

Recommendations for the EU Vision for Agriculture and Food

Dear Commission President Ursula von der Leyen,

In a first instance, we'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on the publication of the report from the much-needed Strategic Dialogue on the Future of Agriculture in the EU. We fully agree that Europe's rural areas are of crucial importance for the future viability of our European society and liberal democracy, as well as global food security. We also appreciate the clear recognition that cooperation and dialogue across the food value chain are critical.

As such, stakeholders along the animal agriculture value chain are fully committed to support these objectives and as a first expression of our engagement, we have come together to propose three recommendations for your vision paper to be published within 100 days of your taking up office for the second term.

- 1. Accord greater recognition for input sectors:** The participants in the Strategic Dialogue agreed that now is the time for change. We can confirm that the EU is a world leader in the transition towards more sustainable animal agriculture and this would not have been possible without advances in animal breeding, animal health and animal nutrition solutions. We call on you to promote greater access to such necessary tools and specific knowledge on animal handling throughout their life span, along with enhanced veterinary oversight as they were largely overlooked in the Strategic Dialogue report.

The opportunities coming from digital technologies and innovation in breeding, nutrition and in animal health (including disease prevention) should be leveraged to support the transition towards more sustainable agri-food systems. Healthy and well-fed animals experience higher welfare states and increase the overall farm sustainability. Stakeholders supplying such tools to farms are essential actors of the food chain and need to be better integrated in agricultural reflections.

- 2. Ensure a nutrition-centric focus for dietary recommendations:** Dietary recommendations should be targeted at the concept of achieving a healthy and balanced diet for people, covering the main food groups that provide the essential nutrients in their most bio-available form. Many people do not yet achieve their individual needs for micronutrients; this is a gap to be closed. We call on you to prevent generalised recommendations against foods of animal origin as this would diminish the importance of certain highly nutritious and healthy foods.

Education on nutrition and how food is produced should be prioritised to help ensure a more informed population and higher respect for food, how it is produced and the animals involved in farming practices. With better education, European consumers may be more willing to approach food-purchasing decisions in a better way, e.g. to pay more for better quality and diverse food, to better fulfil their individual needs and waste less.

- 3. Support socio-economic analysis as fundamental for policymaking:** Prefacing the animal welfare legislation to be revised by 2026 by a socio-economic analysis is a welcome step forward. Taking the needed time to prepare such an assessment preceding all legislative proposals and proceeding in consultation with all relevant stakeholders of the value chain is an essential element of 'Better Regulation'.

We reiterate that impact assessments as foreseen by the EU Better Regulation agenda are a critical first step prior to introducing proposed new legislation to help ensure a balanced approach, taking into account environmental, social and economic aspects. EU policy action must ensure that 'no one is left behind', particularly not European farmers nor the supporting farm animal value chain which is facing tough global competition.

Our call to action:

We believe the European Board on Agri-Food should be a platform for all leading agri-food stakeholders – pre- and post-farm gate – as the European agri-food sector is providing high-value nutrition and much more than food. Our combined expertise, inputs and contributions are essential to ensure a greater understanding of how technological progress and innovation contributes to improving the sustainability of EU animal agriculture.

As mentioned in our previous letter to you, the absence of recognition for the wider livestock sector was echoed in the selection of organisations contributing to the Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture. This exclusion should not continue.

Together, we call on you to pay critical attention to our recommendations and call to action.

Signatories:

