

POSITION PAPER ON THE VISION FOR AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

REV
.institute



BY GREEN REV INSTITUTE

Introduction

1

The new Vision for Agriculture and Food must ensure that all the most pressing challenges we face in the European Union today are addressed: access to safe food at affordable prices, access to sustainable and plant-based food, social injustices, environmental protection, and the protection of human rights and animal rights. The **strategic document proposed by the Commission fails to adequately address these critical needs**. The document, which is very vaguely worded, **fails to provide concrete, sustainable measures to address urgent challenges**, and instead appears to mainly protect the interests of large-scale producers who benefit from the status quo, negatively impacting access to healthy food, exacerbating environmental crises and contributing to animal suffering.

However, certain aspects of the **vision offer a glimpse of potential positive change**. The purpose of this position paper is to critically examine **both the shortcomings and the opportunities** within the Commission's Vision, and

to highlight areas where civil society, policymakers and various stakeholders can use the Vision to hold the Commission to account and push for better policies and legislation.

General Remarks on the Vision

2

The aim of the vision is to build trust and develop a strategy 'across the agri-food system'. Unfortunately, it **fails to include the voices of civil society organisations working for social and environmental justice, animal rights and public health**. This omission is deeply disappointing for EU citizens and animals, and jeopardises the achievement of global climate goals. **The Commission has disregarded the outcome of the [Strategic Dialogue on the future of EU agriculture](#)**, which successfully incorporated recommendations formulated by a wide range of stakeholders, including farmers and climate change campaigners, and **instead proposed a document that could lead to the continued industrialisation of agriculture while ignoring the needs and interests of important stakeholders - including smaller farmers and consumers.**¹

One of the key principles outlined in the vision is 'competitiveness', which raises concerns when applied to agriculture - a sector that affects European diets, health, and the environment. If misapplied, this principle **could lead to policies that undermine human rights, public health, animal rights, and environmental protection**. Competitiveness must not become a populist justification for eroding rights and degrading the planet. Civil society must remain vigilant to ensure this does not happen.

Key Concerns and Observations:

- **Maintaining intensive animal farming:** The Vision favours an agricultural model based on mass animal production, emphasising that 'livestock is and will remain an essential part of EU agriculture, competitiveness and cohesion'.
- **Agricultural policy continues to prioritise animal-based production:** There are no explicit measures to reduce the consumption of meat and animal products. The Commission again fails to address the damage that diets high in meat and dairy products cause to health, human and animal rights, and the environment.
- **Unequal distribution of agricultural subsidies:** There is no determined effort to reform area-based income support and large producers may continue to benefit disproportionately from it. There is no major effort to ensure that income support payments are targeted to smaller farms, no targeted socio-economic support structure.
- **Lack of support for plant-based food production:** The vision does not explore the need to introduce funding for plant-based proteins, nor the measures to shift subsidies from animal agriculture to plant-based agriculture, despite its environmental and health benefits. The document does not mention the words 'plant-based' or 'vegan'. There is no mention of the EU Action Plan for Plant-Based Food, nor of the new fund for sustainable agriculture recommended by the Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture.
- **No specific targets and measures:** There are no specific environmental targets, but broad 'climate objectives'. As a means of decarbonising agriculture, the Commission plans to invest in technological developments in the animal farming sector, including feeding strategies. However, there is no mention of reducing the number of animals in agriculture.
- **Labelling and transparency issues:** The Vision does not sufficiently address the need for clear and detailed food labelling that includes carbon footprint, ingredient sources, and production methods. However,

Commission considers labelling with regard to animal welfare.

Positive aspects:

- **Same standards for imported food of animal origin:** Future legislative proposals on animal welfare will apply the same standards to products produced in the EU and those imported from third countries, in line with WTO obligations.
- **Improving farmers' mental health:** The Commission recognised the poor state of farmers' mental health and well-being and the need for action to improve it.
- **Young generations and women farmers:** The vision includes the need to encourage the young generation of farmers and to create an attractive working environment in rural areas. It also expresses the need to create good living and working conditions for women farmers, who represent only 30% of people working in agriculture.
- **Disinformation in rural areas:** Vision expresses its commitment to fight against disinformation in rural areas.
- **Fair working and living conditions, vibrant and well-connected rural areas:** Vision addresses the need to invest in infrastructure, health and education in rural areas to improve living and working conditions.
- **Protection of migrant workers:** Vision addresses the precarious conditions of workers from 'third countries', very often involved in food production, and the need to improve them.

