

# Plant Our Future: Rebalancing Our Food System



## A Plant-Based Food Manifesto for a thriving, sustainable food system in the EU

As the European Union (EU) prepares for a new five-year legislative cycle, it is crucial that newly elected officials prioritise the need to rebalance and diversify the region's food system. This momentum was clearly reaffirmed in the conclusions of the Strategic Dialogue on the Future of Agriculture in the EU. A sustainable food system, with plant-based food at its core, can help the EU achieve strategic autonomy and reach the 2050 Paris Climate targets. It can also offer economic opportunities, placing Europe at the forefront of a global transition towards more sustainable food systems.



**The European Alliance for Plant-Based Foods (EAPF) calls on the European Union's institutions and Member States to put the transition towards a sustainable food system in the EU at the heart of the next mandate and come forward with a dedicated plant-based food action plan by 2026, as recommended in the conclusions of the Strategic Dialogue on the Future of Agriculture.**

## The challenge: A system under strain

**The EU's current food system is unsustainable.** Many agricultural practices and consumption patterns pose a threat to Europeans' health and the environment, contributing to greenhouse gas emissions, deforestation, and water pollution.<sup>1</sup> According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), climate change negatively affects all four pillars of food security: availability, access, utilisation, and stability.<sup>2</sup> Recognising the power of our food choices and their effects on the environment,<sup>3</sup> elected officials have a critical role to play in fostering a competitive, fair, and healthy European food system.



## The opportunity: A plant-based future

Rebalancing towards more plant-based foods offers the opportunity to address the multiple challenges our current food system face. The importance of dietary shifts is already recognised by European strategies such as the Farm to Fork, Biodiversity, and the Beating Cancer plan - but more needs to be done.

**As EAPF, we believe implementing a plant-based food system can deliver for everyone - consumers, farmers, investors, innovators, and businesses – and help Europe thrive.** In order for the EU to build a more resilient and sustainable food system, EAPF envisions a plant-based food action plan encompassing the following key elements:

<sup>1</sup> Food systems in Europe and across the world are currently unsustainable. Globally, they account for almost one third of GHG emissions, drive biodiversity loss and harmful health impacts, and fail to ensure fair economic returns. ([source](#))

<sup>2</sup> IPCC Special report on Climate Change, chapter 5: Food security ([source](#))

<sup>3</sup> The joint JRC report on food systems, environment and health recognises that to reduce air, water, and soil pollution, shifting to a more plant-based diet is crucial. The study stresses that among 144 scenarios investigated, those that allow the EU to meet its climate targets all involve diet change. ([source](#))



## Political Direction

Deliver a clear political direction and policy framework through a Sustainable Food Systems Law and an EU Action Plan for Plant-based Foods. Transitioning towards more plant-based foods requires changes in the EU production and consumption patterns that must be supported by a robust European regulatory framework. The introduction of an Emission Trading System (ETS), that puts in place an effective carbon pricing mechanism for agriculture can act as a strong signal for positive change.



## Awareness, Education & Accessibility

Educate consumers about the benefits of plant-based foods and the environmental impact of different food choices.<sup>4</sup> One reason why unsustainable products are consumed excessively is that they are underpriced because their environmental and health costs are externalised.<sup>5</sup> Empowering consumers with information and access to plant-based foods can drive demand for these products and facilitate the transition to more sustainable food systems by facilitating societal acceptance.



## Research & Development

Increase funding for research into plant-based foods, scale up production methods and boost European competitiveness through a more supportive regulatory framework. Supporting the development of plant-based foods will not only enhance the variety and taste of these products but also drive innovation and economic growth in the sector,<sup>6</sup> placing Europe in a leading global position. One way to achieve this is by reallocating funds from climate-harming subsidies<sup>7</sup> to support the growth of plant-based alternatives.



## Public Procurement

Encourage the inclusion of plant-based foods in canteens, schools and other public institutions. Given that Europe's government expenditure on public procurement accounts for roughly €1,8 trillion annually,<sup>8</sup> leveraging this policy tool to prioritise plant-based options can create market demand and support local production. To progress more quickly, public procurement should be decoupled from a Sustainable Food Systems Framework initiative, as it would allow for more rapid implementation and help accelerate the transition towards more sustainable food systems.



## Labelling & Transparency

Develop clear labelling standards, with transparent product information to facilitate consumers' choice of more sustainable products. Europe must ensure that the plant-based food sector is not hindered by conflicting national labelling and denomination rules. Ensuring that all food products can utilise the same denominations albeit with clear indications for plant-based counterparts, is key to help guide consumers towards more sustainable diets.



## Farmer Support

Over the long term, economically sustainable agriculture is dependent on environmental sustainability, and a healthy environment relies on responsible land management and production methods. However, in the short term, such a transition will affect the economic viability of livestock farmers. As highlighted in the Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture, support measures, such as the Agricultural Just Transition Fund (AJTF), must be adopted to help farmers to adapt. More widely, farmers need to be supported in transitioning towards sustainable plant-based food crop production systems by providing financial incentives through measures like a revised Common Agricultural Policy and increasing coupled income support (CIS) in the plant-based sector. By doing so, Europe can make significant strides in fostering a sustainable and environmentally friendly food system that recognises each actor along the value chain.

**Plant Our Future is a call to action. We urge policymakers and Member States to join us in this transformative journey to create a future where plant-based foods form a key part of healthy diets, safeguard our environment, and promote economic growth.**

4 Today, at least 71% of the EU's farmland is used to feed livestock. This results in a major negative environmental footprint for the agricultural sector, which accounts for 10% of the EU's total GHG, but also represents an ineffective use of raw materials. ([source](#))

5 Excessive consumption of unsustainable products can be effectively reduced with minimal cost to society if sufficiently high tax rates are applied to them, providing new revenues that can be geared towards more sustainable practices. ([source](#))

6 Research from the Good Food Institute shows that across 13 European countries, sales of plant-based foods grew by 21% between 2020 and 2022 to reach a record €5.8 billion. ([source](#))

7 The EU and its Member States have a long-standing commitment to phasing out environmentally harmful subsidies (EHS). The removal of EHS can save government's money while supporting the achievement of environmental and climate policy goals. ([source](#))

8 Public procurement indicators ([source](#))