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Sustainable food and land use in Europe

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The global challenge is to reform a food system whose hidden costs exceed the value of the food it produces.

Source: Food and Land Use Coalition, 2019
The picture is similar in the EU in spite of significantly higher productivity.

Value of food produced in the EU: 434 Billion EUR, 2018 prices

Health:
- Obesity: -450
- Undernutrition: 0
- Pollution, Pesticides & Anti-Microbial Resistance: 45

Environment:
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions: 37
- Natural Capital Costs: 41

Economic:
- CAP subsidies: 59
- Food Loss & Waste & Fertiliser Leakage: 143

Food System Value Net of Hidden Costs: 202

Source: Food and Land Use Coalition, 2019; SYSTEMIQ analysis
The EU’s food and land use system has the potential to lead the world in sustainability and get itself onto track for net zero

The EU has strong assets in food and land use . . .

Sophisticated consumers: EU consumers buy a third of the world’s organic food, and many are willing to pay more for food that is nutritious and sustainable

Resource efficiency: the EU is the only region in the world to reduce agricultural emissions (by 10-20%) between 1990 and 2017, while yields continued to rise

Food security: Most Europeans are food secure and adequately nourished – less than 10% of the population suffers from food insecurity

. . . complemented by a desire to raise standards both at home and abroad through policy leadership

- On track to be first region to commit to net zero emissions by 2050 and >50% reduction by 2030
- First region to ban neonicotinoid pesticides and phase out glyphosate
- Use of palm oil in biodiesel to be phased out by 2030
- Commitment to carbon border taxes in the Green Deal
- Focus on deforestation through trade agreements like EU-Mercosur
Leading the next food and agriculture revolution will require the EU to overcome a mix of public and private sector bottlenecks.

What stands in the way of an EU food and land use system that is good for people and the planet?

- **Inflexible farm support:** Three quarters of CAP payments are per hectare, not linked to practices.
- **Ageing farming population:** One third of EU farm managers are over 65.
- **Natural capital accounting:** Soil and biodiversity resources are not on the farm’s balance sheet.
- **Technology constraints:** Europe lags the USA and China in commercialising precision/digital ag tech.
- **Conflicted advisory model:** Many farm advisers are paid by commission on agrochemical sales.
- **Transparency constraints:** Consumers can’t trace their food to the farm or know how it was produced.
SYSTEMIQ and our partners are doing our part by setting up an EU Food and Land Use Action Platform, with four action groups leading the transition.

**Empowering farmers**
Set up collaborations between farmers, food companies and financial institutions to speed the transition to regenerative farming methods through technical advice, financial incentives and peer support.

**Empowering consumers**
Unlock consumers' buying power to drive food producers and the value chain towards products that are good for health, good for farm economies and good for the planet.

**Empowering rural communities**
Set up a nature-based solutions hubs that allows local communities to diversify beyond agriculture to activities that strengthen nature/biodiversity and support livelihoods.

**Empowering new food industries**
Unlock technical advances and shifting preferences for new food industries, specifically alternative proteins to increase adoption, minimise risks and maximise impact.

*NB: These are working names for groups, subject to change as new members join.*
Thank you for your attention

Please get in touch if you want to find out more:

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