Both negative and positive aspects of the vision will be discussed in the following paragraphs. As far as the positive aspects are concerned, they are far from the expectations of society and are likely to have little impact. However, they can be used by different stakeholders to advocate for better policies and should be revoked if the Commission fails to implement them in its policies.

Vision or Missed Opportunity?

3

The EU's 2040 **food system objectives are predominantly market-driven, with a strong emphasis on competitiveness and trade enhancement.** The only objective in line with Green REV's priorities is the commitment to develop **agriculture within planetary boundaries and to meet the EU's climate objectives.** However, the Commission repeatedly fails to clearly define what it considers to be the 'climate objectives' and continuously water them down. We welcome however general willingness to protect healthy soils, clean water, air quality and biodiversity, which are crucial objectives.

There is **no commitment to phase out industrial agriculture or to shift from large-scale to small-scale production.** This omission is particularly worrying in relation to both food produced within the EU and food imports.

Food Safety and Agricultural Subsidies

We recognise the Commission's objective of protecting food safety. However, the Commission fails to define this term and the Vision itself shows a lack of wider understanding.

To achieve just food transition and secure food safety, Green REV calls for **an end to public funding of animal-based food production**. Meat remains artificially cheap **due to excessive subsidies**, while plant-based foods and vegetables are often significantly more expensive. Data on public subsidies show that [82% of EU agricultural subsidies support animal agriculture](#) (38% directly and 44% for animal feed), while the CAP itself accounts for 30% of the EU budget.² This financial model needs to change as it shows that industrial animal farming is neither economically nor socially viable.

The Commission's own studies show that the [animal agriculture sector is responsible for 81-86% of agricultural greenhouse gas emissions](#).³ If the EU is serious about tackling the climate crisis, it must phase out factory farming. However, the negative impacts of animal agriculture are much broader and include human rights, the right to health, the right to live in a clean environment, and animal rights.

Social and Labour Issues

We welcome the Commission's recognition of the **mental health challenges faced by farmers**. Various data show higher rates of suicide between farmers and other groups of workers, as well as high rates of mental illness, including depression. **Farmers working in animal agriculture are exposed to physical injuries, ammonia and aerosols, and zoonotic diseases**, which increase the risk of respiratory problems. In addition, **communities living near farms suffer from noise pollution, unpleasant odours and contaminated water and air**. We believe that the Commission fails to adequately address the fact that the cause of poor mental health among farmers is very often animal farming itself, and that one of the reasons for the depopulation of rural areas in Europe is the poor living conditions imposed by industrial farms. Recent studies conducted in Africa show that [60% of people involved in animal farming face mental health problems](#) - depression, anxiety and stress.⁴ Working in a brutal environment, surrounded by suffering, having to impose death and being forced to exploit sentient beings are very extreme working conditions that should be adequately addressed.

We support initiatives to attract more young people and women into the agricultural sector. At present, agriculture is male-dominated and 30% of women farmers are under-represented in farmer unions and decision-making. **Gender-sensitive policies must be integrated into EU agricultural legislation**.

Migrant workers are particularly vulnerable to exploitative conditions in agriculture. We welcome the Commission's commitment to take action to improve their situation. We call on the Commission to improve their living conditions, fair wages and access to health care.

Digitalisation, Climate, and Rural Development

Digitalisation

We recognise the potential of digitalisation to transform agriculture. Smart farming solutions, monitoring and digital supply chains can increase efficiency while reducing reliance on harmful industrial farming practices. However, **digitalisation should be used to promote sustainable, plant-based agriculture, not to optimise harmful animal farming models and perpetuate the ongoing industrialisation of agriculture**.

Decarbonisation and Sustainability

We reject the notion that minor technological adjustments can make industrial animal farming sustainable - **technological adjustments to animal feed are an unrealistic solution to GHG emissions**. True decarbonisation of agriculture must involve a shift away from animal agriculture towards plant-based systems, regenerative agriculture, agro-ecology and organic farming practices. The most effective solution to reduce emissions from animal agriculture is simple: **reduce the number of animals used in agriculture and the consumption of meat and dairy products**.

Farming and Nature – Soil Health

Soil degradation is a major threat to food security. The Commission has failed to address the fact that industrial farming practices, particularly animal farming, **contribute significantly to soil acidification, erosion and biodiversity loss**. The EU must prioritise regenerative agriculture and soil restoration initiatives.

