VISION FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

Sustainable agriculture is the only way forward to address the triple challenge - making healthy diets more affordable, improving environmental sustainability, and ensuring better livelihoods for farmers. The social, environmental, and economic dimensions of sustainability are crucial to the future of agriculture[1].

Despite the efforts made already, more needs to be done. If the European Union can support the acceleration of sustainable food production and the uptake of innovation, it will increase food security, help address all the key challenges faced by EU agriculture and contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

KEY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR AGRICULTURE IN THE EU

- Ensure security and affordability of food and raw materials.
- Strengthen resilience and support efforts to mitigate climate change.
- Reduce negative impacts on biodiversity and implement restoration practices.
- Ensure responsible and optimised use of resources and inputs (soil, water, energy, etc).
- Secure economic sustainability of farmers and rural areas.
- Develop internationally competitive EU agriculture contributing to the global food market.

OUR VISION FOR EUROPEAN SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

Our sector is part of the solution and ready to support this transition by providing farmers with access to a diverse toolbox containing innovative tools[2]. In order to address the key objectives and seize the opportunities, it is crucial that EU policymakers facilitate access to a full toolbox, adequate financial support and knowledge transfer as well as ensuring a future-oriented regulatory environment.

The sustainability of agricultural production systems must be measured based on holistic outcomes encompassing the social, economic and environmental dimensions. Only by boosting the development of new agri-food technologies in Europe can we make EU agriculture more competitive and resilient.

Sustainability will only happen if farmers have a viable business model that respects Europe's strength: its diversity. The policy framework should therefore be built on public and private incentives aimed at agreed outcomes, avoid prescription of specific solutions, and be sufficiently flexible to allow farmers to implement farm systems that deliver on the agreed outcomes.

At the same time, EU agriculture remains integrated into international, rules-based trade. It is a key cog in the global agri-food trade system and requires rules that ensure fair competition between farmers in the EU and their counterparts in third countries, while also recognising and enabling the tools required for different agronomic conditions around the world. The most efficient allocation for resource use on a global scale is essential to achieve global SDG goals.

1. United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Indicator 2.4.1 specifically requires that environmental, economic and social dimensions are included in sustainability assessment
2. https://croplifeeurope.eu/2030-commitments/

THE FUTURE OF SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE RELIES ON POLICIES TO BE:

- ***Outcome-based:*** empowering farmers and farm service providers to deliver the desired social, environmental and economic sustainability outcomes;
- ***Enabling and innovation oriented:*** ensuring farmers have access to all available innovative solutions whilst encouraging their uptake, providing training and advice when needed, and incentivizing R&D and innovation in the agriculture sector;
- ***Inclusive:*** empowering contributions to sustainable agriculture from all farmers (conventional, organic, other), and respecting differences between regions and countries;
- ***Comprehensive and trustworthy:*** strengthening social, environmental, and economic performance of agriculture, considering the synergies and trade-offs involved in food production and ensuring that progress is reliably measured, monitored, reported and verified;
- ***Practical and efficient:*** following the EU principles of Better Regulation and provide the needed regulatory certainty, transparency and science-based policy whilst ensuring coherence between different regulations.

OUR CONTRIBUTION TO THE TRANSITION TO SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL SYSTEMS

All farmers use different tools and practices to create Integrated Crop Management systems to deliver social, environmental, and economic benefits. As part of this integrated approach CropLife Europe's members deliver the following solutions to enhance the farmers' toolbox, and provide associated support on optimal and responsible use of these tools:

BIOPESTICIDES

Our members have committed to invest €4 billion by 2030 to develop and bring to market new and more effective biopesticides.

Specific policy needs

- Accelerate evaluation procedures by granting of provisional authorisation for biopesticides.
- Develop tailor made and fit-for-purpose guidance documents to ensure the competent authorities at national level have the appropriate resources, expertise and training in order to ensure timely assessment of dossiers.
- Adopt a biopesticides definition at EU level that includes all relevant categories.
- Encourage and promote mutual recognition of biopesticides evaluation by Member States.

CONVENTIONAL PESTICIDES

Our sector constantly innovates and develops more effective products with improved environmental and human health profiles.

Specific policy needs

- Enhance the implementation of the existing framework to accelerate introduction of innovative products and consider realistic conditions of use (i.e. by considering realistic and effective risk mitigation measures in risk assessments).
- Ensure proportionality and socio-economic impact on agricultural production of various implementation decisions.
- Leverage innovation in future policy initiatives ensuring tools are available and accessible to all farmers and that their adoption is incentivised.
- Enable farmers to continue to have access to conventional chemical products that have passed rigorous assessments by the EU regulators.

DIGITAL & PRECISION AGRICULTURE

Our members have committed to invest €10 Billion into digital and precision technologies by 2030.

Specific policy needs

- Establish targeted EU-wide policy initiatives aimed at enabling uptake of digital technologies, ensuring access to equipment and digital and precision application solutions and training.
- Foster a data policy framework built around farmers' data ownership that can further increase users' trust in these tools and their uptake.
- Ensure robust and reliable high-speed mobile data infrastructure in all EU rural areas.
- Integrate digital solutions in pesticide product evaluations.

PLANT BIOTECHNOLOGY

Our members are actively investing in new plant breeding techniques, accelerating the development of resilient plant varieties.

Specific policy needs

- Adoption of a pragmatic and evidence-based legislative framework on plants obtained by New Genomic Techniques.
- An efficient and predictable authorisation process for the import of genetically modified crops, which respects legally foreseen deadlines.
- Protection of innovation through plant variety registration and patents.

WE BELIEVE THROUGH COLLABORATION AND SWIFT ACTION, WE CAN CONTINUE TO DO EVEN BETTER.

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