and fertilisers

One of the F2F Strategy’s declared ambitions is to reduce significantly the use and risks of chemical pesticides, as well as fertilizers and antibiotics. EFFAT recalls that the use of these products is not only dangerous for the environment and consumers, but also for workers.

EFFAT Demands

EFFAT calls on the Commission to develop concrete measures in the framework of the F2F Strategy to enhance the protection of agricultural workers exposed to fertilizers, pesticides and other dangerous chemical products. In this respect, EFFAT urges the Commission to implement the following initiatives:

- Workers must receive comprehensive information about the use and the associated dangers related to the use of pesticides.
- Protective equipment and training must always be provided to workers for free.
- Each agricultural worker must be able to get official documentation reporting the type of pesticide used during their work activity.
- The use of dangerous pesticides (based on WHO and PAN Europe lists) should be prohibited as they continue to pose a major risk to workers, consumers and the environment. Food products treated with such pesticides should not be imported.



- The use of glyphosate is currently approved in the EU, with its licence having been extended until 15 December 2022. This herbicide is still suspected to be carcinogenic. EFFAT continues to call for its immediate ban.
- Not using pesticides is the best way to protect workers, consumers and the environment. Organic farming and other environmentally-friendly farming methods should therefore be promoted and integrated into vocational training systems.

5. Tackling shareholder value maximisation along the food chain

The agriculture and food sectors have not escaped the growing power of financial actors such as individual and institutional investors, commercial and investment banks, insurance companies, hedge funds, private equity funds, stock exchanges, agricultural exchanges and other trading entities for agricultural commodity derivatives. Expectations of long-term growth in food demand and increasing food scarcity together with the inherent uncertainty and risks involved in agricultural production (whether conditions, trade wars, diseases) are appealing to financial investors, as the greater the risk and volatility, the higher the potential returns.

Financial investors are dictating companies' strategy based on a short-term perspective geared toward maximizing the cash flow for their shareholders. Financial markets today directly reward companies for reducing payroll through closures, restructuring and outsourcing. This reflects the way in which financialization has driven the management of non-financial companies to act more like financial market players. At the same time, workers employed along the food chain are paying a very high price in terms of job cuts, worsening working conditions and endless requests for flexibility. Although productivity continues to grow, in several Member States, workers' wages in the agriculture, food processing and hospitality sectors no longer keep pace with profits and productivity. Experience shows that a disproportionate focus on shareholder value maximisation also encourages a race to the bottom in terms of food quality.

The dynamics resulting from the power of financial investors in the food supply chain is distorting the main function of the agri-food sector, which is to provide nutritious and quality food to as many people as possible in an environmentally and socially sustainable way. Such dynamics together with the lack of a European industrial food policy have resulted in increased inequalities and in-work poverty along the food chain.

EFFAT Demands

Financial investors should be held liable for the impact of their financial activities on the economy, the society and the environment. Solutions to tackle the impact of short-term financial interests along the whole food chain are urgently needed and should include regulation of financial markets, the strengthening of workers' rights in company law and more stringent anti-trust measures.

In this regard, EFFAT urges the adoption of, inter alia, the following measures:

- Reframing the scope of EU anti-trust rules (e.g. by including social and environmental criteria or by lowering the threshold of what constitutes a 'dominant market share')
- Strengthening the EU legislative framework on workers' information, consultation and participation rights especially in the case of corporate restructurings.
- Ensuring a fair and transparent taxation system in Europe that aims at limiting financial speculation including the adoption of a financial transaction tax, public country-by-country reporting and the adoption of a Common consolidated corporate tax base.



6. Aligning the EU international trade agenda with the goals of the EU Green Deal and F2F Strategy

Food is not a business like others. Yet there appears to be a disconnect between the EU commitment to ambitious environmental targets and EU trade policy.

