

National pathway of Hungary towards sustainable food systems

I. Introduction

The UN Food Systems Summit (UN FSS) was held in September 2021 on the initiative of the UN Secretary-General. UN FSS organizers recommended to each UN member state to organize national and/or regional dialogues with the involvement of as many stakeholders as possible. These dialogues can highly contribute to the transformation of food systems towards sustainable ones by 2030 and also to the preparation of national pathways to achieve sustainable food systems.

This document intends to define Hungary's tasks in short term (3 years) and in long term (10 years) based on the conclusions of the national dialogues.

II. Assessment - Natural and structural conditions of the Hungarian agriculture

Thanks to its very favourable natural and climatic endowments, Hungary has had a significant and internationally appreciated agricultural sector for centuries, and a considerable share of its products are processed by the domestic food industry. Moderate climate, fertile soils and outstanding water endowment together with high levels of technology and knowledge enable agriculture to supply domestic citizens and foreign markets with safe, high quality food. In Hungary the annual precipitation amount is between 500-750 mm.

The utilised agricultural area and arable land in the total land area is high in international comparison. Out of the 9.3 million hectares of the country's total area, 53 percent (4.9 million hectares) is under agricultural cultivation. More than half of the agricultural area is cultivated by individual farms, and nearly 40 per cent by business organisations. In line with Government policies, there has been an increase in the amount of land used by individual farms in recent years. The property structure is dual, with the presence of a large number of small farms parallel with a small number of large farms using a considerable part of agricultural areas. In the last 10 years the number and utilised area of middle sized individual farms has increased. Farms cultivating land area of 5-300 hectares have an outstanding role, they use about three quarter of the orchards and vineyards, 55 per cent of arable land and 61 per cent of grassland. The average size of arable land was 27 hectares, orchards 2.6 hectares, vineyards 1.8 and grassland 14.7 hectares.

Year by year, the external trade of agricultural and food industry products is contributing largely to the positive balance of the national economy, therefore it has a significant macroeconomic role. In the past years, agriculture provided half- two-thirds of the positive balance of the national economy. The rate of agricultural exports within the total exports of the national economy was 9.2 percent in 2020, and the agricultural economy contributed EUR 3,205 million to the EUR 5,795 million foreign trade surplus of the national economy.

External trade of agriculture is highly Europe-oriented with 82.5 percent of the exports made to EU countries in 2020. The share of the old Member States in the total exports was 46.8 percent, while that of the new Member States was 35.7 percent. In 2020, the five largest export markets – Germany (EUR 1,475 million), Romania (EUR 1,340 million), Italy (EUR 1,137 million), Austria (EUR 790 million) and Slovakia (EUR 790 million) – together accounted for 54.8 percent of all agricultural exports.

III. Assessment – Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals of the Agenda 2030

Hungary was part of the [national voluntary review on the sustainable development goals in 2018](#), which greatly enhanced policy coherence for sustainable development and the national implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The report shows that the most important issues for Hungary in relation to sustainable food systems and the sustainable development goals are SDG 1, 2, 3, 8, 11, 12, 14 (end poverty, end hunger, ensure healthy lives and promote well-being, decent work, make cities and human settlements sustainable, ensure sustainable consumption and production, aquatic resources for sustainable development). Measures related to sustainable consumption and production, healthy lives and the protection of natural resources and the preservation of biodiversity will be also important for achieving the Agenda 2030.

IV. Assessment – Current evaluation of the Hungarian food systems and nutrition

Hungary was ranked number 25 out of 165 in the SDG Index of the Sustainable Development Report 2021 published by the [Sustainable Development Solutions Network](#).

Hungary was classified number 36 with a score of 70,1 at [the Global Food Security Index \(GFSI\)](#). According to this study the strengths of the Hungarian food security systems are: Food safety net programmes, Proportion of population under global poverty line, Food safety, Food loss, Market access and agricultural financial services, Micronutrient availability, Protein quality, Political and social barriers to access, Dietary diversity. In 2018, a European level consumer study, published by European Food Safety Authority, identified National Food Chain Safety Office as the most trusted national level public food safety authority in the EU. Challenges of the System are: agricultural research and development, water management, access to agricultural technology, poverty and inequalities, healthy diet and obesity.

