



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

THE EU PATHWAY TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION

(10 May 2023)

1. Introduction

The 2021 UN Food Systems Summit fully recognised the need for food systems transformation as a way forward to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

Sustainability has been at the heart of the EU agenda since the beginning of President Von der Leyen's mandate. The **European Green Deal** set outs a **new sustainable and inclusive growth strategy** to improve people's health and quality of life within planetary boundaries and leaving no one behind. The EU's Climate Law sets the EU on a pathway of reaching climate neutrality by 2050 and the Fit for 55 package paves the way to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the importance of transformation to robust and resilient food systems supported by a One Health approach, the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine is further exacerbating food insecurity globally, which makes it even more crucial to ensure that our food systems become sustainable in the longer term. The erratic weather with major events, such as droughts and floods, occurring at with increasing frequency and intensity, put food systems at immediate and long-term risk.

Within the European Green Deal, the **Farm to Fork** and the **Biodiversity Strategies** are the two central elements for the transformation of EU food systems, to make them sustainable and resilient. A transition towards sustainable food systems is a necessary step towards achieving EU's climate neutrality. These two strategies were designed to be mutually reinforcing, bringing together primary producers, businesses, researchers and innovators, the public sector and consumers to jointly engage for a sustainable future, while playing a crucial role to the fight against climate change and restoring nature. They are aiming at achieving the necessary transformation of the way we produce, process, distribute and consume food.

2. The EU Farm to Fork Strategy

The **Farm to Fork Strategy**¹ is the **EU blueprint for transformation towards a sustainable food system**² using a One Health approach that integrates human, animal, plant and environmental health.

The food systems approach encompasses the natural, technical, economic and social aspects of several interlinked activity areas, including primary production of food, and their inputs, yields and emissions, logistics, processing, transforming and packaging of food, marketing and distribution, food consumption and waste reduction and valorisation at each stage of the system; and the linkages between these elements. It will improve the understanding of the interdependencies between key parts of food systems at various scales and help set the basis for coherent action to reach the desired outcomes in terms of safe, sustainable and sufficient food, health, environmental and climate impact.

The Farm to Fork Strategy aims at transitioning towards sustainable food systems in the three dimensions of sustainability: social, environmental and economic.

The **social dimension of sustainability** includes human health (including the fight against antimicrobial resistance), as well as healthier diets (where healthy and sustainable food would be the easy choice for consumers), and the fight against overweight, obesity, diet-related diseases (*in 2017, 1 out of 5 deaths in the EU were attributable to unhealthy diets*³). The social dimension covers food availability and affordability (around 2.3 billion people in the world were moderately or severely food insecure in 2021⁴ while 36 million EU citizens cannot afford a quality meal every 2nd day). It also aims at fair economic returns, fostering competitiveness, safeguarding occupational health and safety, social rights for workers, as well as respect for human rights more widely in the food chain, promoting fair trade, ensuring integrity of the EU single market, and enhancing animal welfare. The Farm to Fork Strategy includes steps to provide better consumer information and to encourage industry to increase the availability and affordability of nutritious, sustainable food.

The **environmental dimension of sustainability** implies food systems that are in harmony with the environment, which would help reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, achieve global climate and biodiversity commitments and better respond to the triple environmental crisis that the world is facing, namely climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. In line with the EU Biodiversity Strategy, and the recently adopted Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, food systems should allow halting and reversing biodiversity loss across natural and managed ecosystems. Next to this, the Zero Pollution ambition aims at enhancing biodiversity by reducing pollution including from pesticides and fertilizers, and delivering sustainable food with less pollutants and enhanced nutritional qualities. Creating / re-creating landscape features in agricultural lands also contribute to restoring biodiversity and soil

¹ European Commission (2020) *A Farm to Fork Strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system*. https://ec.europa.eu/food/horizontal-topics/farm-fork-strategy_en
More details on the Farm to Fork Strategy are available: https://food.ec.europa.eu/horizontal-topics/farm-fork-strategy_en

² Council Conclusions on the Farm to Fork Strategy, as approved by the Agriculture and Fisheries Council on 19 October 2020 from: [st12099-en20.pdf \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/food/horizontal-topics/farm-fork-strategy_en)