Fostering Fair Living in Rural Areas

We welcome the Commission's emphasis that rural communities need strong investment in infrastructure, education and quality employment opportunities - rural areas **must remain attractive places to live if sustainable and small-scale farming is to grow**. We welcome that the Commission will take measures to ensure fair wages and working conditions for agricultural workers, especially those from vulnerable backgrounds. This is essential to maintain a vibrant rural economy.

Public Procurement

We recognise the strengthening role of public procurement, but **'high environmental and social standards' should be applied to public procurement** and short food supply chains should be promoted. Public procurement should tackle food waste and increase the availability of local, sustainable and ethical food in educational, social and health institutions. The Public Procurement Directive should also be revised to prohibit Member States from making decisions on the basis of price alone, but to take into account **criteria such as sustainability, food quality, local community safety and ethical sourcing in relation to animal rights**.

Resilience, Trade, and Future Pathways

5

We support the EU's commitment to global food security. However, in the Vision, the Commission did not present **any measures to tackle malnutrition within the EU itself**. In Poland alone, recent reports show that **two million people suffer from malnutrition and lack access to healthy food**, while 88 million tons of food are wasted every year in the EU.

Supply Chain Resilience

The EU needs to develop a **comprehensive plant-based protein strategy to create a more self-sufficient and sustainable EU protein system**. The current vision announces the development of an overall sustainable EU

protein strategy - however, it lacks clarity on how protein production and consumption within the EU will be reshaped and does not yet mention plant-based proteins.

Trade and Competition

We call for stronger trade rules that enforce **strict environmental, social and health standards for imported food**. The EU must ensure that trade agreements do not undermine domestic sustainability efforts or allow companies to exploit weaker regulations in third countries. Trade agreements must uphold the highest climate, environmental and health standards. However, we welcome the Commission's plans to apply the same standards on animal welfare for products produced in the EU and those imported from third countries.

Food Chain

We agree that farmers need a better return from the market. The EU must tackle unfair trading practices by large companies and improve the distribution of income throughout the food chain.

Public Support and Investment

We call for specific incentives that **support plant-based farming and programmes that educate farmers on the benefits of transitioning to plant-based agriculture**, which was not included in the vision.

As the Common Agricultural Policy itself is the largest funding mechanism for agriculture, **it has the potential to transform our food system**, currently based on animal-based food, towards plant-based alternatives. We call for just measures to shift **subsidies from animal agriculture to the plant-based farming. The transition to plant-based agriculture and diets requires supportive policy instruments, subsidies and a supportive market. Currently, 82% of EU agricultural subsidies go to planet-destroying animal agriculture.** Future investments should prioritise sustainable plant-based agriculture and smallholder farming. As recommended by the Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture, we call for a new fund to ensure a just transition in the agricultural sector, which we believe should be financed by the EU's own resources.

Innovation

Young farmers are often more attracted to organic and agro-ecological farming. The EU needs to invest in **sustainable food systems for the future, rather than continuing to prop up outdated industrial farming models.**

We welcome the possible announcement of the bio-economy strategy and its potential benefits for agriculture, as long as it does not encourage animal farming. We do not support the promotion of carbon farming as it has been shown to be an unreliable long-term solution - carbon stored in soils is inherently unstable and can easily be released back into the atmosphere through droughts, floods or changes in farming practices. It also involves animals.

Animal Welfare

We remain skeptical about the EU's commitment to improving animal welfare legislation. While reforms may marginally reduce suffering, they fail to address the core issue - systemic exploitation. We will continue to advocate for a transition to plant-based food systems, while recognising the work of animal welfare advocates.

We strongly oppose strengthening the 'competitiveness and resilience of the livestock sector', which implies further entrenchment of industrial animal farming.

Conclusion

7

The European Commission's Vision for Agriculture and Food fails to deliver a just, sustainable, and equitable future. Green REV Institute will continue to advocate for a transition towards food safety, plant-based food systems, environmental sustainability, and an end to animal exploitation. **We are not alone in our fight - our recent letter to the Commission on food safety was signed by over 140 civil society organisations and scientists from Poland.**⁵ We will continue to advocate for science-based solutions to the current weak food system that perpetuates social and environmental injustice. Policymakers must push for a more ambitious, ethical, and environmentally responsible agricultural future.