Assessment of the nutritional status and NCD risk factors of the Hungarian population

Life expectancy in Hungary at birth was 77.3 years in 2020, an increase of five years since 2000, slightly greater than the average increase across the EU (3.6 years)¹. Despite this, life expectancy at birth remained below the EU average, which was 81.3 years in 2019.² Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) comprise the greatest fraction of deaths in Hungary, accounting for approximately 94% of all deaths in 2016, with 48% attributable to cardiovascular diseases (CVDs), 26% to cancer and 2% to diabetes³. It is estimated that half of all deaths in Hungary can be attributed to behavioural risk factors, including poor diet, tobacco smoking, alcohol consumption and low physical activity. Some 28 % of all deaths may be attributed to dietary risks (including low fruit and vegetable intake, and high sugar, fat and salt consumption). Tobacco consumption, including direct and passive smoking, was

¹ OECD/European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies (2019), Hungary: Country Health Profile 2019, State of Health in the EU, OECD Publishing, Paris/European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, Brussels.

² Mortality and life expectancy statistics (2021), Eurostat, Statistics explained:

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Mortality_and_life_expectancy_statistics&oldid=549020#Life_expectancy_at_birth

³ Noncommunicable diseases country profiles 2018. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2018.

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implicated in an estimated 21 % of all deaths, with around 10 % attributable to alcohol consumption and 4 % to low physical activity¹. One in three Hungarian adults (33%) was obese in 2019⁴. Overweight and obesity rates are also becoming a major problem among Hungarian children. Almost one in five 15-year-olds were overweight or obese in 2013-14, and overweight and obesity rates are even higher among younger children at age 7 (25%) according to the Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative measurements carried out in 2019. The Hungarian Government has taken a series of measures to improve nutrition, including the introduction of a Public Health Product Tax to reduce consumption of non-staple food products that carry proven health risks in 2011 and the adoption of a legislation to control trans-fatty acids (TFAs) in food in 2013 as well as setting legal standards in public catering.

V. Results and steps to do towards more sustainable food systems – key areas

V. a) Nutrition and sustainable consumption - SDG2, SDG3, SDG 12

Results:

Several policy interventions, programs, and initiatives contribute to healthy and sustainable food consumption in Hungary.

Policy interventions:

- Public Health Product Tax – excise tax on non-staple, pre-packaged food products that carry proven health risks containing added sugar, salt, caffeine (methyl xanthine) above certain levels
- Decree on the highest permitted level of trans fats in food products – restrictions of the total amount of TFA in foods
- Decree on the nutritional regulation of public catering – setting nutritional standards on food provided by public caterers. Furthermore the Hungarian Government provides 50-100% catering subsidy for the socially disadvantaged children.
- Decree on public procurement rules – promoting local food products in public catering
- Decree of Minister on the operation of educational institutions and on the use of names of public educational institutions prohibited selling of foods and drinks subject to the Public Health Product Tax, and alcoholic and tobacco products in education premises and at school events. Besides, it orders that supply of canteens and vending machines has to be approved by the school health team. Hungary has food based dietary guidelines for adults and children which take into account environmental sustainability (www.okostanyer.hu), furthermore a specific guideline was developed for the elderly (<https://merokanal.hu/60pluszegeszseg/>). Practical implementation of these dietary goals is promoted through nation-wide nutrition and food waste prevention programs.