³ https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/health-promotion-knowledge-gateway/eu-burden-non-communicable-diseases-key-risk-factors_en

⁴ The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World in 2022
(<https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cc0639en>)

protection. EU's transition to a circular and climate neutral economy, together with the ambition to reach zero pollution and the need to protect and enhance biodiversity have triggered an overall rethinking of how plastics are produced, used and disposed of. Food losses and waste must be reduced (10% of food made available to EU consumers may be wasted) in order to establish a circular bio-based economy which makes sure the EU gets the most value from all food resources including by-products, without compromising food safety, animal or human health.

Economic dimension of sustainability mainly consists in strengthening the capacity of EU operators to produce enough nutritious and diverse food for an increasing population at global level, at an affordable price. It aims at generating fairer economic returns for primary producers and Small and Medium Enterprises and their better distribution throughout all stages of the food supply chain for all food value systems' actors. Economic dimension fosters job opportunities, as well as competitiveness of the EU supply sector and the promotion of fair trade. At the same time, it aims at ensuring that consumers have access to healthy diets at an affordable price while price differences should reflect costs related to externalities such as the impact on natural resources.

A coherent sustainable food systems will enable economies of scale and creates incentives for the food business operators to develop more sustainable practices.

The Farm to Fork Strategy also recognizes that **food safety and security** are at the core of sustainable food systems.

3. EU and global food security

In line with the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Article 39.1), food security is one of the key objectives of the EU. The Farm to Fork Strategy fully acknowledges that sustainable food systems must ensure sufficient and varied supply of safe, nutritious, affordable and sustainable food to people at all times, not least in times of crisis, shocks, natural and man-made disasters.

The European Commission adopted a **European Union contingency plan**⁵, which outlines areas for improvement identified during the COVID-19 pandemic, the principles to adhere to in times of crisis, and sets up a European food security crisis preparedness and response Mechanism (EFSCM), in coordination with Member States and stakeholders, in case of crises threatening food security.

Following the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, the European Commission stressed in its Communication on safeguarding food security and reinforcing the resilience of food systems⁶ that food security interventions at global level need to contribute to more productive, diverse, resilient and inclusive food systems, in coherence with the international dimension of

⁵ Commission Communication on "Contingency plan for ensuring food supply and food security in times of crisis", adopted on 12 November 2021, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021SC0317&qid=1652455372931&from=EN>

⁶ Communication from the European Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: "Safeguarding food security and reinforcing the resilience of food systems", COM(2022)133 final. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:5391557a-aaa2-11ec-83e1-01aa75ed71a1.0002.02/DOC_1&format=PDF link to the press release https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_1963

the Farm to Fork Strategy. The Commission also published a staff working document that analyses the drivers of food security⁷, from both the supply and demand sides.

Moreover, in response to the deterioration of the global food insecurity situation as a consequence of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, in line with the Council Conclusions on global food insecurity adopted on 20 June 2022⁸, the European Union has put forward a comprehensive **Team Europe response to global food insecurity** along four complementary strands: a) solidarity, including emergency relief and affordability support; b) local production, resilience and food systems transformation; c) trade facilitation and work against unjustified restrictions in global trade of agricultural products and inputs, including through the Solidarity Lanes and the support to the implementation of the Black Sea Grain Initiative; and d) multilateralism. So far, the EU and the Member States have committed an estimated EUR 18 billion as part of this response, covering 2021-2024, from which around EUR 8.3 billion from the EU. Around half of this support goes to Africa and the Middle East, the regions most affected by food insecurity.

Regarding EU Humanitarian Food Assistance, the fight against acute hunger and malnutrition is at the center of humanitarian and nutrition interventions in emergencies responding to specific needs of targeted vulnerable groups, with funding being allocated on the basis of these needs. In 2022 for instance, the EU increased its humanitarian food and nutrition assistance by 60%, reaching around EUR 950 million, to support countries affected by the unprecedented food crisis, exacerbated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. At the same time, these immediate responses can and do link to longer term development interventions (humanitarian-development-peace nexus).

