



***ECVC Policy Recommendations for
the June 2024 European
Parliamentary Elections and
Proceeding Legislature***

April 2024



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The ninth legislature of the European Parliament began in 2019 in an atmosphere of hope and high ambitions. The advent of the Green Deal, the Farm to Fork Strategy, and in particular the related objectives seemed to hold the promise of a move towards sustainable food systems.

However, over the past two years, these policies have been stripped of ambition and substantive content, amid uncertainty and fear. The global political situation and European public policies have been shaken by war, climate disasters and social, health, and economic crises, characterised by an increasingly simplistic, populist and polarised political discourse, leading to the rise of extreme right in many countries. Added to this is the pressure from European institutions towards false solutions such as carbon farming and GMOs. The question raised in this context is whether we want the EU to serve the interests of citizens or businesses.

EU farmers have been taking to the streets since January 2024, to demand fair prices, the end of Free Trade Agreements, a fairer CAP, and a reduced administrative burden for farmers. This manifesto is released in the midst of EU proposals and votes so no quick conclusions can be drawn. However elements on the value chain are promising and must be turned into concrete action. Similarly, proposals on simplifying bureaucracy cannot be implemented without addressing the huge climate and environmental challenges of our time. Here again it is crucial to ensure that interests of farmers and citizens are prioritised.

The impact on agriculture and food has been considerable in an already uncertain context. Europe today has around 9 million farms, down from 15 million in 2003, and the average age of farmers is 57 years old. They struggle to access seeds, land, water and the market. Public policies prioritise market interests and corporate profits over human rights and feeding the population.

The limits of the current system, of the increasing industrialisation of agriculture (particularly in livestock farming), and of the misleading subsidy mechanisms of the CAP are more and more obvious. Biodiversity is collapsing, soils are deteriorating, climate change is accelerating and farmers are the first to pay the price.

Yet, in the face of all this, peasant farmers continue to bring solutions and hope to populations. They continue to concretely cultivate an alternative, more resilient agricultural model, based on food sovereignty and peasant agroecology. This model is capable of feeding all citizens, thanks to a social approach that makes it possible to face multiple systemic crises and is best adapted to the unique realities of each European territory.

This type of small-scale farming is only possible with a large number of farms and good living and working conditions for farmers and agricultural workers throughout Europe. Policies must support current farmers and enable them to transition to sustainable models. These policies must encourage generational renewal so that more people and more young people can enter the profession.

We must build bridges of solidarity and understanding between urban and rural areas and deconstruct the current polarising rhetoric. We must show solidarity with the rest of the world and address the issue of fairer international agricultural trade.

In a context of agricultural uprising across Europe, there are clear demands for fairer prices and agricultural markets and better working conditions. The European elections in June 2024 must allow our decision-makers to organise a transition of agricultural and food systems based on this vision of food sovereignty.

1) Ensure viable prices and more farmers in the EU, needed to enable the transition to agroecology, through the adoption of public policies that regulate agricultural markets and the control of production, as well as redistributing production to more farmers and areas in Europe and guaranteeing the right to healthy food for the entire population.

While most small- and medium-scale farmers have little or no access to CAP subsidies and depend on selling their products, large farmers are often dependent on these payments. We must ensure that the CAP once again fulfils its original objective: to provide food, regulate prices and alleviate crises. The CAP and agricultural market rules must guarantee fair prices to producers, reflecting production costs.

As part of this transition, we must ensure that the rights of agricultural workers, including migrant workers, are fully respected across Europe. On the other side of the chain, local, healthy and seasonal food must be accessible to everyone, in particular to the poorest sections of our societies:

Our demands

- The EU must urgently strengthen the Unfair Trading Practices Directive to ensure that all EU product prices cover production costs, including decent incomes, and that farmers can make anonymous complains.
- The CAP should recover its original role to implement instruments for market regulation, including by using subsidies as to regulate the market and manage supply.
- The CAP first pillar subsidies must be oriented to prioritise the agroecological and sustainable transition of farms.
- The EU must establish public stocks to stabilise prices and keep food affordable for everyone, particularly in times of crisis.

Resources/reference documents

- [Putting market regulation at the heart of the debate on the CAP](#)
- [ECVC Youth Articulation position paper on the reform of the common agricultural policy \(CAP\)](#)
- [Public conference - More farms across Europe: a roadmap for the reterritorialization of European food systems](#)

2) Prioritise local food and the needs of populations, instead of prioritising exports: stop free trade agreements.