National programs

Short Food Supply Chain Program,

Year of the Local Products

Food Chain Safety Strategy 2013-2022

Awareness raising programmes:

- [“Healthy Nutrition Promoting School”](#) program
- [Get smart about food!](#) (Ételt csak okosan) awareness raising campaign about household food safety risks

⁴ Hungarian Diet and Nutritional Status Survey 2019

- [Wasteless](#) – national level food waste prevention programme that focuses on household food waste prevention and also collects and distributes good practices for food industry, catering&restaurants and retail
- Wasteless sub-campaign, called “Vegyél számba!” – Project Wasteless launched a sub-campaign in August 2019 about the proper storage of fruits and vegetables. It also lays emphasis on the promotion of seasonality and the appreciation of irregularly shaped fruits and vegetables.
- [SuperMint \(Szupermenta\)](#) awareness raising programme about food quality and conscious shopping
- High Quality Food (Kiváló Minőségű Élelmiszer) trademark that also embraces sustainability aspects and require commitments from producers
- [Nébih Educational Programme](#) – free online (and printed&shipped on demand) childhood education programme packages about food safety and food waste prevention by the National Food Chain Safety Office
- [HAPPY-week](#) - The Hungarian Aqua Promotion Program in the Young (HAPPY) was developed to promote water and reduce sugary drink consumption among children. Since 2010 the program has been organized every year with a weekly series of activities revolving around water consumption.
- Educational programs supporting healthy food consumption (Green Kindergarten and Eco-School program, School-garden promotion program).

Tasks on short term:

1. Encourage promotion of local products particularly through better information to consumers, and to the stakeholders of catering sector.
2. Continue the awareness raising and educational campaigns about healthy and sustainable diet, in particular on the importance of the locally produced, seasonal fruits and vegetables, and food waste reduction to increase conscious consumer behaviour towards nature and sustainability.
3. Educational and awareness raising campaign to the general public on healthy and sustainable diet.
4. Continuous development of the dietary guidelines with considerations of the health, sustainability and cultural aspects
5. Develop national online foodstuff nutrient database to provide reliable information on foodstuff nutrients and to support the healthy choice of consumers
6. Preparation of a complex, inter-sectoral nutrition strategy and action plan, introduction of precision nutrition are desirable.
7. Develop more tools based on information technologies (apps)
8. Certified marks and labels for raising the awareness of the public on environmental/ sustainability issues.
9. Promote organic food production and support local production and distribution.

Tasks on long term:

1. Educational programmes about sustainable food consumption, food safety and food quality should reach all children during primary school years in Hungary.
2. The High Quality Food trademark system should cover the majority of food categories to offer sustainable and quality food choices that are validated by the National Food Chain Safety Office.

3. Adaptation of front-of pack nutrition label system to empower consumers to make the healthy choice.
4. Adaptation of front of pack sustainability label system to empower consumers to make the environmentally conscious, sustainable choice.
5. Development of educational and awareness raising campaigns to the general public, health professionals and teachers on interpretation of the front of pack labels.
6. Development of food and nutrition action plan taking into account the environmental, and in broader sense sustainability aspects, with the contribution of all relevant stakeholders.

V.b) Reduce impact of food systems on climate and biodiversity and improve agricultural techniques - SDG13, SDG14, SDG15

Results:

Hungary encouraged agricultural practices beneficial for the climate and the environment (greening measures). The measures covered three practices: crop diversification, maintenance of permanent grasslands, and designation of ecological focus area (EFA) in agricultural areas. Diversification of crop production contributed to improving soil quality, while preserving permanent grasslands played an important role in carbon sequestration and protection of environmentally sensitive grasslands.

The National Strategy on the Preservation of Food Genetic Resources (2014–2020) fostered the preservation of genetic resources of food species and varieties. The conservation of genetic resources for food and agriculture is a priority in Hungary, for which the Government launched a special programme in 2019. Regarding the integrity of ecosystems, in the last decade, interventions - aiming at habitat restoration - were carried out on more than 150,000 hectares in Hungary.

Hungary prepared and adopted National Plant Protection Action Plan (NAP). The country's objective is to apply Integrated Pest Management (IPM) to foster sustainable agriculture, to protect plants and plant products from harmful organisms, and to produce high quality, safe food. NAP encourages the introduction and development of integrated production.

