

Unlock Agriculture's Climate Action Potential for Climate and Food System Resilience

Brussels, 05 June 2025

Dear Commissioner Hoekstra,

Cc: Teresa Ribera, Executive Vice-President for a Clean, Just and Competitive Transition; Christophe Hansen, EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Food; Jessika Roswall, EU Commissioner for Environment, Water Resilience and a Competitive Circular Economy

We are writing to you as a group of 17 civil society organisations and farmers representatives to express our concern about the [possible weakening](#) of the EU's 2040 climate ambition which the Commission is considering.

We would like to remind you of the potential of our agriculture and food system to deliver climate action with wider benefits, rather than risks. We believe this action should be prioritised in your efforts to set and achieve the 2040 climate target of at least 90% net emission reductions or even climate neutrality.

Realising ambitious climate action requires a clear and robust pathway. The loopholes that are under consideration for the 2040 target, however, are riddled with risk and uncertainty. Rather than relying on shortcuts – such as deviating from the domestic nature of the EU targets as enshrined in the Climate Law and [reintroducing historically failed international carbon offsets](#) – the European Union should achieve its target domestically, as [recommended](#) and [reiterated](#) by the European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change and modelled in the [Commission's own impact assessment](#).

As recognised in the Commission's recently published Vision for Agriculture and Food, our current EU agriculture and food system exerts significant pressure on the climate and the natural environment. At the same time, farmers are on the front lines of dealing with the exacerbating impact from climate change already today, [resulting in €28.3 billion](#) losses annually according to the European Investment Bank. Tackling climate change is therefore in the sector's best immediate and long-term interest.

Despite large potential for emission reductions with widespread benefits for nature and health, agricultural emissions have been stagnating over the past two decades. Without additional efforts, this [will not change](#). **A necessary first step to ensure the right direction and scale of the agroecological transition in the sector is to set an ambitious and binding emission reduction target for the sector compatible with the Paris Agreement.**

The Commission's [impact assessment on the 2040 climate target](#) highlighted that the sector can reduce its emissions by 44% by 2040 – if structural changes and a modest shift to healthier diets are pursued. The [EU's Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change](#) assessed that emission reductions up to 56% would be possible, while [other scientific assessments](#) show pathways of up to 60%. This leaves no doubt: substantial potential exists.

Proven holistic solutions, such as agroecological, organic farming, and paludiculture address not only climate concerns but wider biodiversity, water, health, and animal welfare issues and increase the system's resilience by truly transforming EU agriculture. Important components of this transformation will be a shift away from industrial animal farming – particularly in high livestock density regions – and reducing the reliance on synthetic fertilizers and pesticides.

Unfortunately, there is currently a strong tendency towards applying technical tweaks to business as usual or compensating with offsets. These measures [fall short](#) because they neither address the inherent sustainability issues of the industrial agriculture model, nor will they deliver the needed mitigation.

As the next generation of farmers begins their journey, a clear EU vision with adequate guidance and support to transition their businesses is needed. This support for a shift to sustainable practices should also be reflected in the EU's next long-term budget.

It will be equally important to hold the entire agri-food value chain accountable to contribute to the transition, including middle of the chain actors such as processors and retailers. A systemic transition also requires support for creating new and local markets, as well as shorter and transparent supply chains for more sustainable production, and ensuring conditions for communities to access healthy, nutritious, and sustainable food. This includes strengthening EU public procurement that valorises local, organic, and agroecologically produced food with an emphasis on plant-based options.

Echoing the conclusion of the Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture, we remind you that the time for bold and evidence-based policy is now. A transition to agroecology is necessary to securely meet our climate objectives, restore and preserve nature, and ensure the long-term viability of European agriculture.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss how the agri-food system can constructively and justly contribute to climate action in the EU.

Yours sincerely,