Free Trade Agreements should never expose the EU agriculture, food and hospitality sectors to unfair competition with negative consequences for workers on wages, working conditions and employment. EFFAT is committed to promoting and defending a broad range of fundamental rights: the right to adequate, nutritious and safe food, the right to food security and food sovereignty, the right to a safe working and living environment, the right to livelihood protection, and multiple democratic rights including the rights of workers and their trade unions. EFFAT rejects all trade and investments agreements which conflict with those rights.

EFFAT Demands

EFFAT urges the Commission to adopt a new approach towards Free Trade Agreements that considers, inter alia, the following elements:

- The ambitious environmental goals of the EU Green Deal should not be affected by the signing of trade agreements that are a threat to the environment.
- Agriculture and food need specific attention as the economic, social and environmental sustainability of these sectors is fragile and easily disrupted by internal and external factors/shocks. Derogations for food and agricultural products should always be considered, and Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) products and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) products should receive enhanced protection.
- Workers' rights must not be brought into question. On the contrary, the respect of labour rights should constitute an "essential element" of all trade and investment agreements, including possible suspension of the agreement in case of sustained breaches.
- The ratification and implementation of the eight ILO Core Labour Standards, as well as compliance with up-to-date ILO conventions, should be a precondition for entering into trade negotiations. If a partner country has not ratified or properly implemented these conventions, it must demonstrate through a binding roadmap how this will be achieved in a timely manner.
- Trade agreements must be transparent and democratically controlled by stakeholders

7. Introducing mandatory human rights due diligence at EU level

Child labour as well as brutally exploitative working conditions on farms and plantations of coffee, cocoa, tea, sugar cane, fruits and vegetables, fish processing, to name but a few, within the EU and across the world, are recurrent. Investigations by EFFAT affiliates have uncovered debt bondage, sub-poverty wages, sub-standard housing, water and sanitation facilities and appalling health and safety conditions. Violence also underpins a system of exploitation in parts of the world where trade union organizers, social and civil rights activists are murdered with impunity. The F2F strategy should also touch on the environmental and social impact caused by food giants and retailers in their operations outside the EU.



EFFAT Demands

EFFAT calls for a European Directive on mandatory human rights due diligence and responsible business conduct, covering companies' activities and their business relationships, including their supply and subcontracting chains at European and global level.

Companies should be made accountable for the impacts of their operations along the food chain within the EU and across the globe.

The directive would constitute an important step forward to ensuring the respect and enforcement of human rights, including trade unions and workers' rights. It should ensure the full involvement of trade unions and workers' representatives throughout the due diligence process and should oblige companies to carry out a comprehensive supply-chain risk analysis.

8. Digitalisation should leave no-one behind

Smart farming, drones, remote-controlled tractors, the use of climate and weather information with Big Data technologies, smart factories and hotels or the application of synthetic biology are a growing reality. Along the whole food chain, the new high-tech era is one with decreased demand for low-skill workers and with increased demand for high-skill workers. The impact of digitalization on the future of work will depend on how productivity gains are distributed and whether the transition creates good, decent work through qualifications, sustainable growth, collective bargaining and social protection.

EFFAT Demands

EFFAT believes that the F2F strategy must also deal with the digital revolution along the food chain. EFFAT demands that new technology should be used to make workplaces safe and to improve working conditions. Technology should be for the benefit of all workers, not merely as tools for increased profits. A fundamental requirement of integrating Industry 4.0 technologies is ensuring that workers along the food chain and their trade unions are fully involved and placed at the centre of this transition at the most appropriate level.

The implementation of the F2F Strategy will initiate major changes in the agriculture, food and hospitality sectors. As current technologies and processes become obsolete, new skills will be required. It will therefore be imperative to invest substantial resources into education and reskilling programmes for workers, as well as new green technologies and the circular economy, in order to deliver new, sustainable jobs in the EFFAT sectors. In this respect, a major increase in EU and national funding for training and lifelong learning is needed.