In 2018–2020, several projects were supported involving research on traditional Hungarian species in order to involve these species in the national genetic preservation system with the aim of increasing the state's role in the field of gene conservation. The Homestead Development Program created an opportunity to protect and preserve indigenous animal and plant species.

Hungary considers that agriculture may remain competitive by increasing ecological agricultural cultivation and animal production methods, moreover, explicit benefits may arise from GMO free production. Thus, the cultivation of GE crops is constitutionally prohibited in Hungary. There are no GE plants approved for production.

Hungary developed its Digital Agricultural Strategy and launched the "Smart Farmer Program", which serves the alignment of digital agricultural knowledge in the curriculum, and on the other hand ensures the training of trainers, the appropriate material conditions, and the involvement of professional partners.

On 30th October 2018, the Hungarian Parliament adopted the Second National Climate Change Strategy for the period 2018-2030 with an outlook until 2050. The policy framework for our contribution to combat climate change is provided by further strategies as well, which were adopted by the government on 8th January 2020.

Furthermore the Hungarian Parliament adopted the Act on Climate Protection in 2020, which now declares Hungary's medium- and long-term climate targets, namely that we will reduce

our emissions by at least 40% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels, and by 2050, we will achieve full climate neutrality.

Tasks on short term:

1. In line with the European Green Deal we put emphasis on policy incentives to support more sustainable production techniques.
2. Put more emphasis on agro-ecological approach in agriculture, participation in concerned coalitions (Agro-ecological, Soil Health Coalitions),
3. We promote Eco-management and Audit Schemes (EMAS) through the National Chamber of Agriculture.
4. Enhance circular economy and renew the waste management system
5. National Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 to be adopted by the Parliament.
6. Encourage environmental education programmes.
7. Proper data collection and agreeing on right indicators.
8. Develop prevention and forecasting.

Tasks on long term:

1. Implement the National Biodiversity Strategy for 2030
2. Ensure and maintain the long-term conservation of plant and animal genetic resources for food and agriculture and increase the number of genetic resources preserved.
3. Promoting sustainable and diverse agriculture that respects biodiversity conservation and environmental and landscape protection.
4. Promote organic food production
5. Support local production and distribution,
6. Restore degraded ecosystems, preserve and restore their natural values and service-providing capacity.
7. In order to reach GHG emission reduction goals in the agricultural sector, a reduction in fertilizer use; a more efficient use of organic fertilizers; and a wider application of precision farming, automatization, and digitalization will be needed. Moreover, investments targeting feeding, irrigation, and energy efficiency are key requirements.
8. For sustainable forestry, the maintenance of stocks with the optimal CO₂ equilibrium and business model (regarding area and age structure) needs to be emphasized, while also taking into account biodiversity conservation. Furthermore, interventions should support maintaining and developing forests while protecting their natural levels despite climate change impacts.

V.c) Improved livelihoods, empowerment of communities – SDG3, SDG8, SDG11, SDG16, SDG17

Results:

Hungary considers essential to target the root causes of poverty and inequalities, social exclusion and to leave no one behind. Therefore the Hungarian government continues to promote decent work and social inclusion, affordable access to land and to essential services, such as water, sanitation, financial services and digital communication. Hungary considers that universal rights (right to food, right to healthy environment, to social protection, education and culture) are key to social and economic inclusion to all. In order to address the structural root causes of hunger, technological and other innovations are necessary but not enough. Structural changes are essential, addressing power imbalances and conflicts of interests for better corporate accountability. In this respect we should provide policy incentives to promote food systems that are really sustainable, resilient and inclusive.

As far as access is concerned, there is no significant difference in access to knowledge, information and associated tools (land, financial resources, IT) in Hungary, either in terms of gender and location of interested farmers.

Hungary launched the "Smart Farmer Program", which serves the alignment of digital agricultural knowledge in the curriculum of the relevant vocational training programs, and on the other hand ensures the training of trainers, the appropriate material conditions and the involvement of professional partners.

