



A manifesto for agricultural transition to address systemic climate crises

Farmers and civil society call on the EU to prepare for unavoidable climate crises through 13 urgent action points

Devastating consequences of the climate crisis are now felt in every corner of the world. From north to south, the magnitude and impact of recent climate crises serves to prove that the longer the current business-as-usual approach continues, the more severe, widespread and irreversible the consequences will be. We need to act urgently, implementing rapid solutions at every level and recognising that poorer populations and sectors of populations are being hit the hardest.

According to the European Drought Observatory, in September 2022, 59% of the EU faced a drought warning or alert.ⁱ These statistics confirm a worrying yet well-documented trend that we have seen intensify over several seasonal cycles. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has stressed that “all possible actions to address climate

change are urgently needed: to reduce it and ensure that it does not exceed 1.5°C, but also to adapt to it".ⁱⁱ Yet, in spite of all these indicators, on both a European and global level, we are failing to change the status quo.

Climate change impacts not only the environment but also puts pressure on resources such as water, land, forest, and production means. This enhances political and socio-economic crises, fuelling wars, hunger, mass displacements of populations, and migration. We need fundamental political transformation to reverse this trajectory. Stopping and adapting to the climate crisis requires deep economic and social changes as well as a commitment for peace and demilitarisation. We must work on changing the core of our production and consumption models to achieve the objectives of the legally binding Paris Agreementⁱⁱⁱ, the Sustainable Development Goals^{iv} (SDGs) as well as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural areas (UNDROP)^v. Taking into account planetary boundaries and social justice must be central in a fair transition.

The current agricultural system, which is becoming highly industrial and increasingly disconnected from natural cycles, emits around 15% of the total greenhouse gas emissions of the EU-27^{vi}. However, farmers are also among those most structurally affected by climate change because they work with natural cycles on a daily basis.

Small and medium-scale peasant farming is now proven to be more resilient than most industrialised models, yet small and medium-scale farmers are subjected to political, social and economic conditions in which they simply cannot survive^{vii}. Peasant farms are disappearing at an alarming rate across Europe and with them we lose generations of proven know-how, experience and opportunities to produce food sustainably.

These farmers, together with other citizens, therefore demand concrete measures and support to: 1) change to sustainable and inclusive production models in order to reduce the impact of industrialised agriculture as soon as possible, and 2) anticipate and plan for the worsening effects of climate change and the biodiversity crisis that we will experience even with a fair transition. So far, although the EU institutions recognise this challenge, there is a lack of sufficient, tangible solutions.

With this manifesto, farmers organisations and civil society organisations call on the European institutions to work on an ambitious and fair transition, enabling food sovereignty, global solidarity, the defence of peace and the respect of human rights, to ensure that European agriculture is able to face the climate challenge and that its impact can be radically reduced. The European Union must begin an inevitable agricultural transition, which must be fair and robust, work with nature and support life-enriching systems.

Importantly, these demands must not be implemented in isolation but rather taken as a

holistic roadmap to systemic change. The interdependence and interrelatedness of these demands reflects the interdependence and interrelatedness of the ecosystems, social systems, labour systems and economic systems that are key to be able to feed the world sustainably.

The EU must implement 13 urgent actions at this crucial crossroads for European agriculture:

- 1.** Act to guarantee a profound change in European agriculture to respond to the climate emergency, respecting the Green Deal commitment to leave no one behind.
- 2.** Double the number of farmers in Europe by 2040, by supporting existing farmers and setting up 10 million new farms.
- 3.** Guarantee access to farmland and ensure generation renewal.
- 4.** Protect the rights of peasants on seeds and cultivate agrobiodiversity.
- 5.** Support, advise and train existing and future farmers towards more sustainable practices and agroecology.
- 6.** End factory farms within 10 years.
- 7.** Rebalance the presence of livestock farmers in all territories across Europe so that by 2035, the size of EU herds matches the capacity of the land to provide local fodder.
- 8.** Maintain and enforce the target of reducing synthetic fertilizers by at least half and phasing out synthetic pesticides by 2035.
- 9.** Ensure that healthy food is made affordable through a transition to territorialised food systems across the EU.
- 10.** Ban unproven and dangerous technologies and stop public subsidies for harmful products and practices.
- 11.** Ensure equitable water sharing and encourage water-efficient agricultural practices.
- 12.** Develop a ten-year plan to phase out soy and palm oil imports into Europe, starting with a ban on GMO imports.
- 13.** Adopt public policies to regulate and protect agricultural markets and the right to food.

Why and how each of these actions must be taken is detailed in the [rationale and supporting arguments](#) to the manifesto.

Right now, we have an opportunity – perhaps our last opportunity – to carry out a real transition and face the challenges of climate crisis. There is no time to lose in pursuing climate justice. Scientific projections are clear: “a rapid and far-reaching transition is needed”.^{viii} With every day that passes, we move further in the wrong direction and the urgency of the situation increases. Policy makers must act to make systemic changes, and civil society and farmers' movements are ready to support this effort.

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i European Drought Observatory, ‘Situation of Combined Drought Indicator in Europe’. Accessed: Sep. 23, 2022. [Online]. Available: <https://edo.jrc.ec.europa.eu/edov2/php/index.php?id=1000>

ii Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Global Warming of 1.5°C: IPCC Special Report on impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels in context of strengthening response to climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty*, 1st ed. Cambridge University Press, 2022. doi: [10.1017/9781009157940](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009157940).

iii United Nations / Framework Convention on Climate Change, *Paris Agreement*. UN, 2016. [Online]. Available: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:22016A1019\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:22016A1019(01))

iv UN General Assembly (70th), *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. UN, 2015. [Online]. Available: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3923923>

v Notably article 18. UN General Assembly (73rd), *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas*. UN, 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1661560>

vi ‘Common Agricultural Policy and climate: Half of EU climate spending but farm emissions are not decreasing’, European Court of Auditors, 16, 2021. [Online]. Available: <https://www.eca.europa.eu/en/Pages/DocItem.aspx?did=58913>. This percentage includes the use of fuel for machinery and heating of buildings but does not include neither the imported animal foodstuff impact nor food packaging and distribution.

vii R. Rossi, ‘Small farms’ role in the EU food system’. European Parliament, Sep. 05, 2022. [Online]. Available: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI\(2022\)733630](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2022)733630)

viii IPCC, *ibid*.