The EU supports partner countries to reduce their dependency on imported mineral fertilisers by investing in efficiency of use, alternative green and organic fertilisers, and sustainable agricultural practices and soil fertility management (e.g. agro-ecology), as highlighted in the Communication on fertilisers published on 9 November 2022⁹.

4. Policies and actions towards sustainable food systems

The Farm to Fork Strategy puts forward an initial list of **27 actions**¹⁰, of both **legislative and non-legislative nature** at all stages of the food value chain to achieve a successful transition towards sustainable food systems. Similar actions were also identified as components of a successful transition by the UN Food Systems Summit and its Action Tracks activities (e.g. green procurements, sustainable and healthy diets, reduction of food loss and waste, labelling, fight against antimicrobial resistance).

⁷ https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2023-01/SWD_2023_4_1_EN_document_travail_service_part1_v2.pdf

⁸ Council of the European Union conclusions on "Team Europe response to global food insecurity", adopted on 20 June 2022, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-10066-2022-INIT/en/pdf>

⁹ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:c82d9dd0-61b9-11ed-92ed-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_1&format=PDF ;

Annexes: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:c82d9dd0-61b9-11ed-92ed-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_2&format=PDF

¹⁰ For more details on all the actions and their state of pay /progresses see : https://food.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-04/f2f_timeline-actions_en.pdf

The Farm to Fork Strategy also foresees actions to stimulate sustainable practices by food industry and retail, food processors, hospitality and food service as they all play a pivotal role in the food systems. The EU “**Code of Conduct** on responsible food business and marketing practices”¹¹ was finalised in July 2021. Its objective is to stimulate concrete voluntary initiatives by all actors of the middle food supply chain, such as food processors, food service operators and retailers towards the sustainability of the food value chain and to promote healthy and sustainable consumption patterns. The creation of a healthy food environment will also help in making the healthiest and most sustainable choice the easiest one for the consumers, and will also help in reducing the environmental footprint.

The Farm to Fork Strategy included an initiative on ‘corporate governance framework’ with requirements for the food industry to integrate sustainability into their corporate strategies. In this respect, the European Commission adopted a proposal for a **Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive**¹², in February 2022. The proposal aims to foster sustainable and responsible corporate behaviour throughout global value chains. Companies have a corporate due diligence duty to identify, prevent, mitigate, and bring to an end and account for negative human rights and environmental impacts in their own operations, subsidiaries and value chains. This duty also refers to their value chains outside the European Union¹³. SMEs will not be subject to corporate diligence duty but rather guidance and other tools will be put in place to help them gradually to integrate sustainability considerations in their business operations. The duty has been largely aligned with the steps of the OECD due diligence standards and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

Legislation on **materials in contact with food** (including food packaging) will be revised to help increase food safety and public health, and support the use of innovative and sustainable packaging solutions.

Amongst the Farm to Fork actions, a **legislative proposal to establish a framework for sustainable food systems** should be brought forward by the end of 2023, aiming to gradually raise sustainability standards. The purpose of such EU level intervention is to establish the new foundations for future food policies by introducing sustainability objectives and principles on the basis of an integrated food systems approach. It will be the basis to ensure policy coherence at EU and national level and to mainstream sustainability in food-related policies. It will include a **framework on labelling** that will govern the provision of information to consumers on the sustainability-related information on food products regarding their climate, environment and socio-economic aspects with the objective to empower consumers to make informed, healthy and sustainable food choices. The Farm to Fork recognizes the importance of animal welfare¹⁴ and includes a revision of the **animal welfare** legislation in order to align it with the latest scientific evidence and citizen’s expectations.

Food fraud is part of the Farm to Fork list of actions, and it aims at scaling up the fight against food fraud to achieve a level playing field for operators as well as to strengthen the powers of

¹¹ https://food.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-06/f2f_sfpd_coc_final_en.pdf

¹² https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/proposal-directive-corporate-sustainable-due-diligence-and-annex_en

¹³ https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/proposal-directive-corporate-sustainable-due-diligence-and-annex_en

¹⁴ https://food.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-04/f2f_timeline-actions_en.pdf ; [Revision of the animal welfare legislation \(europa.eu\)](#);

control and enforcement authorities and to enhance their coordination to enforce single market rules.

