



Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe is Europe's leading NGO coalition fighting dangerous climate change. With 200 member organisations active in 40 European countries, representing over 1,700 NGOs and more than 40 million citizens, CAN Europe promotes sustainable climate, energy and development policies throughout Europe.

May 19, 2025

CAN Europe views on the Vision for Agriculture and Food ahead of the AGRIFISH Council on May 26, 2025

To:

EU Ministers of Agriculture and Fisheries

Copy:

European Commissioner Agriculture and Food, Christophe Hansen

European Commissioner Climate, Net Zero and Clean Growth, Wopke Hoekstra

Dear Ministers of Agriculture and Fisheries,

We share this letter with you on behalf of our over 200 member organisations across Europe ahead of the AGRIFISH Council on 26 May and building on our collective [position paper](#). The agriculture and food sector in the EU faces significant challenges in light of its contributions as well as its exposure to rising levels of climate change and extreme weather events, soil degradation, water scarcity, and biodiversity collapse, while there is a need to increase biodiversity protection and nature restoration. Likewise, millions of farmers are confronted with rising production costs and often low farmgate prices, bureaucracy, and exploitation from deep-set incumbents in agriculture and food systems. Cost increases for food in combination with quality of food and sustainability considerations are among the major concerns in the cost of living challenges millions of consumers face.

In CAN Europe's view, **the European agriculture and food system should move towards a comprehensive just agroecological transition while increasing its resilience and constructively contributing to achieving ambitious climate targets in a manner that is fair to farmers, rural communities, consumers and the public at large.**

Against this backdrop, CAN Europe highlights the following aspects as critical for the further development and regulatory initiatives for the EU's agriculture and food systems:

1. There is the need for a **binding and ambitious sectoral gross non-CO₂ emission reduction target**, separate from the LULUCF sector, so that the EU agri-food sector contributes its share to emission reductions, to be developed in the context of the post-2030 climate targets¹
2. **Move to a policy framework that ensures emission reductions across the food chain as an all-actor task**, including by implementing supporting policies including through:
 - Revising the Public Procurement directive,
 - Addressing and reducing food waste,
 - Developing an EU Action Plan for Plant-based Foods.

¹ CAN Europe's overall climate target position on climate neutrality by 2040: [CAN Europe's Position on the EU Climate Targets & an Equitable GHG budget for the EU - CAN Europe](#)

3. With industrial livestock production being the main cause of EU agriculture emissions, **a strategy is needed for the just transition to a more resilient and sustainable EU livestock sector through a territorial approach** (including quantitative, differentiated reductions of livestock in the context of wider sustainability considerations leading to an overall reduction of livestock numbers);

4. **Reform the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to support the just transition to sustainable food systems** including through:

- A dedicated funding mechanism should support the agri-food just transition;
- Phasing out harmful subsidies, including those that encourage the production and consumption of animal products and area-based direct payments, which are linked to the size of the farm rather than the sustainability of practices;
- Reform income support to be more targeted to those farmers and communities most in need;
- Incentivising sustainable practices and supporting the transition to agroecology.

Unfortunately, the *CAP simplification proposal* and its impact assessment presented by the European Commission **fail to provide clear evidence that the steps suggested would not undermine the EU's environmental and climate objectives**. While some simplifications for example for organic farming may reduce the administrative efforts for the farmers, other proposals are estimated to have a negative effect on the sector's environmental and climate performance, such as increasing the share of allowed grassland decrease from 5 to 10%. Removing the links between the CAP and more recently adopted environmental and climate legislation risks resulting in increasing policy incoherence and inefficiencies on the way to climate neutrality.

5. Ensure **fair prices for farmers and consumers in a socially-just way** by addressing unfair trading practices and making the sustainable, less emission-intense choice the easy one for consumers, like encouraging Member States to differentiate VAT (e.g. plant-based, organic, locally sourced products at 0% VAT; unhealthy, less sustainable food at highest VAT).

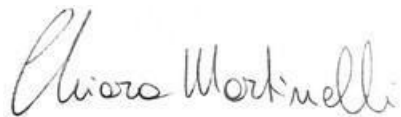
6. We support the application of the **polluter pays principle** in the agriculture sector in the EU. Therefore, options for socially-just carbon pricing should also be considered within a wider policy-mix, while practices that have a positive impact on climate and the environment are rewarded.

7. Ensure **consistency between trade policy and sustainability requirements**: Achieving this will require the EU to rethink its approach to market access for exports and imports, considering the positive and negative externalities of agri-food trade on environmental sustainability, the competitiveness of EU producers, animal welfare, labour standards, and consumer factors such as price and choice.

Overall, the **Vision for Agriculture and Food** falls short of these key asks. Positively, its

narrative aims to better bring together food production and climate aspects. However, in several ways it stays either very vague or projects key political steps to be outlined in forthcoming strategies and legislative initiatives. It aims to shift agriculture policy even more from conditions to incentives, but without any clarity on whether incentives will be made available at a scale and in a way that they are consistent with critical sustainability and climate objectives. Thus, changes are needed and we ask you to brace the suggestions in this letter to **support a comprehensive European just agroecological food system transition while increasing its resilience and constructively contributing to achieving ambitious climate targets and biodiversity goals in a manner that is fair to farmers, rural communities, consumers and the public at large.**

Yours sincerely,



Chiara Martinelli, Director CAN Europe