

A Farm to Fork Strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system

2020/2260(INI) - 20/10/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on a farm to fork strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system.

Parliament welcomed the ambitions and goals of the farm to fork strategy as an important step in ensuring a sustainable, fair, healthy animal friendly, more regional, diversified and resilient food system, which is central to achieving the goals set out in the European Green Deal and in the SDGs. It encouraged the Commission to translate the strategy into concrete legislative and non-legislative action as soon as possible, accompanied by the proper financial support mechanisms for the transition.

Need for action

Members welcomed the announcement of an evidence-based proposal for a legislative framework for sustainable food systems based on transparent data and taking into account the latest scientific knowledge. They invited the Commission to use this proposal to develop a comprehensive, balanced, integrated, environmentally, socially and economically sustainable common food policy. This proposal should take full account of farm animal welfare as a fundamental aspect of food sustainability.

Parliament also supported the development of strategic food policy plans, stressing the need for a new cross-cutting approach to governance is needed to ensure coherence between EU food and farming policies and those that influence them such as trade, energy, competition, and climate policies. It also welcomed the Commission's proposal to develop an emergency plan to guarantee food supply and security to coordinate a common European response to crises affecting food systems.

Building a food supply chain that works for citizens, workers, producers, distributors and the environment

Parliament called for measures to promote sustainable agriculture, reduce the use of pesticides, protect and restore soil ecosystems, to help the recovery of species and habitats protected by nature directives, including pollinators and their habitats.

According to Members, the regulatory framework for the authorisation of pesticides should encourage innovation and research for the development of better and safer plant protection products and alternatives to them. Members insisted that each Member State should establish robust, effective and time-bound quantitative reduction targets in their reviews of the CAP strategic plans and other relevant policy instruments, with the ambition of reducing to zero the agricultural emissions to soil, groundwater, surface water and air.

Antimicrobial resistance is a transnational and cross-border health threat that requires coordinated EU action. Members stressed the need to further reduce the use of antibiotics, including in food production. It welcomed the Commission's plan to reduce overall sales of antimicrobials for farmed animals and in aquaculture by 50% by 2030.

Healthier food

Parliament called on the Commission to ensure that a mandatory and harmonised EU front-of-pack nutritional label is developed based on robust, independent scientific evidence and demonstrated consumer understanding, with open access for all market operators including small and medium-sized operators, taking into account the additional burden to food operators and unions. In order to facilitate comparison across products, it should include an interpretive element to provide transparent, comparable and harmonised product information and be based on uniform reference amounts.

According to the report, Member States should be given more flexibility to differentiate the VAT rates on food with different health and environmental impacts and enable them to choose a zero VAT rate for healthy and sustainable food products such as fruits and vegetables and a higher VAT rate on unhealthy food and food that has a high environmental footprint.

Parliament also called for an improved EU policy to promote agricultural products and foodstuffs by focusing on European quality labels, such as the EU organic label and geographical indications, on short, local and regional supply chains, on healthy nutrition and lifestyles, and on promoting greater consumption of fruit and vegetables as part of a varied and balanced diet, and lower intake of sugar, salt and fats with the aim of reducing obesity rates.

Making the transition possible

The resolution stressed the importance of EU funding for research and innovation, especially for SMEs and smallholders, as key drivers in accelerating the transition to a more sustainable, productive and inclusive European food system. It pointed out that the introduction of new smart-farming technologies and techniques, including digitalisation and protected cropping systems, can be beneficial for improving efficiency.

In addition, Members highlighted the key role that young farmers will have in accomplishing the transition to sustainable farming and in delivering on the aims of the strategy.

Promoting the global transition

Members called on the Commission and the Member States to:

- ensure that all food and feed products imported into the EU fully comply with relevant EU legislation and the Unions high standards;
- maintain a holistic approach as the implementation of certain farm to fork strategy targets in the EU must not lead to the relocation of parts of agricultural production to other regions with lower standards than

the EU.