

Background on the European Green Deal

On December 11th, 2019, the then newly-appointed European Commission presented the "European Green Deal," which is the European Commission's work program for the following five years (until 2024). The European Green Deal seeks to implement the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and the 2015 Paris Agreement in the EU. The goal is to achieve climate neutrality in Europe by 2050. The EU Green Deal thus covers a large array of policy areas, including agriculture ("Farm-to-Fork Strategy"), biodiversity ("Biodiversity Strategy"), and public health ("Beating Cancer Plan").

2050 is the goal to achieve climate neutrality by in Europe

The Farm-to-Fork Strategy was presented a few months after the European Green Deal, in May 2020. The Farm-to-Fork Strategy is a plan developed by the EU Commission to implement the objectives of the European Green Deal in the specific policy fields of agriculture and public health. In practice, the Farm-to-Fork Strategy is a document laying out the policy orientations for the EU in the policy areas of agriculture and public health for the next 10 years. To that extent, the Farm-to-Fork lists a series of broad policy and regulatory actions meant to improve sustainability in food production and consumption.

In the Farm-to-Fork Strategy, the European Commission also acknowledges that "average intakes of energy, red meats, sugars, salt, and fats continue to exceed recommendations, [while] consumption of whole-grain cereals, fruit and vegetables, legumes, and nuts is insufficient."¹ Even though the European Commission does not commit to ending the promotion of meat, it still acknowledges that "marketing campaigns advertising meat at very low prices must be avoided."²

The European Commission further states that "moving to a plant-based diet with less red and processed meat, and with more fruits and vegetables will reduce not only risks of life threatening diseases, but also the environmental impact of the food system," citing the EAT Lancet Planetary Diet study, which recommends lowering the consumption of animal source food and increasing the consumption levels of plant-based food.³

Likewise, the "Europe's Beating Cancer Plan" published in February 2021 insists on the need to "shift to a more plant-based diet, with less red and processed meat and other foods linked to cancer risks and more fruit and vegetables."⁴

 moving to a plant-based diet with less red and processed meat

Food

EU Code of Conduct on Responsible Food Business and Marketing Practices

VOLUNTARY ADOPTED

Policy Goal: encourages food processors, food service operators and retailers, to voluntarily commit to improve and communicate their sustainability performance.

Key measure: The Code contains seven aspirational objectives, including "Healthy, balanced and sustainable diets for all European consumers, thereby contributing to reversing malnutrition and diet-related noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) in the EU, and reducing the environmental footprint of food consumption by 2030." The Commission announced it would consider legislative measures if progress is insufficient.

Nutritional Labeling

LAW BLOCKED

Policy Goal: Inform consumers on the nutritional value of food products by imposing a mandatory front-of-pack nutritional label, inspired by the NutriScore, an already-existing voluntary label.

Key measure: The enactment of a mandatory nutritional label to inform consumers that certain products, such as red and processed meat, are not nutritious.

EU Marketing Standards

LAW ADOPTED

Policy Goal: EU Marketing Standards improve consumer information by regulating the use of certain terms that food producers can use on food packages. Marketing standards rules exist for eggs, poultry, beef, and dairy products.

Key measures: Marketing standards regulate the use of plant-based and cellular alternatives, as well as certain terms related to the method of production of eggs and poultry products (such as "free range"). However, the European Commission did not amend the rules pertaining to alternative proteins. As a result, so plant-based and cell-based producers are still restricted from using terms such as "milk," "cream," "yogurt," "butter," etc. Similarly, rules pertaining to the method of production of eggs and poultry remain unchanged.

Legislative Framework for Sustainable Food Systems (including sustainable food labeling and standards for sustainable food procurement)

LAW DELAYED

Policy Goal: Achieve a sustainable EU food system and integrate sustainability into all food-related policies.

Key measures: The enactment of a sustainable food labeling and the adoption of minimum mandatory criteria for sustainable food procurement in schools and public institutions.

Climate

Industrial Emissions Directives

LAW DELAYED

Policy Goal: Regulating greenhouse gas emissions on farms, enacting a regulatory definition for "industrial farming," so as to apply a specific legal regime to such a method of production.