There are different production costs across the world. Putting EU and third country farmers in competition with each other on products that could be cultivated locally will only exacerbate dumping as well as driving down prices and therefore wages. The negative impacts of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) are not only felt in Europe but also in the rest of the world. They are damaging to the rights of farmers recognised in UNDROP, to food systems, to gender equality, to the climate and to biological diversity. With the increase in crises, it becomes evident that this paradigm linked to agricultural trade

is outdated and WTO rules are not capable of ensuring food security and overcoming the ecological and social problems of food systems.

Our demands

- Stop free trade agreements.
- Promote radical international trade reform creating a new trade framework based on food sovereignty and social and environmental justice.
- Ban food speculation and allow countries to build public food stocks to prepare for times of crisis.

Resources/reference documents

- [Peasant and agricultural organizations from Europe and South America unite against the EU-MERCOSUR free trade agreement](#)
- [Putting market regulation at the heart of the debate on the CAP](#)

3) Maintain strict regulation of all GMOs, including new genomic techniques, and enforce farmers' rights on seeds.

To practice agroecological agriculture, farmers need seeds adapted to their local growing conditions and must therefore be able to select their own peasant seeds. To support these practices, we need a European regulatory framework that enforces farmers' rights over seeds.

However, two draft European regulations currently being negotiated seriously threaten these rights. The first, concerning the deregulation of new GMOs ("new genomic techniques", shortened to NGTs), aims to remove all traceability and labelling for GMOs obtained with NGTs, and therefore to suppress the right to cultivate GMO-free crops. Furthermore, all GMOs, including NGTs, are patented, and their deregulation would lead to an abusive extension of the scope of patents to conventional seeds, and therefore an unprecedented privatisation of seeds by the few seed multinationals that hold these patents. If traceability of NGTs (i.e. the publication of detection and identification processes) is not guaranteed anymore, farmers will have no protection against these patent abuses. The second draft regulation concerns the marketing of plant reproductive material (PRM) and directly threatens the right of farmers to exchange the seeds of their crops, by assimilating these farmers to seed companies and treating exchanges of seeds between farmers as marketing. Furthermore, in connection with the proposal on new GMOs, the creation of new commercial categories (non-organic heterogenous material, new conservation varieties) in this regulation could open the way to the marketing of patented and untraced GMOs, and remove the right of farmers to reuse the seeds of their harvest.

Our demands

- New genomic techniques are GMOs and must be regulated as such. The current GMO regulations (Directive 2001/18/EC) guarantee the right of farmers to grow GMO-free crops and protect them against patent abuse made possible by European patent law (Directive 98/44/EC). ECVC calls for the rejection of the unacceptable deregulation proposal.
- We call on the European Parliament to continue the work started not only on the non-patentability of essentially biological processes, but also on the non-patentability of living organisms in general.

- Concerning the proposal on plant reproduction material (PRM), ECVC welcomes the positive modifications to the proposal that have been introduced by the Agriculture Committee of the European Parliament, especially on the framework allowing farmers to exchange seeds and the scope of the regulation. In this process, ECVC will keep demanding that the exchange of all kind of PRM between farmers be considered as mutual aid in the framework of agricultural production, and not as marketing. Moreover, the commercial categories introduced in the proposal should not be covered by patents or be derived from genetic modification techniques. If these important modifications are not adopted, ECVC will be calling for the rejection of the proposal.

Resources/reference documents

- [Open letter – Patents, ANSES reports and detection/identification: the European Parliament must not consolidate its position on GMOs/NGTs before these key issues are resolved](#)
- [Statement: ECVC welcomes the Council of the EU decision to block the deregulation of GMO-NGTs and condemns the European Parliament’s hasty approval of an incoherent and unenforceable proposal](#)
- [Position: Proposal from the European Commission on new GMOs, towards the appropriation of all seeds through the patents of a few multinationals](#)
- [Position: ECVC calls for a rejection of the European Commission proposal on plant reproductive material](#)

4) Make land a priority issue for public policies to guarantee the integration of more young farmers and soil health.

Half of Europe's agricultural land is in the hands of just 3% of farms. Land concentration is increasing, driving land prices up and endangering the generational renewal of farmers. This process is the result of EU policies favouring the enlargement of farms, and over the past 15 years, we have lost more than 5 million farms. New financial actors and non-agricultural companies are appropriating land because they see it as a safe investment or possible short-term added value, to the detriment of the environment, soil health, local communities and the future of European food systems.

However, agricultural models and the way land is used depend on land tenure structures. There is now a clear mandate and momentum to address soil health and generational renewal at EU level. For ensuring access to land and the agroecology transition, we need land regulation.

