

**Ms Ursula von der Leyen**

President of the European Commission

**Mr Frans Timmermans**

Executive Vice-President for the European Green Deal

**Ms Stella Kyriakides**

Commissioner for Health and Food Safety

**Mr Janusz Wojciechowski**

Commissioner for Agriculture

**Mr Virginijus Sinkevičius**

Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries

Thursday, 10 March 2022

**Joint open letter: EU food supply and solidarity response to the war in Ukraine**

Dear President von der Leyen, Executive Vice-President Timmermans, dear Commissioners Wojciechowski, Kyriakides and Sinkevičius,

We are writing to you in the context of the terrible acts of aggression against Ukraine and the knock-on effects on the global food production and trade they entail. This tragic situation that is destroying towns and lives, will need our solidarity and support. We ask you to address this immediate crisis without undermining the environmental and social progress to which you committed in the European Green Deal. This letter comes as a reaction to the [statement](#) by Commissioner Wojciechowski that *“if food security is in danger, then we need to have another look at the objectives of the Farm to Fork strategy and correct them”*. We believe the contrary to be true: **the crisis in Ukraine is yet another reminder of how essential it is to implement the Green Deal and its Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies**. More than ever, the EU must shift towards healthy, socially and environmentally friendly farming practices, such as agroecology, organic farming, and agroforestry, which provide the only path to ensuring long-term food security, food sovereignty, and the overall sustainability of the food systems. We must turn away from intensive agriculture, industrial fisheries and aquaculture.

Watering down the Farm to Fork strategy and its policies will maintain Europe’s dependence on non-renewable energy sources like fossil fuels, and will go against what is needed right now to secure food for all. Europe must support farmers to undertake an agroecological transition, notably by ensuring they and farm workers have a fair income. Practices such as organic and agroecological agriculture - especially as practised by small scale family farmers in Europe – should be effectively supported, as they are key to food sovereignty, biological diversity, natural pest control and pollination. The transition towards agroecology should be combined with policies that on the one hand, foster a reduction in the production of animals farmed industrially towards small scale extensive and animal welfare-friendly practices, through a just transition respectful of the right to farmers to have a fair income and, on the other hand, promote healthier and more plant-based diets. Indeed, the most recent IPCC<sup>1</sup> report made it crystal clear that *“while agricultural development contributes to food security, unsustainable agricultural expansion, driven in part by unbalanced diets, increases ecosystem and human vulnerability and leads to competition for land and/or water resources”*.

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<sup>1</sup> IPCC Sixth Assessment Report: <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/>

Global food systems will continue to be afflicted by crises and uncertainties over the coming years and decades. By acting responsibly now, we will ensure that Europe is well-placed to face possible future crises.

This war will undoubtedly destabilise the cereal, oilseed and fertiliser markets. Russia and Ukraine provide a large part of the global cereal market and the EU imports much of its oilseed meal, oil and seeds<sup>2</sup> and fertilisers<sup>3</sup> from Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. The dependency of low income countries on these imports poses major challenges for their food security, which in turn increases the risk of social unrest and conflict. In Europe, the surge in prices risks affecting the most vulnerable – both farmers and consumers – who are already struggling to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. This calls for the Commission to support efforts aimed at securing the right to food and food sovereignty and, first and foremost, local food systems grounded in principles of agroecology and animal welfare, both in Europe and abroad.

Ploughing more farmland, as is currently being put forward<sup>4</sup>, to grow crops for biofuels and intensive animal farming by using even more synthetic pesticides and fertilisers would be absurd and dangerously increase ecosystem collapses, the most severe threat to social-ecological stability and food security. The European Union must tackle the current challenges by **accelerating the implementation of its strategies to reduce the use of synthetic pesticides and fertilisers**, to preserve its natural environment and the health of its citizens.

Both the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine have shed light on the weaknesses of the European food system, which requires concrete actions to ensure long-term sustainability. Current attempts by some lobby groups to use the war atrocities as an excuse to undermine the Farm to Fork Strategy are fully misplaced. In a world facing more recurrent shocks in the form of environmental crises or conflicts, we need policies oriented towards relocalising and democratising our food systems, building on traditional and ecological knowledge that support resilience.

We strongly hope that you will consider our above recommendations with due care and diligence, and we remain at your disposal for a meeting to further exchange on these matters.

Yours sincerely,

**European & International organisations**

Ariel Brunner, Senior Head of Policy, BirdLife Europe and Central Asia

Teresa Anderson, Climate Justice Lead, ActionAid International

Lili Balogh, President, Agroecology Europe

Kajsa Pira, Policy officer, AirClim

Oliver Moore, Editor, ARC2020

Francesco Panella, President, BeeLife European Beekeeping Coordination

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Clara Behr, Head of Policy and Public Relations, Biodynamic Federation Demeter International

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<sup>2</sup> CDG Arable Crops Cereals, Oilseeds and pulses, 07 March 2022.

<sup>3</sup> EU Agricultural Market Briefs, 2019. Fertilisers in the EU. Nr 15/June 2019

<sup>4</sup> FNSEA [communication](#), 03 March 2022

Anaïs Berthier, Head of EU Affairs, ClientEarth

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Marta Messa, Director, Slow Food Europe

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Isabel Alvarez Vispo, President, Urgenci

## National organisations

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Bart Vangansbeke, President, Natuurpunt

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