The **Biodiversity Strategy**¹⁵ aims to protect nature and reverse the degradation of ecosystems. This strategy aims to build our societies' resilience to future threats (forest fires, food insecurity, climate change, diseases' outbreaks) and sets global targets to protect and restore biodiversity in the EU across natural and managed ecosystems. The strategy was a EU's key contribution to the successful adoption of the Kunming-Montreal **Global Biodiversity Framework** by the 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. As announced in the Strategy, the Commission adopted the legal proposals on Nature Restoration Law and Sustainable Use of Pesticides.

The proposal for a **Nature Restoration Law**¹⁶, including the binding restoration targets and the commitments to reverse the decline in pollinators is a key step in avoiding ecosystem collapse and preventing the worst impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss on agriculture. Restoring EU wetlands, rivers, forests, grasslands, marine ecosystems, urban environments and the species they host is a crucial and cost-effective investment into food security, climate resilience, health, and well-being.

In the same vein, the proposal for a Regulation on **Sustainable Use of Pesticides**¹⁷, including the binding targets to reduce by 50% the use and the risk of chemical pesticides and the use of the more hazardous pesticides by 2030 as well as the new rules on environmentally friendly pest control, aims to reduce the environmental footprint of the EU's food system, protect the health and well-being of citizens and agricultural workers, and help mitigate the economic losses that we are already incurring due to declining soil health and pesticide-induced pollinator loss.

The **Regulation on Veterinary Medicinal Products**¹⁸ includes a wide range of concrete measures to fight against antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and to promote a more prudent and responsible use of antimicrobials in animals. It notably sets an enlarged ban on the use of antimicrobials for growth promotion or yield increase purposes and a ban on the preventive use of antibiotics in groups of animals. Its efficient implementation will be paramount to achieve the Farm to Fork objective of reducing by 50% overall EU sales of antimicrobials for farmed animals and in aquaculture by 2030.

The **Common Agricultural Policy**¹⁹ and **Common Fisheries Policy**²⁰ play a key role in the transformation of the EU food systems. The Common Agricultural Policy will play a particularly important role as the Member States have to consider the objectives and targets of the Farm to Fork Strategy in their National Strategic Plans.

The Common Agricultural Policy has been designed to guide and support European farmers – including small farmers – to improve their environmental and climate performance through a more results-oriented model. The Common Agricultural Policy also provides for a framework

¹⁵ https://environment.ec.europa.eu/strategy/biodiversity-strategy-2030_en

¹⁶ https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/nature-and-biodiversity/nature-restoration-law_en

¹⁷ https://food.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-06/pesticides_sud_eval_2022_reg_2022-305_en.pdf

¹⁸ <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2019/6/oj>

¹⁹ https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy_en

²⁰ https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/policy/common-fisheries-policy-cfp_en

where both economic and social aspects of sustainability of the food systems are enhanced. For example, rules favouring cooperation within the food supply chain and limiting unfair trading practices (UTP Directive) contribute to a better functioning of the EU food supply chain²¹. The Farm to Fork Strategy recognises that the organic action plan provides the framework for enhancing the contribution of the organic sector to sustainable and resilient practices in agriculture as well as to the provision of healthy food. The Common Agricultural Policy improves the response of EU agriculture to societal demands on food and health, including high-quality, safe and nutritious food produced in a sustainable way, to reduce food waste²², as well as to improve animal welfare and combat antimicrobial resistance. It will also foster sustainable development and efficient management of natural resources such as water, soil and air, including by reducing chemical dependency.

Sustainably managed and caught fish, farmed fish and seafood are a source of high quality and affordable protein with a relatively low carbon footprint²³. Sustainable fishing and managed fish stocks are essential to food security for many people and to maintaining the economic basis of fishing communities. These actions are also key to protecting ocean biodiversity and fighting against climate change. The Common Fisheries Policy is bearing positive results and commits to step up efforts to bring fish stocks to sustainable levels. Moreover, the Farm to Fork Strategy calls to scale up the fight against fraud, strengthen the EU's fisheries control system – currently in negotiations- and enhance the traceability system²⁴. As announced in the Biodiversity Strategy, in February 2023, the European Commission has presented an *Action Plan to conserve fisheries resources and protect marine ecosystems*²⁵. This Action Plan will contribute to the production of sustainably managed and harvested fish of high quality and affordable protein.

