



RECOMMENDATIONS TO INSTITUTIONAL AND CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS

A comprehensive food policy requires better institutional anchoring of the values of ecological sustainability, public health and the resilience of the food supply system at all levels – national, EU and global (WRR Report NO. 93 "Towards a Food Policy").

The EESC's Group III "Various interests" organized an extraordinary meeting in The Hague on 21 April 2016 bringing together a **wide range of stakeholders** - institutional and organized civil society actors, varying from consumers, to farmers, academics, environmentalists, producers, government officials and trade representatives. The objective was, on the one hand, to debate the challenges of combining the need to ensure a continued sufficient supply of healthy, safe, indispensable and affordable food, whilst on the other hand, managing natural resources sustainably in order to protect the environment and to avoid overproduction.

The debates demonstrated the existence of interrelated areas of common agreement for which the following recommendations can be formulated. However, **dilemmas will have to be tackled**, such as: how and most of all, who in terms of resources, should bear the additional costs of a more healthy and sustainable production and consumption? How to maximise win-win solutions? How to cope with win-lose situations?

Governments, regional and local authorities have a key role to play in achieving these recommendations by proactively engaging with all the relevant stakeholders along the food chain, including consumers' and environment organizations, food producers, transport services and retailers.

Group III is willing to support initiatives aiming at setting-up a **comprehensive food policy** – covering both **production and consumption** - which is **sustainable, resilient, healthy, fair and climate-friendly**.

The fundamentals – new opportunities and reversed logics

- **Agriculture is part of the solution** for societal changes (climate, environment, employment) Healthy and sustainable food production and consumption should be an **easy and affordable**

choice both for producers and consumers

- The **food industry is part of the process** and should engage in corporate social responsibility all along the food chain, supporting healthy and sustainable production and consumption
- **Transfer research into use and social change**, for example for containing the possible extra costs linked to healthy and sustainable production and consumption
- All this requires an **interdisciplinary approach** based on strong cooperation and links among public authorities, researchers, producers and civil society organizations. The set-up of an **International Panel on Food & Nutrition Security** recommended by the EXPO 2015 EU Scientific Steering Committee would be a clear step in this direction
- The administrative organisation of European and national bodies should reflect the interdisciplinary and coherent approach, particularly the European Commission's Directorates General. The Commission could demonstrate best practice by setting-up an **inter-service task force in charge of steering the process towards an EU food policy and the same interdisciplinary approach should be reflected all the way through the co-decision process**
- An **in depth-reflection** on the role of the CAP, including the possibility of a fitness check, the prioritisation of goals, sectors and instruments as well as the level of institutional actors to be involved should be carried out. In the **short term** it is possible **to start from the available instruments** taking into account potential solutions proposed by local authorities, such as the **municipality of Ede (NL)**

Health protection

Taking into account that the responsible choice of healthy food is often a sustainable choice, synergies are to be envisaged with the recommendations below on sustainability:

- Improve product composition and information (less salt, fat and sugar), set targets in agreement with consumers', environment and sectoral organizations (producers, supermarkets, caterers and the hospitality industry)
- Encourage consumers to **make responsible choices** for the protection of their health and that of their children. The Dutch campaign for a **"flexitarian" food consumption** is a good example



From agricultural to food policy:

Towards a healthy & sustainable production and consumption



European Economic and Social Committee

Group III "Various Interests"

- Invest in **awareness raising, social advertising, education campaigns** and the use of clear, relevant, independent and reliable product information. This information must be standardized and comparable, ensuring **labels are clear, user tested and truthful** to avoid misleading claims
- Make sure that **healthy and sustainable products are available and affordable** for all consumers, including the most vulnerable, especially the youngest people
- Support, in cooperation with independent consumers' and environmental organizations, the conclusion of **strict agreements between businesses of the food industry** in order to ensure food **safety and combat food fraud**, under the supervision of independent public authorities
- Adapt **medical professional recommendations** as regards education, training and the recognition of qualifications, with a view to protecting health through healthy food choices

Towards sustainability (environmental, social and economic)

- Stimulate the food business to continue with further actions on **sustainable sourcing of raw materials**, a starting point for a sustainable food policy. The **Sustainable Trade Initiative** is an example going in this direction
- Develop **clear indicators** assessing the environmental impact of successful clean agriculture production, aquaculture, fisheries as well as consumption
- Support **research and innovation to make sustainable intensification and other methods such as agroecology a reality**: increasing responsible productivity, the efficient and sustainable use of natural resources and the prevention and recovery of soil degradation
- Invest in **better farming skills and storage techniques**, making use of relevant new technology
- **Encourage consumption for sustainable food products** by creating a stronger market demand, via green public procurement or other approaches
- Create **investment opportunities for sustainable production in order to adapt supply to demand reduction**: produce less, of better quality for a higher price on the market
- Engage in **awareness raising and education campaigns**, with clear and reliable independent product information, including labels and ICT opportunities
- Support and generalize the **Dutch Green Deals** helping sustainable initiatives getting off the ground in the food chains, including the catering and the restaurant sector
- Prevent and reduce waste and **convert to a circular economy production and consumption** schemes. Food waste prevention

and reduction is a shared responsibility for all players in the food chain, including consumers.

Prices and farmers' income

- **Work towards a better functioning and fair food chain**: shift bargaining power back to primary producers and consumers. Short supply chains, alternative safe food networks, local responsible farming systems, direct fair and responsible on-farm sales are promising practices
- Apply **minimum standards** for sustainable production in Europe and engage in achieving them globally
- Support **training schemes helping farmers to produce more sustainably** without necessarily increasing production costs
- In the process of negotiating **trade agreements** take into account **environmental and climate implications**, as well as food quality, product information and health standards applied in the EU
- Make sure that farmers around the world **respect the legal obligations** linked to the above-mentioned standards
- Promote **innovative financing**, income insurance schemes and management tools alongside **social innovation practices**
- Adapt **competition policy rules to allow anticompetitive price arrangements** that have been made for the purpose of sustainability, with the necessary safeguards for markets and consumers
- Foresee **tax schemes and incentives** supporting sustainable production, transport and safe products for human consumption
- Increase **subsidies for environmentally friendly practices**