9. Enhancing responsible food consumption to challenge workers exploitation

One of the declared objectives of the F2F Strategy is *to stimulate sustainable food consumption and promote affordable healthy food for all. Imported food that does not comply with relevant EU environmental standards is not allowed on EU markets. The Commission will propose actions to help consumers choose healthy and sustainable diets and reduce food waste.*

EFFAT believes that this commitment lacks ambition. The F2F Strategy cannot exclusively aim at the promotion of affordable healthy food produced in respect of environmental standards. Experience shows that affordable food often goes hand in hand with workers' exploitation. Food consumption, to be truly sustainable, must be conscious. Food supply chains generate millions of jobs worldwide and deliver customers a vast array of food products, all year round,



at ever-lower prices. But all too often low food prices hide many factors including the deplorable working and employment conditions of those producing our food. There are wide-ranging human and labour rights violations in food supply chains. It is a brutal irony that those producing our food are themselves among the most likely to be unable to adequately feed their own families.

EFFAT believes that there is a crying need to raise consumers' awareness about the damaging effects on human and workers' rights of excessively low food prices; to explain that quality and ethics also have a price. Raising consumers' awareness can also limit the pressure to keep food prices low, today even exacerbated by the competition of low-cost discounters.

EFFAT Demands

EFFAT demands that the F2F Strategy provides for the revision of EU law on food information to consumers (food labelling) and in particular Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011. The EU legal framework on food labelling must integrate the social dimension of sustainability. The process from cultivation, harvest, processing, and delivery to the consumer is long and has costs throughout the chain. Transparency must therefore be ensured for consumers concerning the costs and benefits related to each stage of the food chain. This is the only way to achieve truly sustainable food consumption

10. Don't forget about the "Fork" - Workers in the hospitality sector matter

One of the declared objectives of the F2F Strategy is promoting sustainable practices in hospitality and food services.

In this respect, EFFAT reiterates that the F2F Strategy as well as all resulting policy measures must consider the impact – even indirect – they can have on workers. All too often, under the pretence of implementing practices considered "sustainable", workers have to pay a very high price. For instance, many hotel companies have recently launched programmes that encourage guests to decline housekeeping services (i.e. cleaning of hotel rooms). In exchange, hotel companies reward guests with, for example, vouchers, extra points on the loyalty programme or clients can choose to make a donation. Some guests may believe that declining cleaning services helps the environment by reducing the use of detergents and chemical products. Others think that it helps housekeeping staff to ease their workload. Experience shows that neither is true. If hotel rooms are not cleaned daily, housekeepers have to use larger quantities of hazardous chemicals to remove extra dirt. These products are harmful to the environment and may cause damage to eyes, or cause irritation to skin, and irritate the throat and respiratory system. Moreover, implementing these programmes results in a reduction of the total number of worked hours and therefore has a direct consequence on workers' wages. Under the guise of environmental sustainability, the work has intensified, and the jobs become less sustainable.

EFFAT Demands

EFFAT does not want the the F2F strategy to focus only on the positive contribution the hospitality sector can make to the circular economy or the reduction of chemical products, packaging or food waste. It is crucial that the F2F Strategy as well as all resulting policy also considers the impact – even indirect – it can have on workers.

EFFAT demands that "green programmes" implemented in the hospitality sectors as part of Corporate Social Responsibility practices are assessed by public independent entities in order to evaluate their impact on working conditions.



Moreover, EFFAT believes that the F2F Strategy should be an opportunity to improve the working and employment conditions of workers in the hospitality sector, including platform workers such as food delivery riders and workers employed in short-term accommodation rental. The sector is affected by major challenges such as precarious work, and the progressive expansion of the platform economy.

11. To be “Just”, the transition needs proper funding

As the investment pillar of the European Green Deal, the Sustainable Europe Investment Plan sets out to mobilise at least €1 trillion of sustainable investments over the next decade. This amount of financing for the green transition is achieved through spending under the EU's proposed long-term budget, a quarter of which has been earmarked for climate-related purposes. The Plan aims also to crowd in additional private funding through leveraging the EU's budget guarantee under the InvestEU Programme that will support private and public climate and environmentally-related investments over the period 2021-2030.