Promoting equal access to advanced ICT tools for all generations is successfully pursued by the International Digital Council for Food and Agriculture on the basis of good practices and their common use.

Hungarians and minorities live in the Carpathian basin for more than 1000 years. Preserving rural traditions, culture and traditional knowledge and practices are integral part of Hungary's policies.

For the sake of proper nutrition, Hungarian Government provides 50-100% catering subsidy for the socially disadvantaged children. Since 2016, the obligatory task of local governments has been to provide free meals once a day to disadvantaged, cumulatively disadvantaged children during all school holidays, the corresponding closure of the nurseries and kindergartens.

Tasks on short term:

1. Investigating the possibility of further expanding the range of those entitled to free or discounted child catering.
2. Policy incentives to support small scale farmers to improve their livelihood in rural areas.
3. Policy incentives to promote sustainable production techniques
4. We strengthen family farms, for this purpose a programme to promote generational renewal in agriculture is being developed. This programme will encourage the younger generation to get involved in agricultural activities, to ensure fair job creation, to encourage entrepreneurship and innovation.

Tasks on long term:

1. Policy incentives to promote generational renewal

V.d) Resilience - SDG8

Results:

Hungary is especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change due to its location in the Carpathian basin. More frequent extreme weather events and shifting hydrological conditions are evidences of such negative consequences. Numerous Hungarian regions suffer from periods of water surplus and water shortages (droughts) in the same year. Certain parts of the Great Plain are prone to desertification.

Therefore, Hungary's National Adaptation Strategy, as the sub-strategy of 2nd National Climate Change Strategy, declares short, medium and long-term action lines for the affected sectors, including appropriate cultivation techniques, development of sustainable resource-efficient irrigation facilities, nature-based water retention solutions and related conservation of water habitats. The mentioned national development directions correspond with the main objectives of the Water Framework Directive.

Crop safety can not only be increased by irrigation. Extreme weather conditions also result in extreme water conditions in the soil, so it is an important task to preserve or improve the water storage capacity of soils by proper agro-technics.

Tasks on short term:

1. Enhance the use of properly cleaned wastewater can be a good alternative.
2. Promote the model of the circular economy in agriculture.
3. Increasing the water storage capacity of soils and water retention (e.g. by fish ponds)
4. Encourage breeding of drought-tolerant crop varieties
5. Improve the nutrient use efficiency of varieties
6. Research and innovation and digitalization for better water management
7. Improve the water retention capacity of soils by using appropriate cultivation techniques (e.g. by soil cover – mulching - and avoiding deep tilling) and by improving the structure and enhancing organic matter content of soils by using manure and compost.
8. Financial support and extension services for the above-mentioned measures
9. Risk management measures and support

Tasks on long term:

During the 2021-2027 Programming period the improvement of the agricultural sector's resilience against the effects of climate change will be one of Hungary's most crucial strategic aims. Sustainable irrigation developments and complex water management projects will be among the critical elements of some Operational Programmes.

V.e) Knowledge and Innovation - SDG9

On Bloomberg's innovation list of 2021 Hungary is ranked number 27. On EU eco-innovation scoreboard, Hungary is ranked 24.

Results:

Digital Agricultural Strategy, besides the efficient use of available environmental resources, significantly contributes to the increase of the profitability of agricultural production and food sector by collecting and processing information, automating and robotizing technological operations.

- PREGA (Precision Farming) Conference is held every year, where interested farmers (and early-stage innovators) can learn more about the latest international and domestic technology innovations.

Tasks on short term:

1. Increase the volume of research and innovation activities on sustainability of agriculture and food production
2. Enhance agri- and food industry digitalisation and precision technologies
3. Proper data collection and identification of right indicators,
4. More investment in information technology (apps) is needed.
5. Strengthen the cooperation and coordination between sectors, establishment of a more horizontal approach.
6. Enhance common governmental communication on sustainability.

