

Farmers, as well as other professionals along the livestock value chain, are faced with a growing amount of misinformation and don't always have the possibility or the capacity to reply. This situation has to change.

We are convinced that animal-based farming, under all its forms, has brought, and will continue to bring, many benefits to Europe, and practices are constantly improving for an ever-more sustainable future for agriculture. Education must be the basis from which we forge a more inclusive vision on sustainability with every citizen given the responsibility to make choices that feed into this over-arching vision for sustainability.

We have five key ambitions for Europe to maintain its world-leading reputation for sustainable animal agriculture

## Members of the European Parliament can help by:

### 1 Promoting strong agricultural representation in EU politics

European Livestock Voice partner associations call for strong leadership for agricultural policies, maintaining a dedicated Committee for Agriculture in the European Parliament and Directorate General for Agriculture in the European Commission. We call on you to ensure agriculture is well represented in EU politics and that decisions on the future of agriculture are based on solid agricultural knowledge. We believe the EU should invest more in civil dialogue groups and observatories, and look for new ways to ensure dialogue with the rural community on a more structural basis.

Agriculture, and more precisely the livestock value chain is about more than just farming, they are the connecting fibres for our entire lives. Whether Europe's citizens are city-dwellers, rural tenants or coastal denizens, they all rely on the livestock value chain every day of the year. Whether it's for food, clothing, fertiliser, medicines, beauty products, maintaining the landscape, or even travel we all depend on farmed animals. Even crop farming relies on livestock. You can't have one without the other.

It's important that the very essential role of animal agriculture is well-supported by strong policymakers and agri teams who are not just the purse-string holders for one of the EU's largest budgets, but the drivers of realistic, feasible and fully sustainable measures for the future of EU agriculture as a whole.

### 2 Supporting the development of an EU Strategy for Sustainable agri-food, products and services

European Livestock Voice partner associations call for an EU Strategy that sets out a clear vision for a sustainable livestock value chain to ensure the necessary investment and support needed are fully predictable. As part of this strategy there must be consensus-led clear and coherent definitions, based on science, for the concept of sustainability in the broadest sense. A long-term vision set out in a framework plan that can be adapted as the latest science and tools for improvement become available is needed to move forward as one and avoid further polarisation.

The livestock value chain in Europe with its multiple actors wants to have a broad and common vision of overarching societal goals for food production and services from the agri-food sector and asks for a coordinated approach with all relevant decision-makers and stakeholders. An all-encompassing framework must consider the varying realities on the ground, as the diversity and heritage of all the European regions are our value and part of Europe's long-term sustainability.

Trade-offs between the different dimensions of sustainability must also be considered to ensure any decision taken or action proposed by policy makers balances out and ensures the best possible steps to improve as a whole.

### 3 Assessing in full potential impacts of future proposals

Hand-in-hand with the request for an EU Strategy for Sustainable agri-food, products and services, European Livestock Voice partner associations call for impact assessments to become a critical first step hand-in-hand with any strategy proposal. Such measures would help avoid the various push backs experienced following various Green Deal initiatives. Such assessments will help ensure a future Strategy is more balanced from an environmental, social and economic perspective and that 'no one is left behind'. This will ultimately guarantee that any new legislation does not undermine European food sovereignty by jeopardising EU farms and other agri-food operators' viability or that solutions can be foreseen to counteract negative impacts.

We call on the new European Commission to produce a comprehensive and holistic report analysing the cumulative impacts as well as the consistency of and coherence between the different Green Deal initiatives relevant to the agri-food sector (e.g. Farm-to-Fork, Biodiversity and Chemical Strategies). The few studies already published on the matter have not provided such an in-depth and ex-post analysis.

In the future, a preceding comprehensive impact assessment, covering the whole agricultural value chain, from the input industries to the farm and various outputs should be made before any political strategy is published. Cumulative impacts, both current and future, of the initiatives already in force and those that will come into force during the new legislature should be analysed.

## 4 Reconnecting urban and rural Europe

European Livestock Voice partner associations call for dedicated measures to address the growing divide between urban and rural, with a strategic focus on education. Integrating comprehensive agricultural curricula into schools, more information in public restaurants and canteens, organising farm visits, and leveraging social media campaigns can foster a deeper understanding of farming practices. Public-private partnerships could be encouraged to invest in initiatives that promote agricultural awareness, ensuring citizens are informed consumers. Rather than diverting resources solely to alternatives like plant-based diets, prioritising education can reshape perceptions and contribute to a more sustainable and informed society. With more education about agriculture, perhaps Europe's consumers will be more willing to pay for better products.

A widening gap between urban and rural communities is driven by a decline in personal connections with agriculture, exemplified by the fact that 85% of the world population resides within or near urban centres (FAO). Moreover, Eurobarometer data reveals that merely 6% of Europeans have regular contact with farm animals, shaping public perceptions primarily through media sources. This disconnect is exacerbated by the migration of young individuals from rural areas to cities for employment opportunities. As a result, misconceptions and stereotypes about farming practices and environmental impact proliferate, overshadowing the nuanced reality of the agricultural industry.

This increasing urban-rural divide poses significant risks. The potential loss of family farming, a cornerstone of European agriculture, and the decline in attracting young people to rural jobs are alarming consequences. Generation renewal already presents a significant challenge in the EU, with nearly a third of farmers eligible to retire. As urban areas distance themselves from the realities of agriculture, there's a danger of overlooking the positive contributions of the sector, leading to misguided environmental perceptions. The European livestock sector faces scrutiny for environmental impact and animal welfare practices, impacting the livelihoods of those engaged in responsible farming. Furthermore, new alternatives to meat, such as lab-grown meat, are exacerbating this divide by distancing the connection to the soil even further, with repercussions for the broader food production landscape and sustainability efforts.

## 5 Empowering global agriculture through the EU's vision on livestock farming and sustainability

European Livestock Voice partners call for an EU commitment to ensure that participation in the global market does not result in detrimental ramifications for Europe's pursuit for sustainability. Walking towards sustainability should not inadvertently trigger adverse effects on economies, societies, or the environment, neither within the EU nor beyond its borders. As the EU takes confident steps towards achieving its sustainability goals, it should guarantee to safeguard against any negative repercussions that may arise from its engagements in the global marketplace.

Mitigating potential consequences of trade deals necessitates a proactive approach, fostering collaborations, and implementing measures that promote fair trade practices, ecological resilience, and social well-being. By striking a balance between global integration and sustainability activities, the EU should aim to set a precedent for responsible, harmonious, and mutually beneficial interactions within the international market. In the pursuit of global sustainability, it is imperative for the European Union to acknowledge and endorse the recognition by the FAO that livestock farming plays a pivotal role within the framework of reviewing the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The FAO estimates that the demand for animal protein is projected to grow continuously to 2050, so the significance of EU agriculture cannot be understated, as it not only nourishes its own citizens but also contributes substantially to the global food supply in a sustainable manner. Advocating for a global level playing field aligns with the principle of "One planet," emphasizing fairness and equity in global agricultural practices. Embracing and amplifying the importance of livestock farming while recognizing the sustainability efforts within EU agriculture will not only benefit local economies but also foster a more balanced and sustainable world.

# Manifesto from the partner associations of European Livestock Voice

European Livestock Voice is a multi-stakeholder group of like-minded EU partners in the livestock value chain that decided to unite to forge a more balanced debate around a sector that is playing such an essential role in Europe's rich heritage and future. The associations which represent sectors ranging from animal health to feed, to breeding and animal farming, farmers, and output industries, aim to inform the public about the societal value of livestock production and its contribution to global challenges, offering another perspective in the ongoing debate.