Marketing standards for agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture products are being revised to stimulate the uptake and supply of sustainable products²⁶.

As mentioned further above, the Farm to Fork Strategy includes a target to reduce the overall EU sales of antimicrobials by 50% for farmed animals and in aquaculture by 2030. It also aims at a significant increase in organic aquaculture. In May 2021, the European Commission adopted the new **Strategic Guidelines for the sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture**²⁷. The Farm to Fork Strategy also stresses the potential of algae and calls for the support to its production and use in the EU. Accordingly, in November 2022, the European Commission presented its **algae initiative**²⁸ to unlock the potential of algae in the European Union.

²¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019L0633&from=EN>

²² To improve EU response to the challenge: by financing processing and storage capacities, and by financing trainings/tools for producers and processors as well as training, awareness and tools to improve of communication/cooperation between producers and other actors in the food chain”.

²³ Bianchi, M., Hallström, E., Parker, R.W.R. et al. Assessing seafood nutritional diversity together with climate impacts informs more comprehensive dietary advice. *Commun Earth Environ* 3, 188 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43247-022-00516-4>.

²⁴ Making seafood products traceable from point-of-catch to final point-of-sale is a necessary precondition to combating illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, achieving sustainable fisheries and healthy fish stocks, and safeguarding the livelihoods of fisheries-dependent communities.

²⁵ https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-02/COM-2023-102_en.pdf

²⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_23_2366

²⁷ https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/ocean/blue-economy/aquaculture/aquaculture-guidelines_en

²⁸ [Communication from the Commission: Towards a strong and sustainable EU algae sector \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_23_2366)

About 95% of food produced in Europe, comes from terrestrial sources and depends on healthy soils. However, soils are scarce, non-renewable resources, that are under threat throughout Europe and beyond. It has estimated that about 60 to 70% of EU soils are unhealthy.²⁹ **The Soil Strategy for 2030**³⁰ and the announcement to propose a Soil Health Law aims to tackle the problem of continuing and aggravating soil degradation in the EU, and presents healthy soil as an important solution for the biodiversity and climate crises as well as to prevent fresh- and sea-water degradation, but also for other societal challenges such as food security and safety. The new strategy sets the vision that by 2050 all soils should be healthy and resilient in the EU, which will require decisive changes. The Soil Strategy also puts forward a significant number of actions in relation to climate change, circular economy, environmental and human health, clean water, sustainable soil management, desertification and soil pollution. The EU Mission ‘A Soil Deal for Europe’ together with the European Soil Observatory (EUSO) will work in synergy with the future Soil Health Law and form a unique and robust framework to address soil and land stewardship at the necessary scale and pace and across all types of land use and sectors.

Carbon farming approaches that reward farmers for preserving or increasing soil organic carbon can also improve soil quality and its fertility: the Commission communication on **Sustainable Carbon Cycles**³¹ promotes carbon farming through a series of actions, and the recently adopted Commission proposal for the certification of carbon removals³² will enable new business opportunities around carbon farming.

The upcoming **Regulation on deforestation-free products**³³ aims to reduce deforestation by setting provisions for commodities linked to a high risk of deforestation: soy, beef, palm oil, coffee, cocoa, timber and rubber as well as derived products (such as furniture, or chocolate). This new law will ensure that a set of key goods placed on the EU market will no longer contribute to deforestation and forest degradation in the EU and elsewhere in the world and in turn reducing greenhouse gas emissions and biodiversity loss.

The European Green Deal announced headline actions on zero pollution such as: a) on Chemical strategy for sustainability- to better protect citizens and the environment against hazardous chemicals; b) zero pollution action plan for water, air and soil - to better prevent, remedy, monitor and report on pollution; and c) revising measures to address pollution from large industrial installations - to ensure they are consistent with climate, energy and circular economy policies.

