

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen
Vice-President Frans Timmermans
European Commission
Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200
1049 Brussels

Cc: Commissioner Stella Kyriakides
Commissioner Janusz Wojciechowski

By email

18 May 2020

Farm to Fork Strategy must address the industrial livestock problem

Dear President, Dear Vice-President,

We are extremely concerned by the possibility that the Commission's upcoming Farm to Fork strategy could fail to address the overwhelming impacts of European animal farming and the related need to reduce and improve the production and consumption of meat, dairy and eggs.

It is no exaggeration to say that intensive animal farming is the largest single problem with the global food system, and it would be extremely remiss to ignore this in the Farm to Fork plan.

Overwhelming scientific evidence shows the impacts that industrial livestock production has on [climate](#), the [environment](#), [human health](#), and the [welfare of rural communities](#). The credibility and legitimacy of the Farm to Fork strategy depend on addressing these problems and driving a transition towards the livestock sector of the twenty-first century.

The European Green Deal aims to prevent climate breakdown, avoid environmental destruction and ensure people's health and well-being. Failing to reduce the quantity, and substantially improve the quality, of meat, dairy and eggs produced and consumed in Europe would prevent the EU from reaching these core objectives of the European Green Deal.

The COVID-19 crisis has exposed the overproduction of meat and dairy products in Europe and made its unsustainability and over-reliance on exports and imports increasingly clear. But this is not a new problem, as [earlier outcries and demonstrations](#) by farmers over unfair pricing and income have shown, these sectors were in crisis well before Covid-19 hit. The ongoing crisis has also put a spotlight on the [appalling working conditions](#) in some European slaughterhouses where the pandemic is accentuating well-known problems in the 'cheap meat' industry.

Ecosystem destruction, expansion of agriculture, intensive factory farming and exploitation of wild species have created what leading scientists describe as a '[perfect storm](#)' for diseases similar to COVID-19 to spill over from wildlife to people. Animal farming and feed production in particular are among the main drivers of global forest and ecosystem loss. Scientists [estimate that 31%](#) of outbreaks of emerging diseases are linked to land use change and human encroachment on tropical rainforests.

Responding to the multiple crises we face means addressing the underlying issues that make our societies vulnerable and unsustainable – not just treating the symptoms. To do this, the Farm to Fork Strategy must [put forward measures to lower the EU's consumption](#) of products that drive global destruction of ecosystems including meat, dairy products, and soy fed to animals.

The Farm to Fork strategy is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for your Commission to achieve the aims of the European Green Deal and build the food system of the future.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Riss', with a stylized, cursive script.

Jorgo Riss
Director, Greenpeace European Unit