Signatures:

1. Green REV Institute
2. Coalition Future Food 4 Climate
3. 9dwunastych
4. Akcja Demokracja
5. Akcja Uczniowska
6. Azyl Swinki Lili
7. Bieganizm
8. BoMiasto
9. Compassion in World Farming Polska
10. DaEKOwzroczne
11. Daniel Petryczkiewicz
12. DiversityPL
13. Dolina Bawole Serce
14. Earth Day Everyday
15. ECO EDU kids
16. Ekowyborca
17. Federacja Wegan dla Zwierząt
18. First Step
19. Foodsharing Polska

20. Foodsharing Toruń
21. "Ekopotencjał – Przestrzeń Możliwości"
22. Aquila
23. Centrum Edukacji Baza
24. Chlorofil
25. To Proste
26. Impuls
27. Klub Myśli Ekologicznej
28. Lambda Polska
29. MARE
30. Ne_Ni
31. Perspektywa
32. Prawnej Ochrony Zwierząt Lex Nova
33. ProVeg
34. Psubraty
35. Rething
36. Rzecz Społeczna
37. Szkatułka
38. Zielone Światło
39. Zwierzęta Niczyje
40. Gdańsk bez granic
41. Głos Pokolenia
42. Green teenager
43. Grupa Społeczni Opiekunowie Drzew - Toruń
44. Halo Tu Fauna
45. Instytut Przeciwdziałania Wykluczeniom
46. invECO
47. Istota
48. Klimatyczny Kopernik
49. Kolektyw Przełom
50. Koło Naukowe Praw Człowieka i Kryzysów Humanitarnych
51. Kompostuj Z Nami
52. Kongres Ruchów Miejskich
53. Lokalni Liderzy
54. Miastozdzczenie
55. Mikołów - Roślinne Yeah
56. Misja: Rozwój
57. Młodzieżowy Strajk Klimatyczny
58. NO PAIN IN YOUR BRAIN

59. Oficyna 21
60. Open Dialogues International Foundation
61. Plant Your Home
62. Podróże z Pazurem
63. Polska Dla Zwierząt
64. Pomorskie Stowarzyszenie Aktywni Lokalnie
65. Projekt Kaczuchy Dziennikarskie
66. Przestrzeń do życia
67. Pudełko Lilki
68. Rodzic w Mieście
69. Rodzice dla Klimatu
70. Roślinna Strona
71. RUCH zaNIEdban
72. Śląski Ruch Klimatyczny
73. Społeczna Straż Ochrony Zieleni Szczecina
74. Stowarzyszenia Mężczyźni Przeciw Przemocy
75. Stowarzyszenia Protest Porszewice
76. "Nasz Bóbr"
77. Jestem na pTAK!
78. Kraków dla Mieszkańców
79. LUWIA
80. MOST
81. Mudita
82. na rzecz Azylu dla Świń Chrumkowo
83. Przyjaciele Kubusia
84. Równość
85. Stop Stereotypom
86. Tarnowska Rospuda
87. Szczera Sfera
88. Szkolna Młodzieżowa Rada Klimatyczna
89. Świadomi prawa
90. Vege Vouge
91. W imię zwierząt
92. Wawelska Kooperatywa Spożywcza
93. Wegaństwo - podcast
94. Wegrateka
95. Wiosna bez Barrier
96. WORLDmates
97. Wygadajmy Przyszłość

98. Reaktyw

99. Społeczno - Oświatowe Gminy Międzyrzec

100. Ludzie z Natury

1 **Strategic Dialogue** is available at agriculture.ec.europa.eu.

2 Anniek J. Kortleve and others, **Over 80% of the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy supports emissions-intensive animal products**, study available at www.nature.com.

3 DG AGRI, **Future of EU Livestock**, available at op.europa.eu.

4 Francis Sena Nuvey and other, **Poor mental health of livestock farmers in Africa: a mixed methods case study from Ghana**, available at bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com.

5 Green REV Institute, European Open Letter from Scientists and Civil Society Organisations: "**Safe Food, Safe Planet, Safe Future**", available at futurefood4climate.eu.



**WE BELIEVE IN THE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
QUALITY OF LIFE AND
RESPECT FOR THE RIGHTS
OF BOTH HUMAN
AND NON-HUMAN
ANIMALS.**



GREENREV.ORG

KONTAKT@GREENREV.ORG