The 2020 European **Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability**³⁴ encompasses a number of work strands (foreseeing reinforced action on substances with particularly concerning properties such as being endocrine disruptors and chemical mixtures, the single assessment of a substance “one substance-one assessment” across different legislative requirements, etc.), with the aim to better protect citizens and the environment from harmful chemicals and boost innovation by promoting the use of safer and more sustainable chemicals.

²⁹ Veerman et al (2020): Technical report of the Mission Board Soil Health and Food “Caring for Soil is Caring for Life”, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/4ebd2586-fc85-11ea-b44f-01aa75ed71a1>

³⁰ https://environment.ec.europa.eu/publications/eu-soil-strategy-2030_en

³¹ [Sustainable carbon cycles \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_7156/smo)

³² https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_7156/smo

³³ https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/forests/deforestation/regulation-deforestation-free-products_en

³⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/environment/pdf/chemicals/2020/10/Strategy.pdf>

It is part of the European Union's **zero pollution**³⁵ strategy to help to deliver on the overarching common vision to reach a toxic-free environment across the EU by 2050 for air, water and soil pollution to be reduced to levels no longer considered harmful to health and natural ecosystems, that respect the boundaries with which our planet can cope, thereby creating a toxic-free environment, including by revision of the food waste and industrial emissions targets. This is translated into key 2030 targets to speed up reducing pollution at source. The EU zero pollution action plan 'Towards Zero Pollution for Air, Water and Soil' aims to better prevent, remedy, monitor and report on pollution, as a pathway to a "Healthy Planet for All". It provides a compass to mainstream pollution prevention in all relevant EU policies, to step up implementation of the relevant EU legislation and to identify possible gaps.

The new Commission's proposal for the revision of the Industrial Emissions Directive aims to, inter alia, reduce methane emissions from livestock³⁶.

In March 2020, the European Commission adopted a **new circular economy action plan**³⁷, one of the main building blocks of the European Green Deal. The transition to a circular economy will reduce pressure on natural resources and will create sustainable growth and jobs. It is also a prerequisite to achieve the EU's 2050 climate neutrality target and to halt biodiversity loss. The legislative proposal on substantiating **green claims**³⁸ establishes a full set of rules for the substantiation, communication and verification of environmental claims, with the aim to make claims reliable, comparable and verifiable, fight greenwashing, create a level-playing field for operators and enable consumers to make informed choices.

Research and Innovation (R&I) policy has a key role to play in supporting food and nutrition security and the transition towards sustainable food systems. **Horizon Europe**³⁹ is the EU's multi-annual framework programme for R&I (2021-2027), via which a diversity of actors, disciplines, sectors and countries are being supported to gain knowledge and develop impact-driven innovation relevant to agriculture and food, like nature-based and agroecological approaches, alternative proteins, and digitalisation. **Food 2030**, which is being deployed via Horizon Europe, is a framework for a systemic approach to R&I for the transition towards sustainable, healthy and inclusive food systems⁴⁰. Food 2030 aligns with the EU Green Deal and Farm to Fork Strategy and reinforces the science-policy interface for food systems governance. It is underpinned by the need for inter and transdisciplinarity, multi-actor engagement, and supports all forms of innovation needed to develop, test and demonstrate impactful and scalable solutions delivering co-benefits to climate, health, environment and communities, with a potential for market-uptake and/or for the global commons.

³⁵ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52021DC0400&from=EN>

³⁶ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:32d55555-c550-11ec-b6f4-01aa75ed71a1.0001.03/DOC_1&format=PDF

³⁷ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0098&from=EN>

³⁸ Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on substantiation and communication of explicit environmental claims (Green Claims Directive)

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52023PC0166&from=EN>

³⁹ **Multi-annual framework programme Horizon Europe:** https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/research-area/environment/bioeconomy/food-systems/food-2030_en

⁴⁰ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/research-area/environment/bioeconomy/food-systems/food-2030_en

The Better Training for Safer Food initiative provides support to Member States for improving the knowledge and implementation of the Farm to Fork Strategy policies in the area of food, animal health and welfare among others.