Key Measure: The regulatory threshold defining which farms will be covered by the environmental rules established in the Directive. The European Commission proposed that farms with more than 150 livestock units be covered in the Directive. The European Commission estimates that this new threshold will cover 10% of the largest cattle farms, representing 41% of emissions of the sector, and so a yearly reduction of at least 184 kt of methane and 59 kt of ammonia. Similarly, for poultry and pig farms, the new Directive's scope will result in covering 18% of the largest pig farms and 15% of poultry farms, representing respectively 85% and 91% of the emissions of the sectors, and so reducing yearly emissions at least by 135 kt methane and 33 kt ammonia from pig farms, and 62 kt ammonia from poultry farms.

10% of the largest cattle farms
18% of the largest pig farms
15% of poultry farms

Regulation on an EU Certification for Carbon Removals

LAW DELAYED

Goal: This proposal sets out a voluntary EU framework to certify carbon removals generated in the EU, by enacting standards to define high-quality carbon removals and the process to monitor, report and verify the authenticity of these removals. The goals of the Carbon Removals Regulation is to encourage the development of carbon removal technologies and to fight greenwashing.

Key measure: The enactment of standards defining carbon removals in the agricultural sector, so as to avoid greenwashing claims on high-emitting sectors, such as beef production.

 fight greenwashing

 encourage the development of carbon removal technologies

Agriculture

Common Agricultural Policy Regulations

LAW ADOPTED

Policy Goals: Encourage sustainable practices on farms by further linking agricultural subsidies to good environmental and animal welfare practices, such as: crop rotation with leguminous crops, low intensity grass-based livestock system, increased space allowances per animal, increased access to pastures and increasing grazing period for grazing animals, conservation agriculture, rewetting wetlands/peatlands, establishment and maintenance of permanent grassland.

Key Measures: The creation of a new subsidy, called "eco-schemes" to encourage farmers to engage in more sustainable agricultural practices. However, the amount allocated to this new subsidy is low compared to other subsidies, and farmers have to apply for this subsidy on a yearly basis, which represents a significant administrative burden.

Review of EU Agri-Food Promotion Program

LAW BLOCKED

Policy Goals: Revise the agri-food promotion program, a program whereby the EU funds advertisement promoting EU agricultural products within and outside the EU, with a view to enhancing its contribution to sustainable production and consumption, and in line with the shift to a more plant-based diet, with less red and processed meat and more fruit and vegetables.

Key Measures: The end of public promotion campaigns for unsustainable and cruel products, such as pork.

Review of EU School Scheme for Fruits, Vegetables, and Milk

LAW DELAYED

Policy Goals: Revise the EU School Scheme for Fruits, Vegetables, and Milk, a program whereby the EU funds the distribution of fruits, vegetables, and milk in EU schools. The revision of this policy aims to promoting sustainable food consumption patterns in line with the Farm-to-Fork Strategy.

Key Measures: While the European Commission proposed to increase the share of organic products, it did not propose to reduce the volume of milk distributed to school, nor to mandate schools to provide a plant-based alternatives for milk and dairy products.

Animal Welfare

Revision of EU Farm Animal Welfare Legislation

LAW BLOCKED

Policy Goal: Revise all seven directives establishing minimum animal welfare standards to align them with the latest scientific evidence, broaden its scope, make it easier to enforce and ultimately ensure a higher level of animal welfare

Key Measures: Potential new rules would include a prohibition on the use of cages and new species-specific animal welfare rules for rabbits, turkeys, quails, and fish. However, this proposal has been considerably delayed and there exist important risk that it will not be published.

Animal Health

2019 Regulations on Antibiotics Used in Farmed Animals

LAW ADOPTED

Policy Goal: The Commission announced it aimed to reduce overall EU sales of antimicrobials for farmed animals and in aquaculture by 50% by 2030.

Key Measures: The Regulations on Veterinary Medicinal Products and Medicated Feed adopted in 2019 (before the publication of the European Green Deal), prohibit the use of antimicrobials for the sole purpose of compensating "bad husbandry practices." However, the Regulations do not specify what would qualify as bad husbandry practices.

