

Achieving food security while combatting climate change – the need for a global commitment to ensure sustainable development

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Global trends such as growing international competition in the agri-food sector, automation and mass-oriented food production, modern trends and changes in our lifestyle and eating habits, increased consumption, rapid urbanisation, and the rising threat of climate change and its environmental consequences all have a direct effect on **what we put on our plates**. The year 2015 presents a pivotal opportunity to shape our future and successfully tackle the challenges of food insecurity, climate change and poverty, as world leaders decide on the post-2015 universal Sustainable Development Goals and will later meet at the international climate change conference in Paris to agree on globally binding commitments.

MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF FOOD & NUTRITION SECURITY

Although many Europeans take food security for granted, we must keep in mind that it is not a problem of the past, nor does it concern solely the developing world. Although the initial objective of the European agriculture policy of securing food production while ending starvation and malnutrition in post-war Europe has been successfully achieved, the 21st century brings about new challenges to food and nutrition security that must be tackled. However, it is our responsibility to provide citizens with not only food, but **sufficient, safe and nutritious food at reasonable prices**. This must be ensured **while maintaining the competitiveness of the European agriculture sector** and a fair standard of living for farmers. The role of farming with regard to job creation and employment in rural areas, especially for young people, has to be upheld.

The EU is today the biggest importer as well as exporter of agriculture products. The EPP supports the ongoing shift towards a **more competitive and sustainable agriculture sector** enabling increased production while respecting our natural resources, maintaining balanced territorial development and aiming for a proper balance between international trade and food security. Business as usual is no longer possible and considerable investments in sustainable farming processes are needed in order to **produce more while using less** land, water and energy, while minimising greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change.

In view of international competition, it is crucial that any imported agriculture products comply with the same high production standards as the food produced in Europe. The European marketing standards for fruits and vegetables have played an important role in providing European farmers with a **common language and legally binding uniform parameters**, thus facilitating trade in their products. It must be avoided that, in the absence of such EU standards, farmers are subject to multiple requirements and rigorous private food and sustainability standards from the supermarkets. The **monopolistic practices of the food retail sector** and their negative consequences **should be assessed** and addressed by the authorities so they do not cause unnecessary food waste while prohibiting the sale of products for which there is market demand. In addition, requirements for retailers to **manage unsold products, offer them to charity** or, as a last option, **transform them to animal feed or fertilisers**, should be envisaged.

According to the World Resource Institute, we are still wasting 22% of our food calories in Europe, which is slightly less than the global average and should be significantly minimised. **Consumer awareness and behaviour** is paramount to **reducing food waste**, together with **research and innovation in sustainable agriculture** in order to produce better-resistant varieties and to develop less-damaging cultivation methods, improved machinery equipment and increased capacity and techniques for cooling and storage.

With the growing internationalisation of the agriculture sector, **the CAP must remain the cornerstone of the EU's food-security policy** guaranteeing our farmers a stable and fair income. The potential of responsibly developed **bioenergy should remain as an alternative revenue** and an alternative market for the agriculture sector, in line with our climate objectives to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and promote renewable energy. Programmes to **promote local production and seasonal food** should be developed and supported, including through awareness campaigns for consumers. To further increase the efficiency of our farming sector, the EPP supports **sustainable intensification** and the on-going **CAP-simplification** exercise to allow for **more flexibility** in the implementation of some of the provisions, and also to reduce as much as possible the **administrative burden** on farmers so that they can focus on their **core activity – producing healthy, nutritious food sustainably**. Malnutrition remains a serious public health problem also in wealthy nations where, despite consuming enough calories, people do not get enough of the vitamins and minerals they need to grow, function, stay healthy and fight disease. **Obesity is rising across Europe** and is a particular concern for children, with one third of the EU's children and half of its adults estimated to be overweight or obese. Without action the prevalence of obesity in some European countries will reach 90% by 2030. The EPP supports schemes and information programmes **promoting nutrition and a healthy diet**, especially for children, which are crucial to improving the wellbeing of our population and have further environmental and climate co-benefits.

TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE – THIS YEAR WE DECIDE OUR FUTURE

Climate change will be the biggest challenge to food security in the coming years, with an important impact on vulnerable, farming-dependent countries. The last decade was the warmest decade on record, with 2014 the warmest year ever recorded. The resulting effects of changing weather patterns on our environment, nature, biodiversity and natural habitats are already apparent and are causing loss of life, adverse health effects and damages to property and infrastructure. Climate change also heavily impacts people's access to arable land, food and water, thus contributing to increased migration and resulting security concerns and the rising rate of conflicts and war. Rising sea levels pose a direct threat to coastal areas and island states.

The EPP reaffirms its commitment to **limit global warming to below 2 degrees Celsius** and calls on all actors to secure **an international, legally binding climate agreement at the upcoming international climate conference in Paris**. While the recent commitments by the US and China are a positive step in the right direction, we highlight the need for an overall agreement on credible, verifiable and transparent mitigation commitments from all parties to the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) that can be open to responding to new scientific evidence and technologies. Moreover, agreement on a **well-functioning support system** is crucial for the success of the COP21.

The **carbon price is a key element** in order to drive investments in green technologies. The EPP agrees with the much-needed comprehensive structural reform of the EU Emissions Trading System as the world's biggest carbon market and the EU's primary mechanism to reduce CO₂ emissions in a cost-effective and market-based way, but highlights our limited potential to globally mitigate negative climate change effects without further **contributions from all major emitters**. Sectoral links between cap and trade schemes in various industrial sectors in different countries should be developed with the aim of reducing CO₂ emissions while **preventing carbon leakage**. Moreover, our climate objectives will never be achieved without the full deployment of **safe and sustainable low-carbon energy sources as a principal instrument to reduce our dependency on fossil fuels**. Energy efficiency should be directly integrated into the agreement in parallel with efforts made to reduce CO₂ levels, and research and development of clean technologies should be upheld and supported. Furthermore we acknowledge the **unique position of the agriculture sector** and its lower mitigation potential in balancing the EU's food security and our climate change objectives.

DEVELOPMENT POLICY AT A CROSSROADS

Together, the European Union and its Member States are the world's largest aid donor, spending more than €56.5 billion, and with a focus on good governance, growth, democracy and human rights. However, as evident from the recent **surges in immigration** numbers from developing countries, the **effectiveness** of this aid has to be **properly examined and significantly improved**. We need stronger and more tangible results so that our development aid reaches the right targets. The EPP welcomes the universality of the new sustainable development goals, highlighting that everybody has a role to play in the process.

The world has successfully progressed in some **development goals** like reducing extreme poverty rates, fighting preventable diseases, ensuring drinking water access, achieving gender parity in primary education and increasing the political participation of women, with developed countries increasing their development assistance while rendering the international trading system more favourable for developing countries. Still, with the world's population expected to surpass the 9 billion mark by 2050, the EPP stresses that **more effort is needed** universally, especially in view of **reducing poverty, ensuring food security as well as combatting climate change**, with **environmental sustainability** as an overarching goal.

At present, **food security is primarily a question of access to food – an issue of poverty rather than global food availability**. Around 11% of the world's population is facing chronic food insecurity and most of those people rely on agriculture for their livelihoods. Moreover, 805 million people remain undernourished, with one-third of children in developing countries being stunted because of malnutrition.

The EPP highlights our **responsibility to address the global challenge to eradicate poverty**. The EU can make contributions to global food security through balanced trade policy and fair economic partnerships. We need to **avoid new price spikes**, which would threaten the most vulnerable consumers in food-importing nations. Moreover, a **comprehensive, sustainable approach to food systems is needed**. The role of sustainable management of natural resources and measures to increase resilience must be promoted, highlighting their potential to provide economic opportunities and quality jobs for small farmers, women as well as youth. A global boost in **sustainable productivity and production** will be required, minimising environmental effects and post-harvest losses, and creating better resistance to climate change. The **proper management of water in agriculture**, including irrigation, will further help to achieve the goal of global food security. Doing so will not only stimulate growth and employment – especially in rural areas – but also improve social stability and slow migration pressure. The causes as well as impacts of **food loss and waste** on a global level must be properly assessed and **tackled**.

Rue du Commerce 10
1000 Brussels
T +32-2-2854140
E connect@epp.eu

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