



**HUMANE SOCIETY
INTERNATIONAL**
EUROPE



**COMPASSION
in world farming**
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European
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On behalf of Humane Society International/Europe (HSI), Compassion in World Farming (CIWF), Eurogroup for Animals, Pro Veg, Green REV, Future Food 4 Climate, FOUR PAWS and European Vegetarian Union, we are writing with regard to the Resolution on the need for an urgent EU action plan to ensure food security inside and outside the EU in light of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

European Green Deal ambitions must not be abandoned

The war in Ukraine has indeed already had a devastating impact on its citizens who have been subject to horrific violence and destruction of the nation's infrastructure by the Russian aggressor. This has hit Ukraine's agricultural production hard, which, in turn, will impact the supply and price of wheat, maize, sunflower seeds and sunflower oil for both food and feed, to the EU and elsewhere in the world. The war will also impact exports of EU agricultural products, particularly pig meat, to our Eastern neighbours.

Notwithstanding the challenging and deeply troubling situation resulting from war in Europe, it is important to realise that the climate change and biodiversity crisis, which we already face, will continue to pose an existential threat to the future for life on our planet. **While we cannot ignore the fact that food security is threatened by war, this is not the time to start weakening or abandoning the important environmental and animal welfare commitments made under both the EU Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies.**

Achieving food security through more efficient protein conversion

Conversely, the looming food security crisis posed by the war in Ukraine could be viewed as an opportunity to address our currently inefficient use of food resources and accelerate the much-needed transition to a plant-based diet that is less reliant on animal production as is envisaged by the Farm to Fork Strategy.

In the context of the political debate on ensuring food security, it is also important to recognise how much of the cereals and oilseed that we produce and import is actually destined directly for human consumption. According to European Commission [data](#), around two thirds of EU cereal production and 70% of oilseed production is intended for animal feed. Even this is insufficient to feed all our farm animals, so we also supplement it with imports from Ukraine, as well as with millions of tonnes of soybean meal from Latin America – thereby also significantly contributing to deforestation and global warming.

Using cereals and legumes as animal feed is a highly inefficient means of producing protein. If one considers the percentage of protein inputs as feed effectively converted to animal product, it is clear that feeding grain to animals for meat production is an extremely wasteful practice. For example, for beef production, only 3.8% of protein in animal feed inputs are effectively converted to animal products; the remaining 96.2% is lost during conversion to meat. As regards pork, 8.5% of animal feed is converted to meat and 91.5% of protein is lost.¹

In short, directly feeding people with plant proteins is far more efficient than feeding animals with cereals and oilseed. If politicians and policymakers are serious about ensuring food security in both the short and long-term, reducing the amount of plant proteins used for animal feed is a key step towards achieving this goal.

¹ <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/protein-efficiency-of-meat-and-dairy-production>

"Feed conversion ratio" is defined as the quantity of feed inputs required to produce one kilogram of edible product. This is measured in kilograms of dry-matter feed per kilogram of edible weight product. Protein and energy efficiency are both measured as the percentage of protein or energy converted from feed to animal product."

Reducing farm animal numbers

One solution to the problem of the availability of animal feed that has been mooted by the animal agriculture industry is to allocate more land in the EU to animal feed production. We deem this to be an unacceptable strategy, particularly if it means that such agricultural activities further impinge on biodiversity. Likewise, taking measures, such as instigating market intervention measures to prop up the already ailing pig meat sector, is also unacceptable.

The most straightforward strategy to ensure the greater availability of cereals, such as wheat and maize, for human consumption is to reduce the number of animals bred for food. We note that many Member States routinely produce far more meat than is needed for domestic consumption within the Union and this overproduction for export purposes already has a negative environmental impact. Additionally, the remaining farm animals should be raised on pasture.

Regrettably, the Versailles Declaration of 10th-11th March 2022 suggests that the EU should use more land for animal feed production, rather than seeking to reduce animal-based production or changing feed sources to implement the transition more quickly in line with the EU Farm to Fork ambitions.

Indeed, the Commission's communication on Safeguarding food security and increasing the resilience of our food system published today explicitly states that "reducing our dependence of feed imports is part of the larger transformation of the EU food system, including a shift to more plant-based diets"

Reducing the size of the EU's farm animal population would result in a significant reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from the agricultural sector, thereby also contributing positively to reaching our climate change targets. **It is, therefore, an opportune moment to accelerate the transition to a more sustainable food system, which will necessitate a reduction in the production and consumption of animal products, and a shift to a more plant-based diet.**

To ensure food security, in the short term, we urge the introduction of a breeding stop for resource intensive sectors, such as pig production, which require large amounts of animal feed. This should ideally lead to a permanent reduction in animal production, thereby also further mitigating the climate and environmental impact of animal agriculture. Member States should assist farmers in transitioning to more sustainable (agricultural) activities, such as the production of plant proteins.

We therefore urge MEPs to reject calls to weaken or abandon the environmental commitments made as part of the European Green Deal. To achieve long-term food security, it is essential that we achieve a protein transition and feed remaining farm animals through outdoor rearing and the diversification of feed sources to reduce our current dependency on food and feed imports.

Kind regards,

Dr Joanna Swabe
Senior Director of Public Affairs
Humane Society International/
Europe

Dr Olga Kikou
Head of Compassion in World
Farming-EU

Reineke Hameleers
CEO,
Eurogroup for Animals

Jasmijn de Boo
Vice-President,
ProVeg International

Pierre Sultana
Director European Policy Office,
FOUR PAWS

Anna Spurek
CEO, Green Rev, Future Food 4
Climate

Ronja Berthold
Head of Public Affairs, European
Vegetarian Union