Tasks on long term:

1. Increase the volume of the research and innovation activities on sustainability of agriculture and food production

Best practices/ initiatives concerning research and development:

Vertical Farming

Hungary is committed to promote research and innovations on the road to sustainability. Climate change, urbanisation, declining freshwater resources, population growth in

developing countries put severe burden on outdoor farming. We believe the solution is to complement smarter outdoor farming with novel ways of indoor food production. Vertical Farming today focused mainly on leafy greens for urban population, which will not contribute substantially to the global food challenge, but the additional focus on e.g. animal feed would substantially add to food security in climate-strained countries. With crops like Alfalfa and Barley Grass even today we could cover e.g. 30% of the daily intake of a milk cow, but by combining different novel feeds like insects, algae etc. 100% can be achieved. 47% of all agricultural output globally is used to feed animals. In a similar approach we plan to develop a fully circular, zero-waste urban food hub affordable even for the poorest people. This could stop human hunger and return large parts of land to nature.

V.f) Transition towards circular economy – SDG 11 and 12

Results:

The re-definition of the waste management requirements is in line with the principles of the circular economy. With the recent adoption of the new act on waste management and the related regulations, the legal harmonization of the EU directives in the field of waste management is fully supported. The Hungarian Government is committed to support sustainability, promote circular economy and is constantly working to take effective measures on climate change mitigation and adaptation. The Hungarian Government has adopted the Climate and Nature Protection Action Plan in February 2020. The Climate and Nature Protection Action Plan includes environmental protection objectives: measures to reduce waste, eliminate illegal waste dumping, as well as the promotion of sustainability, wider use of renewable energy and climate protection. In the framework of the Climate and Nature Protection Action Plan, the Hungarian Government prohibited the placing on the market of certain single-use plastic products in line with the EU requirements (particularly cutlery, plates, straws, beverage stirrers) by 1 July 2021. In addition to EU requirements, Hungary also bans the following single-use plastic products:

- lightweight plastic carrier bags with a wall thickness of between 15 and 50 microns (except those made of biodegradable plastic) from 1 July 2021,
- single-use cups for beverages made of plastic (which includes paper cups with plastic coating) from 1 January 2023.

In order to reduce the consumption of plastic carrier bags, the environmental product fee (defined in Act LXXXV of 2011 on the environmental product fee) also increased significantly for non-banned plastic carrier bags from 1 July 2021:

- from HUF 57/kg to HUF 1 900/kg for plastic carrier bags with a wall thickness of less than 15 microns, and
- HUF 500/kg for biodegradable plastic carrier bags compared to the current exemption from the product fee,
- for plastic carrier bags with a wall thickness of more than 50 microns the environmental product fee unchanged at 1900 Ft/kg.

In addition, the Government plans to introduce a deposit return system for glass and plastic bottles and metal cans from 1 January 2024. These measures aim at eliminating the harmful effect of packaging and other plastic items on the environment.

In order to achieve the goals of the circular economy, the recently adopted regulations allow the establishment a new concession model in order to ensure better performance and coordination regarding the waste management tasks from **1 July 2023**.

As a result of the transformation, the state will be able to control the fulfilment of the increasingly strict EU target values at the national level.

Tasks on short term:

1. Continue the establishment of the new waste management system until 2023.
2. Implement the deposit return system by 2024.
3. Facilitate and support home and community composting, establish community composting facilities in cooperation with local governments. Inform and educate the public and shape their attitude regarding the collection of waste in an appropriate manner.
4. Promote and support aquaculture systems based on circularity principles (e.g. combined intensive-extensive systems, freshwater integrated multi-trophic aquaculture systems)

Tasks on long term:

Hungary is committed to the green transition set out in the European Green Deal and aims to move towards a circular economy; one of the central elements of the plan is to transform all relevant production processes from the very first step (design) to the last (waste management) in order to reduce the amount of waste generated as much as possible. The waste generated during each process can be easily transformed to value for other companies as secondary raw material utilized in their production processes. This is how the value circles work and our current linear economy is transformed into a circular one.