The Just Transition Mechanism is intended to provide targeted support to help mobilise over €100 billion for the regions affected by the transition to net-zero emissions. But only €7.5 billion will be fresh money from the EU budget.

So far, the Just Transition Mechanism seems exclusively targeted at assisting coal dependent/fossil fuel intensive regions which will face significant challenges in adapting to greenhouse gas regulations and others. Whether agricultural regions that may be adversely affected will be eligible for assistance from the Just Transition Fund is as yet not clear.

EFFAT Demands

The allocated budget to achieve the ambitious goals of the EU Green Deal is insufficient. The same goes for the Just Transition Mechanism: the sums put forward will prove vastly insufficient to deal in a socially sustainable manner with the consequences of the expected transformation.

A further increase in the overall EU budget beyond the Commission's draft MFF proposal is therefore needed and new green investments should be deducted from deficit calculations in the Stability and Growth Pact targets.



EFFAT proposals and recommendations for action with respect to the announced EU Forest Strategy

1. Quality job creation must be placed at the centre of the new EU Forest Strategy

EFFAT welcomes the Commission engagement to preserve European forests as well as the acknowledgement of the role forest ecosystems can play in reaching climate neutrality. EFFAT looks forward to contributing to the development of the announced EU Forest Strategy which will build on the 2030 Biodiversity Strategy (expected by March 2020).

Fires, drought, floods and other natural disasters have affected several European regions in recent years with knock-on consequences for European forests. Forest workers are essential to maintaining forest ecosystems but, unfortunately, their number has dropped in recent years. These job cuts, which in many places have led to considerable labour shortages, are having a tangible negative impact on the sustainability of forest ecosystems.

EFFAT Demands

EFFAT calls on the European institutions to make sure that the announced new EU Forest Strategy supports the Member States in creating new jobs for qualified forest workers. Sufficient resources for training should also be allocated. EFFAT has calculated that at least 1 new job per 1,000 ha of forest area should be created to achieve the European Commission goals.

2. The new EU Forest Strategy should boost the job creation potential of the bioeconomy

One of the declared objectives of the upcoming EU Forest Strategy will be the promotion of the bioeconomy. Global challenges such as climate breakdown and worldwide population growth are forcing us as a matter of urgency to find substitutes for fossil fuels and to use bio-resources more efficiently.

Agriculture and the forest-based sector are major producers of biomass for uses other than food or feed and in this way are important contributors to the bioeconomy.

An EFFAT study¹ into the bioeconomy revealed that diversification into non-food biobased value chains can improve the profitability of food business operators, with positive implications for the safeguarding of current employment levels in the food industry. The potential for employment creation of smaller biobased production units should hence not be overlooked.

EFFAT Demands

The Green Deal and in particular the upcoming EU Forest Strategy must boost the job creation potential of the bioeconomy with concrete policy measures.

EFFAT highlights the need to continue the education and training of workers and primary producers. Provisions should also be made to bring in new, especially young and unemployed people.

¹ For more information: <https://www.effat.org/bioeconomy/>



ANNEX - EFFAT sectors and climate change

AGRICULTURE (agriculture, forestry and horticulture)

Globally, the force driving GHG emissions in agriculture is the expansion and intensification of high input, export-driven, fossil fuel-intensive monoculture production which externalizes costs, including the cost of climate change. Most of the deforestation which accounts for 18% of GHG emissions is linked to monoculture expansion, of which the expanded cultivation of soya in the Amazon basin is but the best-known example. In addition to high levels of greenhouse gasses, this method of production accelerates the already rapid loss of biodiversity, which is the foundation of life and of food. It promotes the destruction of soil organic matter, leading to topsoil erosion, flooding and the exhaustion of ground water supplies. The more intensive monoculture expands, the greater is the food system's vulnerability to climatic and biological shocks. These shocks have their greatest impact on the poor and the hungry – over half of whom are food producers.