5. International Cooperation

5.1 Supporting the transition in developing countries

The EU supports the global transition to sustainable food systems, in line with the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals, by encouraging and enabling the development of comprehensive, integrated responses benefiting people, nature and economic growth, with due regard to distinct challenges in different parts of the world.

The EU is legally and politically committed to take into account the objectives of development cooperation in the policies that it implements. Given the complexity of global food systems, it is inevitable that some EU policy choices towards high sustainability standards may have effects in other countries. Recognising this, the EU intends to organise **targeted consultations** with developing and partner country stakeholders in order to get a better understanding of their particular needs and best accompany them in the corresponding transition processes.

In response to evolving EU measures, developing and partner countries may require support in the form of technical expertise and **capacity building**. The European Commission already actively offers considerable technical assistance to developing countries⁴¹ as well as to the Western Balkans and Türkiye⁴². Moreover the European Commission facilitates the early identification of potential effects of EU measures on low- and medium-income countries⁴³.

The EU actively works with partner countries in the Western Balkans, its neighborhood and in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean to address food system issues and tackle global challenges like climate change, biodiversity loss, ocean degradation and pollution⁴⁴.

The **EU is supporting country-level food systems assessments, coordinated by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)** in over 40 partner countries. The objective of these assessments is to assist partner countries to make relevant policy decisions in the transformation to sustainable food systems. Finally, Research and Innovation that supports food system transition in partner countries are also part of the EU effort with specific emphasis on

⁴¹ Including through programmes such as Fit For Market + (see: www.coleacp.org/current-programmes/fit-for-market-plus/) and Plantwise+, (see: [Home – PlantwisePlus](#))

⁴² See:

https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/news/european-commission-will-support-agriculture-and-rural-development-pre-accession-countries-over-2022-03-23_en

⁴³ The AGRINFO programme is a relevant case in point: www.coleacp.org/current-programmes/agrinfo/

⁴⁴ Examples of EU supported projects and programmes are: [Capacity4dev | Connecting the Development Community \(europa.eu\)](#), and to the Global Network against Food Crises www.fightfoodcrises.net [EU4Environment](#) in the Eastern neighbourhood (includes biodiversity and forestry as areas of work. More projects on agriculture in the Eastern neighbourhood [here](#). [Green Agenda for the Western Balkans](#) with a dedicated pillar on biodiversity and one on sustainable food systems and rural areas ([here](#)). Projects on sustainable agriculture in the Southern neighbourhood include [InnoAgroWoMed](#), [MedSNAIL](#) and [ORGANIC ECOSYSTEM](#). The [EU-AU Research and Innovation \(R&I\) Partnership on Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture \(FNSSA\)](#) is a major tool for food systems transition innovations with a total investment of more than 400 m€ (2016-2021).

agroecology and nature-based solutions, value chains, natural resources management and digitalisation.

To assist partner countries to strengthen their food systems, the EU mobilises various **financial instruments**, including the Neighborhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI-GE). Sustainable agriculture is part of the Global Gateway strategy, the EU’s positive offer to the world to promote sustainable investments in view of the twin green and digital transition and human development – in cooperation with the EU Member States, financial institutions, development finance institutions and private sector.

5.2 Bilateral and multilateral cooperation

The EU has reached out to a large number of national authorities of third countries and regions to explain the Farm to Fork Strategy and other initiatives, and to promote the transformation towards sustainable food systems. The aim of this outreach is to establish dialogues with third countries and regions to increase the mutual understanding and establish areas on which to work together in.

The EU is the world’s biggest exporter and the third biggest importer of food products. Compliance with EU sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) standards is a key condition for trading agricultural products as well as fish and seafood products, which account for a large share of the traded goods in the European Union.

The EU is not only promoting sustainable food systems in its bilateral and multilateral policy dialogues but also including ambitious sustainable food related provisions in all relevant **agreements that are negotiated with third countries**. In particular, a **Chapter on Sustainable Food System** in addition to the Chapter on SPS matters, is being included in the negotiation of the Trade Agreements. So far, negotiation has successfully concluded with Chile and New Zealand, much progressed with Australia, and ongoing with India and Indonesia. Provisions to cooperate on Sustainable Food Systems have also be included in the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Thailand.