VI. Links between the "national pathway", other strategic documents, including current national policies and EU requirements

The Hungarian National Pathway is closely linked to the European Green Deal in several points:

Climate change strategy and objectives:

Sectoral measures are being prepared by the COM to decrease emissions.

As for agriculture, livestock farmers have a challenge to prepare farm sustainability plans for five years with emissions data, because no data on current emissions are available. The reduction of certain animal health treatments is of concern. The conservation of health of animal populations, reduction of the presence of infectious diseases, anti-parasitic treatments, etc., should be encouraged by using environmentally friendly methods. Preventive treatments should be also necessary, which may be compulsory in order to maintain the epidemiological status. In order to reduce GHG emissions, good feeding practices should be taken into account for the animal species or species concerned, bearing in mind the animal welfare and animal health aspects.

As for climate actions:

Hungary is among the first few EU Member States that adopted its national climate law setting out climate neutrality by 2050. As far as the EU action is concerned, Hungary proposes a climate convergence mechanism. Every Member State should undertake a national, economy-wide emission reduction objective of at least 40% on a 1990 basis. Any higher climate target for 2030 and climate neutrality should be reached in a technology neutral manner, respecting the Member States' right to set their own energy mix. It is important to provide a proper level of EU financing, while solidarity and fairness should remain key principles of the future climate policy.

Circular Economy Action Plan

According to the **Waste Framework Directive**, a **50% reduction in food waste at retail and consumer level** is required to be achieved **by 2030**, which is in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by the United Nations in 2015.

Under the Waste Framework Directive, the **separate collection of bio-waste must be introduced by 31 December 2023** in order to increase the level of waste recovery. The obligation was transposed into the domestic law in the spring of 2021. Since 2016, National Food Chain Safety Office has been the organiser of the Hungarian national level food waste prevention programme, called Wasteless: <http://maradeknelkul.hu/en/>. This programme connects directly to the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste (DG SANTE) and also JRC's new research initiative, the European Consumer Food Waste Forum.

The EU Action Plan for a Circular Economy foresees targeted action on food waste. Food waste is an economic, environmental, social and moral problem. To address the problem effectively, it is important to consider the whole food supply system, as waste is present at the earliest stages of production. In order to reduce food waste, it is important to establish a food-specific waste hierarchy, as the general waste hierarchy is not applicable in this area. Because of its specific characteristics and potential outputs, food waste differs significantly from other types of waste. In the context of the circular economy, landfilling and incineration (whether for energy recovery or not) are not acceptable options. The three main pillars of the hierarchy are food waste prevention, food donation and the management of food not for sale or donation.

In Hungary too, the prevention of food waste, the reduction of food waste and food composting are important objectives. One solution could be to introduce mandatory requirements for food retailers to allow the donation of food with an immediate expiry date and a shelf life to those in need. Proposals for action include the creation of a food waste prevention scheme, with multinational food retail chains as the initial stakeholders in the initial phase of regulation. The capacity of the distribution network is the main bottleneck in preventing food waste and redistributing salvageable food in our country, and its expansion will be a major achievement. To achieve these objectives, the Food Rescue Centre Non-Profit Ltd (ÉMK) is being set up and a food rescue fee is being introduced. The aim of the introduction of the fee is to ensure that products close to their expiry date in the chains concerned do not go to waste, while at the same time ensuring that the polluter pays principle applies, i.e. that the economic operator finances the prevention of food waste and the rescue of food for consumption.

It is also important to bear in mind that the food industry is one of the largest users of packaging materials, which has a significant impact on the amount, type and recoverability of packaging waste.