50% reduction by 2023 of EU sales of antimicrobials for farmed animals

Financial and Economic Regulations

The Taxonomy Regulation

LAW ADOPTED

Policy Goal: The Taxonomy Regulation establishes requirements that an economic activity has to meet in order to qualify as environmentally sustainable. The EU taxonomy allows financial and non-financial companies to share a common definition of economic activities that can be considered environmentally sustainable. In doing so, these rules encourage business operators to become more sustainable all the while protecting investors from greenwashing.

Key Measures: The EU eventually classified animal agriculture in the list of sustainable activities, thus missing an unprecedented opportunity to steer investors away from this sector.

Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive

LAW ADOPTED

Policy Goal: Increase transparency on the market by mandating corporations' to disclose the impacts of their business activities on the environment and people.

Key Measures: The Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive requires all large companies and all listed companies to disclose information on the social and environmental risks caused by their business. However, information related to animal welfare are not included in the list of mandatory information companies must disclose.

Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive

LAW DELAYED

Policy Goal: This Directive makes EU legislation related to environmental protection and human rights applicable to all business activities conducted by an EU-based corporation, even when such activities occur outside the EU.

Key Measures: The Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive establishes a corporate due diligence duty whereby a corporation must identify, end, and prevent negative human rights and environmental impacts in the corporation's own operations, its subsidiaries and value chains. In addition, certain large companies are required to have a plan to ensure that their business strategy is compatible with limiting global warming to 1.5 °C in line with the Paris Agreement.

EU Legislative Process (Ordinary Legislative Procedure)

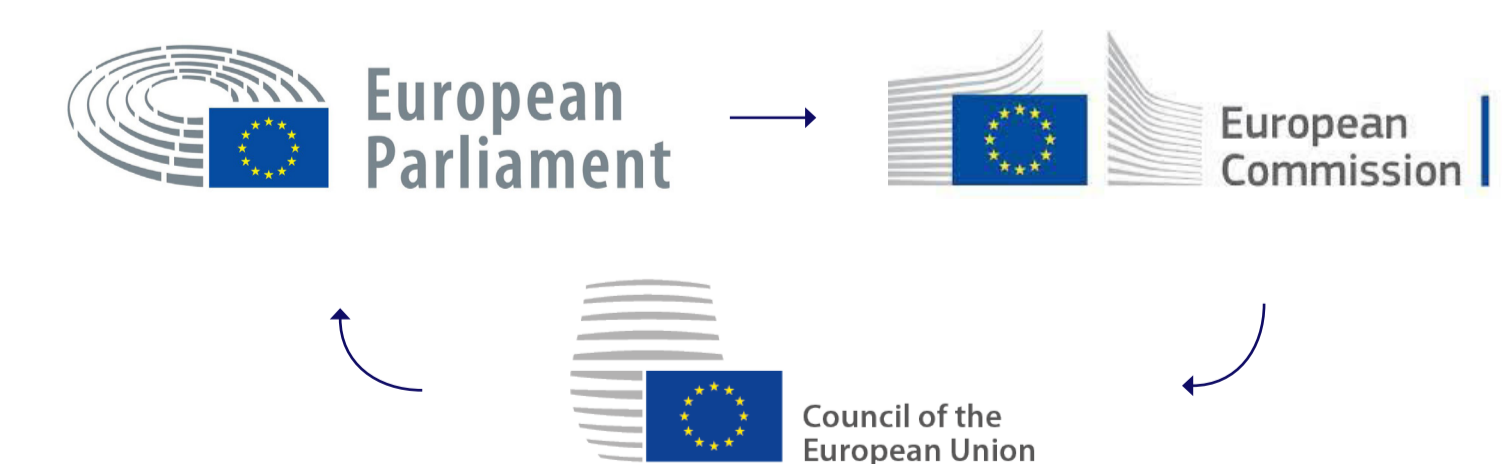
Proposes a Draft



Amends



Negotiate, Amend, Adopt



1 European Commission, "A Farm to Fork Strategy," 14, May 2020, available online: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0381&from=EN>
2 Ibid., 13.
3 Ibid.
4 European Commission, "Europe's Beating Cancer Plan," 11, February 2021, available online: https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/default/files/non_communicable_diseases/docs/eu_cancer_plan_en.pdf