The EU actively promotes the Farm to Fork Strategy in the preparation and participation in many international **multilateral forums**. It actively collaborate with the FAO, the World Health Organisation (WHO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the United Nations Environment Programmes (UNEP), the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and others as to synergise efforts and move forward sustainable food systems transformation and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

The EU will also promote the consideration of sustainability aspects and the application of a One Health approach in **international standard-setting bodies** such as the Codex Alimentarius⁴⁵ Commission, the World Organisation on Animal Health (WOAH) and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC).

The EU was strongly engaged in **the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit** and its follow-up, in particular, by advancing national dialogues and national pathways for food systems

⁴⁵ EU Council Conclusions on Codex :

<https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6298-2022-INIT/en/pdf>

transformation. The EU will support partner countries and stakeholders in these processes, and is currently analysing their national pathways to better inform policy dialogue on priority actions for food systems transformation⁴⁶. Moreover, the **European Commission is part of the following coalitions for action**: (1) Food is never waste; (2) Healthy Diets from Sustainable Food Systems for Children and all; (3) School Meals; (4) Aquatic and Blue foods; (5) Agro-ecology; (6) Zero Hunger; (7) Fighting food crises along the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus; (8) Sustainable Productivity Growth⁴⁷. Another contribution to the follow-up of the Summit is the publication of the report “Everyone at the table: Transforming food systems by connecting science, policy and society”⁴⁸ that explores the needs, gaps and options to strengthen the international science-policy interfaces (SPIs) for food systems transformation, which concludes that food systems SPIs must be better supported and interconnected, and provides recommendations and pathways needed to achieve that, such as multilateral governance, multisectoral task forces, and a network of networks. It highlights that food systems transformation is predominantly a social issue, so the concept of SPIs needs to evolve into Science-Policy-Society interfaces, where society is engaged in the process.

The twelfth **Ministerial Conference of the WTO**⁴⁹ has adopted a Declaration on “Responding to Modern SPS Challenges” which will also allow for a dialogue on new challenges related to sustainability, including sustainable food systems, climate change, biodiversity conservation, food security, rural development and employment.

The **UN Framework on Climate Change** (UNFCCC COP 27) addressed the agriculture sector. There was an agreement on a new four-year plan on Agriculture and Food Security, a new initiative aimed at scaling up finance to transform agriculture by 2030, and an agreement to provide “loss and damage” funding for vulnerable countries hit hard by climate disasters, with an expansion of the donor base.

The 15th Conference of the Parties to the **Convention on Biological Diversity** (CBD COP15), to which the EU and all its MS are a Party, adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and the resumed Fifth Intergovernmental Conference succeeded to complete the negotiations on a new legally binding agreement under UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. Several goals and targets of the GBF concern the agriculture sector: restore 30% degraded ecosystems globally (on land and sea) by 2030, reduce risk from pesticides by at least 50% by 2030, reduce nutrients lost to the environment by at least 50% by 2030, reduce global footprint of consumption, halve food waste, and sustainably manage areas under agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries, and forestry and substantially increase agroecology and other biodiversity-friendly

⁴⁶https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/global-food-nutrition-security/topic/sustainable-food-systems/navigation-page/united-nations-food-systems-summit-2021/country-priority-actions-food-systems-transformation_en

⁴⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_1971

⁴⁸ European Commission (2022) *Everyone at the Table: Transforming food systems by connecting science, policy and society*, P. Webb, R. Sonnino, E. Fraser and T. Arnold,), Publications Office.

<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/28ef3336-ec56-11ec-a534-01aa75ed71a1>

European Commission (2021), *Everyone at the table: co-creating knowledge for food systems transformation*, Webb, P. and R. Sonnino (eds), Publications Office.

https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/news/all-research-and-innovation-news/everyone-table-co-creating-knowledge-food-systems-transformation-2021-08-05_en

⁴⁹ <https://docs.wto.org/dol2fe/Pages/SS/directdoc.aspx?filename=q:/WT/MIN22/27.pdf&Open=True>

practices. The Commission is currently assessing to what extent existing and proposed legislation and initiatives are aligned with the GBF.