Biodiversity Strategy

The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 imposes 17 obligations for MSs. Our efforts in the European Union to put biodiversity on the path to recovery is very important. Hungary appreciates the Presidency's efforts in finding a compromise on the EU Biodiversity Strategy. Hungary considers it important that the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework – to be adopted by the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity – links with the Sustainable Development Goals. This makes it even clearer that biodiversity is closely linked to the well-being of the whole society and the economy through the services provided by healthy ecosystems. In line with the international obligations and reflecting on the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, we are currently working on Hungary's National Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and our plan is to adopt it as soon as possible.

General Union Environment Action Programme to 2030

The Programme aims to accelerate the green transition to a sustainable circular economy in a just, equitable and inclusive way, and to protect, restore and improve the state of the

environment by, inter alia, halting and reversing biodiversity loss. It supports and strengthens an integrated policy and implementation approach, building upon the European Green Deal. The Programme forms the basis for achieving the environmental and climate objectives defined under the UN 2030 Agenda and its SDGs. The Programme has six priority objectives in areas of climate neutrality, adaptation to climate change, protecting and restoring biodiversity, circular economy, the zero pollution ambition and reducing environmental pressures from production and consumption (eg. food system). It also identifies the enabling conditions to achieve the long-term and the thematic priority objectives for all actors involved. In accordance with the General Union Environment Action Programme, the National Environmental Programme for the period up to 2026 has been completed, which includes the country's environmental goals and the measures required to achieve them.

From Farm to Fork Strategy

The Farm to Fork Strategy sets ambitious objectives and challenges for Hungary to be met within a very short time. The ambitious objectives must be evenly distributed among all stakeholders along the food supply chain, so that responsibility is not only a burden to producers, especially small and medium-sized enterprises.

Energy system strategy

The "Fit for 55" legislative proposal aims at aligning the EU's climate and energy policy framework with the new, ambitious 2030 climate change objective, i.e. by reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by at least 55% and moving in the right direction to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. Nevertheless, we think that specificities of member states should be taken into account when setting the future climate policy rules. For this reason, we welcome that in the Effort Sharing Regulation (ESR) the Commission kept the method of using GDP per capita for calculating national targets.

Development of organic production

Over the last five years, Hungary doubled the share of controlled ecological production areas. We hope to accelerate this growth rate during the next period. With the expansion of areas under the ecological control, the research and development will be further appreciated and the future application of the new legislative framework will further enhance the knowledge transfer in Hungary. In order to promote the growth of the ecological sector, we plan to encourage the demand for products derived from organic production and increase confidence. These are our main priorities for the ecological sector.

VII. Voluntary commitments, participation in coalitions

Hungary is open to take part in the following coalitions:

- School Meals Coalition
Food Loss and Waste /Food is Never Waste Coalition
- Agroecology, Sustainable Livestock and Agricultural Systems/ Transformation through agroecology and regenerative agriculture
- Aquatic and Blue Foods
- Soil Health Coalition

In the framework of the Visegrád cooperation (V4), the Hungarian V4 Presidency started a regional dialogue related to the UN Food Systems Summit and sustainable food systems on 8 October 2021, during the agricultural ministerial meeting, with the participation of Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Slovenia and Romania. We plan to

put the subject on the agenda of our next V4 agricultural ministerial meeting, scheduled for spring 2022, which will define the main areas where regional cooperation is needed for transforming our food systems.

Hungary, in collaboration with the Visegrád countries, organized the Planet Budapest 2021 Sustainability Expo and Summit in 2021, offering widely applicable, innovative and pragmatic solutions to the challenges of sustainable development. This event aimed to raise awareness of adverse environmental, social and economic practices among the general public, especially young people, and to show that these negative changes, which overshadow the future of humankind, are still reversible. The Summit focused on solutions to global environmental, economic and social challenges. The participants, global and regional financial institutions, as well as businesses, which are committed to sustainable development, tried to respond to global sustainability challenges, including appropriate conclusions and interventions for the post-COVID world. Planet Budapest (from 29 November to 5 December 2021) provided 183 professional exhibitors an opportunity to showcase how their technological developments, innovative products and services can promote sustainable development.