

https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/european-commission-seeks-feedback-future-plan-ensure-food-supply-and-food-security-times-crisis-2021-mar-01_en

3 May, 2021

Response to the consultation on “Contingency plan for ensuring food supply and food security in the EU in times of crisis”

Eurogroup for Animals welcomes the consultation on a contingency plan to ensure food supply and food security across the EU in times of crisis. As part of the Farm to Fork strategy, the contingency plan should pursue increased environmental, economic and social sustainability for a resilient EU food system.

Create short supply chains - long-distance animal transports are not part of a resilient food system

The need for shorter supply chains has been recognised in the Farm to Fork strategy. The pandemic caused by SARS CoV-2 demonstrated to Member State governments and EU institutions how fragile our system is, due to it being strictly dependent on the long-distance transport of farmed animals. It also demonstrated how much a local food chain is needed, not only for animal welfare reasons but also for food security reasons. Although the “green lanes” for animal transports were established within a few days of the COVID-19 crisis, the more fundamental issue is that long-distance animal transports are not part of a resilient food system.

Furthermore, the promotion of short-distance animal transportation would reduce the risks of virus transmission that might be linked to the movement of animals on long, and very long, distances, with potential negative effects on both animal and public health. Additionally, it would ensure a more efficient flow of foodstuffs, mitigating the impact of possible restrictions in the movement of human beings and animals due to disease outbreaks. The shift away from long animal transports, both within EU borders and across, and a move towards short supply chains for animal products as well as trade in meat and carcasses must be addressed in the contingency plan.

Promote more plant-based production for direct human consumption and alternative sources of protein

The contingency plan should also address the longer-term solutions and transformative actions needed to make the food system crisis-proof, and also prevent future food security crises from happening. Apart from shortening the food supply chain by ending long-distance animal transport and promoting more regional and local food systems, such actions should include diversification of agricultural production as well as diversification of diets.

During crises, the large number of animals kept on farms still need to be fed. Feed shortage due to restrictions of transports or due to drought, or other extreme weather conditions that will increase with climate change, pose threats against being able to provide the large number of animals with feed. To address food security, as well as sustainability, European food production should be diversified to more plant-based food production for direct human consumption. This should also include support to the

development of alternative sources of protein, such as cultivated meat. These measures would increase food security in the future, as well as help prevent crises as they for example would reduce the use of antibiotics used in animal farming as well as contribute to climate change mitigation.

Together with other measures such as the shift to more plant-based food production and consumption, and shift to higher welfare systems for animal farming, cultivated meat is one part of the solution to improving the resilience and the sustainability of the food system. An independent expert report, requested by the Commission, identified the development of new meat alternatives, such as cultivated meat and other novel food technologies, as an important component in achieving the Commission's Food 2030 Initiative for a sustainable food system for a healthy Europe.¹

Recommendations

COVID-19 has been an important reminder to not only ensure that the food system continues to function in times of crisis, but also that we need to increase resilience regarding how and what type of food that is produced. In this fundamental aspect, EU agricultural production needs to be diversified to include more production of plant-based food and alternatives to animal products.

Eurogroup for Animals recommends that the EU contingency plan for ensuring food supply and food security:

- Addresses the needed transition away from long-distance transport to short supply chains for animal products, inside and across EU borders.
- Supports the shift to more plant-based production for direct human consumption as well as the development of alternative sources of protein, such as cultivated meat, as important parts of a resilient and sustainable food system.

Camilla Björkbom
Political Adviser Food Policy
Eurogroup for Animals
c.bjorkbom@eurogroupforanimals.org

¹ European Commission Directorate-General for Research and Innovation. 2018. [Recipe for change: An agenda for a climate-smart and sustainable food system for a healthy Europe](#). Brussels, European Commission.