Our demands

- Implement a European directive on agricultural land which fights against land concentration by regulating land markets, the transfer of land use rights, the creation of public land banks or even via pre-emption rights for young people and agroecology.
- Create a European Land Observatory to record land sale and rental prices, land quality, actual beneficiaries of agricultural land, and to provide early warning in the event of land concentration, as transparency is essential to ensure the access to land.
- Redefine the active farmer to ensure that those receiving EU subsidies are those who work the land.
- Support, advise and train current and future farmers towards agroecological and more sustainable practices to guarantee soil health.

Resources/reference documents

- [Proposal for a European directive on agricultural land](#)
- [Navigating between dreams and precariousness: working and learning conditions for young agricultural workers, interns and volunteers across Europe](#)
- [Your land, my land, our land: basic strategies for preserving agricultural land and access to land for smallholder agriculture and agroecology](#)

5) Shift the paradigm of climate policies towards direct emissions reductions and farming transition and avoid any land-linked carbon credit mechanism.

Offsetting carbon emissions is a popular rhetoric among polluters and an unfortunately common greenwashing technique that gives companies the option to continue polluting. Despite its reputation and the fact that it is the first objective of the Green Deal, the principle of emission compensation has no biological validity: sequestration is a natural phenomenon which cannot be accelerated and even more so with regard to fossil carbon emissions which cannot all be absorbed into natural sinks. Carbon farming, currently presented as the spearhead of EU climate action on agriculture, is a technical abuse. Carbon retention in soils cannot be calculated precisely, starting with the fact that it changes during the day. Additionally, the proposed contracts are too short to sequester carbon in soils long enough to have minimal impact on climate change mitigation. To have an impact, this sequestration would need to be guaranteed for at least 200 years because this is the minimum duration during which CO₂ remains in the atmosphere. Finally, carbon farming proposals pose a considerable threat to European land tenure, as capital seeking quick returns from carbon farming will accelerate land concentration, as was the case with forestry carbon credits worldwide with the REDD+ program. The EU must refrain from reinforcing the financialization of nature and should rather focus on undertaking a viable and timely transition of the farm sector.

Our demands

- Abandon the offset approach that accelerates climate change by allowing polluters to continue their damage.
- Abandon the proposed carbon certification framework.
- Stop the creation of an AGRI ETS. (Emission Trading scheme)
- Plan a viable and planned transition of food systems to have more farms and agroecology in the territories. (See our manifesto below)

Resources/reference documents

- [Manifesto for the agricultural transition to respond to systemic climate crises](#)
- [Carbon agriculture: a “new business model”... for whom?](#)
- [Real zero Europe declaration on the dangers of the carbon offsetting process, signed by more than 200 organizations](#)

6) Rebalance the presence of livestock farms in all European territories by 2035.

In recent years measures put in place have had no impact on large livestock farms, but on the contrary have led to the loss of small livestock farms, where the connection and care between the animals and the breeders are much better, and where the impact on the environment is positive and non-destructive. We must strive to curb the industrialisation of livestock farming to enable peasant agriculture to respect the carriage capacity of the land, getting rid of chemical fertilizers, enhancing proper use of manure, and maintaining landscapes and rich biodiversity, to ensure that rural areas are populated and dynamic and to provide quality food for all.

Our demands

- Establish a transition and territorial plans through the National Strategic Plans of the CAP to balance the size of livestock with available land and fodder needs.
- Ensure a sufficient number of slaughterhouses in the territories and facilitate the creation of local and mobile slaughterhouses.
- Close factory farms, where conditions are intolerable for both workers and animals.

Resources/reference documents

- [Livestock breeding in the European Union: supporting an ambitious transition towards small-scale agriculture](#)

7) Include the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP) in all EU public policies on food and agriculture.

We are now entering a new dynamic for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants, adopted in 2018 by the United Nations General Assembly, with the creation of a working group of independent experts on its implementation. This international monitoring mechanism underlines the responsibility of EU forces to ensure the implementation of UNDROP in EU policy, given its global reach and impact. We must do what is necessary to ensure that UNDROP effectively applies to rural workers and migrant workers, as highlighted in the first article. ECVC stands in solidarity with migrants and refugees around the world, pushed to leave because of wars, dictatorships, or commercial and agri-food systems that destroy their way of life.

Our demands

- The EU must take UNDROP into account in all EU policy decisions, from the seed law to CAP reform, and from trade strategy to international partnership guidelines.
- The EU must specifically ensure respect for rural and migrant agricultural workers in Europe and beyond.

Resources/reference documents

- [The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas](#)
- [UNDROP – Why do we need it in Europe?](#)
- [ECVC proposals on the implementation of social conditionality within the CAP, Brussels, November 2021](#)
- [Via Campesina Declaration of Solidarity and Commitment to the Rights of Migrants and Refugees Worldwide](#)