

European Green Deal and Farm to Fork strategy on sustainable food systems

F2F



MTK warmly welcomes the idea of European Green Deal and Farm to Fork. The Commission's proposal for a green deal has many valuable aspects concerning better agricultural standards. F2F approach has already for a long time been the cornerstone of promoting sustainability in the food chain in Finland. MTK feels this is a valuable opportunity to continue that work throughout the whole EU.

The main principle should be to raise the general awareness and improve the baseline and create a level playing field for sustainable food production. This includes also improving the profitability of agriculture and improve the standard of living for farmers. Farmers need to be part of the process and their work has to be recognized. Only this way, can farming attract young farmers, new investments and innovations.

MTK would like to highlight especially these themes in F2F strategy:



1. One Health – concept

This is a basis to work for food safety, the health of people, animals and the environment. The fight against the globally increasing antimicrobial resistance and maintaining the efficacy of existing antimicrobials against diseases in humans and animals should be prioritized.

- We already have knowledge of how much antimicrobials are sold to use in foodproducing animals in the EU (ESVAC report, 2019). The question is how to reduce the need for antimicrobials in animal husbandry. This means simply that the health of production animals has to be taken care of in a more ambitious way in EU member states. Biosecurity on farms – both internal and external – should be better to take care of health of the animals.
- It is essential to go deeply in to the data of antimicrobials and specify where the antimicrobials really go in terms of animal species and indications.
- In poultry meat production the system of all in-all out should be part of the basicminimum demand of farm biosecurity.



- National action plan of how to reduce the use of antimicrobials for animals should be an essential part of the F2F. The measures listed in the action plan have to be practical and suitable for the specific conditions of each member state. Pig production and poultry meat production are the most intensive type of animal production where most antimicrobials are used on EU level.
- Guidelines of using antimicrobials in animal husbandry for the veterinarians, who are responsible for the prescriptions, should be published nationally and preferably connected to a regulative frame.
- Animal welfare is part of good animal health and promotes food safety issues as well. The full implementation of existing EU directives should be the basis.



2. Better consumer information

MTK welcomes the Commission's intention to explore new ways to give consumers better information on food. In Finland, origin labelling of meat and dairy has been developed in recent years.

- Mandatory origin labelling of meat and dairy in retail shops was introduced in 2018 and for meat in restaurants in 2019 for two years. Customers have been pleased with the additional information and have welcomed the clear origin labelling and it has helped to make better choices. Therefore, it is essential that this legislation will be renewed.
- In our opinion, the regulative frame should be extended to include the origin of all main ingredients in retails, restaurants and public food service, in order to be as transparent as possible to the customers.
- The harmonization of animal welfare labels, at least on a minimum level, is important for better consumer information. At present, consumers might get disinformation if national legislation is stricter than the requirements of an animal welfare label.
- New technology and digitalization should be encouraged and supported in a way to improve traceability and transparency both in animal and plant production for the consumers (fork). An Electronic Grain Passport has been developed in Finland. This electronic document of the shipment between the farm and the recipient and creates reliable traceability of the shipment.



3. From compliance to performance

Finnish farmers welcome European Commission's target to shift focus from compliance to performance. It is vital to stress such targets as:

- Managing and storing carbon in the soil, improved nutrient management and improved water quality or better animal welfare.
- From our point of view, it's essential that European Commission recognizes actions that have already been done. MS programs must be taken into account when baseline and compensation levels are defined.
- Reducing the use of pesticides and fertilizers are good targets, but cannot be implemented as single %-targets, as this would severely punish MS that has done a good job so far.
- The most relevant is to concentrate to reduce the risks of the pesticide use, not the amount of use. Keeping in mind that flexibility is needed during different growing seasons. The reduction should be done with enough time (min 15 years) so that phasing out of active substances used today can be replaced by new active substances and methods. More funding is needed for research and innovation for developing new farming methods.
 - Section control plus new technologies
 - Testing of spraying equipment
 - Training to the users
 - Buffer zones
 - Risk minimizing through mitigation measures
 - Communicate best practices
 - More resilient varieties (NBT)



- Concerning the reduction of fertilizers, the Nitrates directive should be implemented similarly in every MS, to begin with. Finland is one of the few countries in the EU where the Nitrate directive is implemented in the whole country.
- The first step in reducing the use of fertilizers is to know the soil condition through soil testing. Using these results a more targeted fertilizer use can be reached according to the need. Also, new fertilizers obtained through bio and circular economy should be promoted. Technology will also here play a key role but needs investments.
 - Promote nitrogen-fixing crops
 - Cover crops
 - Precision fertilization
- Ecological production should be encouraged and increased, but the increase should be market-driven and based on consumer demand. It is though more important to focus on the share of ecological food products in retail and food services, instead of area cultivated.



4. Improving farmers position in the food chain

The excellent work started by the previous Commission should be continued

- Implementation and improvement of the UTP-directive
- Legislation and/or guidelines concerning Private Label
- PO and cooperatives
- Improvement of EU promotion policy and adequate funding
- Better market access for EU food products
- Same demands for imported food as EU production. No double standards!

5. Knowledge, innovations and investment

Investments and new innovations in the circular economy, transport, storage, packaging and food waste are needed to improve sustainability along with some guidance and regulation. There is also a need to distinguish what is the role of the farmers and what are consumer and processing industry issues.

- Precision farming, planning, advisory services and new technology are crucial to improve sustainability and reduce the footprints of food production.
- NBTs should be assessed whether they can improve farm sustainability, following strict scientific judgement
- Biogas production and other renewable energy sources
- Packaging materials, hygiene and technology
- Innovations in short supply chains, logistical solutions and new food services concepts
- Dietary guidelines
- Reducing food waste in primary production with better integration in the food chain.



**MTK is the union and interest group for farmers,
forest owners and rural entrepreneurs.
MTK has 314 000 members.**

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