Europe loses 970 million tonnes of soil every year, with more than 11% of the EU's territory affected by moderate to high soil erosion. Pesticides and nitrogen-based fertilizers are driving unprecedented impacts on plant and insect life. This includes biodiversity loss, which jeopardises a range of environmental services, including the pollination of many food crops, threatening future yields and costing some 3% of global GDP each year. Globally, food and farming systems contribute up to 30% of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. As much as 31% of the land required to meet EU food demand is located outside Europe. The EU imports some 22 million tons of soya-based animal feed every year, including from South American countries where deforestation (responsible for 20% of global CO₂ emissions), evictions, pesticide poisoning, and rights abuses have been alleged in intensive export cropping zones.

Some agricultural production methods, such as organic farming and near-natural forestry, attempt to prevent negative impacts on the living environment, soil and water. Other production methods try to reduce negative impacts on the living environment, soil and water by means of special programmes (field margins, hedges in fields, eco-islands, stepping stone biotopes, distance regulations to watercourses, ponds and lakes). Many companies produce energy from renewable raw materials and/or renewable energies and use this energy to reduce their own consumption of external energy. In some cases, more energy is generated here than consumed - a special contribution to stabilizing the climate.

Collective agreements and other social partnership agreements (in-company training, health and safety, etc.) make important contributions to improving the conditions for workers and reducing the use of hazardous chemical pesticides and other environmentally hazardous substances.

FOOD (food, beverages, tobacco)

The food and drink industry is the largest manufacturing sector in the EU with an annual turnover of over 1.2 trillion Euros and employing 4.72 million people, in particular in rural areas.

99 per cent of the sector is composed of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (source: FoodDrinkEurope, data and trends, 2019).

In Europe, the processing phase accounts for some 13.6 per cent of food related GHG emissions (source: Joint Research Centre, 2013), while total GHG emissions in the food and drink processing industry in the EU-15 decreased by 22% between 1990 and 2012 (sources: FoodDrinkEurope, A Time To Act, 2019; European Environment Agency (2014).

Annual European Union greenhouse gas inventory 1990-2012 and inventory report 2014, pp. 196-203).

Technology development can contribute to eco-efficient processing in the food industry through direct savings, mainly in energy and water use, and the reduction of waste. An even larger impact on sustainability can be expected from improvements in resource valorisation. The main inefficiencies within the food processing sector are food losses, suboptimal utilisation of by-products/processing residues and unnecessary quality decay within the supply chain (source: Technology options for feeding 10 billion people, European Parliament, 2013).

There can be no question of establishing a hierarchy between developing quality employment in Europe and combating environmental changes to achieve a more sustainable food system. These two challenges must be tackled simultaneously and with the same determination.

TOURISM (hotels, restaurant, catering, fast-food)

Tourism is at the same time “offender”, i.e. contributing to climate change, and “victim”, i.e. having to deal with the impact of climate change on tourism. The sensitivity and vulnerability of destinations (such as winter- and coastal-recreation locations) to weather and climate change also suggest that, as a result of climate change, the tourism industry will in turn undergo drastic future change and will need to adapt to increasing risk. Given future projections, the continuous monitoring and analysis of carbon emissions associated with tourism is becoming more pressing.

Tourism contributes significantly to global gross domestic product, and is forecast to grow at an annual 4%, thus outpacing many other economic sectors.

The global carbon footprint of tourism increased rapidly between 2009 and 2013, from 3.9 to 4.5 Gt of CO₂-equivalent emissions (CO₂e), accounting for ~8% of global GHG emissions. That’s an annual growth of 3.3%. Transport, shopping and food are significant contributors – indeed, international travel accounted for 23% of global carbon footprint of tourism in 2013. The rapid increase in tourism demand is effectively outstripping the decarbonization of tourism-related technology. In the hospitality sector, other issues with regard to climate change are e.g. packaging, food waste, energy consumption, water consumption and sewage, use of chemical cleaning products, etc.

As it stands, at least 15 per cent of tourism-related emissions do not face any binding emissions targets, as emissions from both international aviation and bunker shipping are excluded from the Paris climate agreement.