

Nourishing Europe: The Importance of Animal Proteins

Appeal of the Livestock Supply Chains to European Institutions

26th March 2025

European agriculture is recognized worldwide for its efficiency, crucial role in food security, and ability to innovate and address environmental challenges through balanced and sustainable solutions. Livestock farming, as recognized by the recent Vision for Agriculture and Food, is an essential part of EU agriculture, sharing the same natural cycle, to which it clearly brings important benefits that should be fully valorized and unlocked, to enhance biodiversity and economic and social vitality of rural areas. Agri-food production is based on a constant integration between animal and plant production— two systems closely linked in production and complementary in nutrition.

The European strategy for food, particularly protein production, must ensure a balance between various sources to guarantee food security, public health, and the sustainability of production and economic and social systems. An excessively unbalanced approach favoring plant proteins to the detriment of animal ones risks upsetting this balance, potentially affecting food security and health.

We call on the European Commission to develop a comprehensive EU Food Strategy that supports diversity in agricultural production, including livestock, mixed farming and sustainable intensification methods that optimize resource efficiency without compromising food security or rural livelihoods.

Why should we support an action plan that values animal proteins? We summarize it in three key points.

1. Threat to Food Security and Nutritional Sufficiency

- Meat, dairy, and eggs must be valued, harmful prejudices must be avoided, and dietary guidelines based on sound science must be promoted to protect consumers and producers.
- Livestock farming plays a crucial role in circular agricultural systems, utilizing marginal lands unsuitable for crops, converting 86% of inedible by-products into high-quality proteins, and providing essential nutrients that are difficult to obtain exclusively from a plant-based diet alone.
- Scientific evidence confirms that animal-based foods are important for human health, particularly for vulnerable populations such as children, the elderly, and those with nutritional deficiencies.
- Nutritional deficiencies and the rise in cardiometabolic diseases represent a global challenge exacerbated by reduced access to quality nutrients. Inadequate food policies may intensify this phenomenon, with serious consequences for public health.

2. Economic and Social Impact on European Farmers

- A forced transition that shifts the production and food system away from animal-based agriculture would have devastating consequences for rural areas, especially in many European regions where livestock farming is an important economic and social pillar.
- European farmers have been investing for years in innovation, precision agriculture and regenerative animal farming to promote balanced and sustainable production, ensuring high-quality and healthy food while countering the spread of ultra-processed foods. To continue on this path, they need effective support policies.
- Reducing domestic production of animal products – while demand is growing - would favor imports, leading not only to a loss of competitiveness for European farmers but also increased global emissions, as GHGs are not subjected to borders.

3. Environmental Sustainability: Recognizing the Complexity of Agro-Livestock Systems

- Recognize farmers' consistent and significant achievements in promoting increasingly sustainable production, avoiding ideological biases that jeopardize livestock farming unfairly favor plant-based alternatives or alleged replacements.
- When assessing the whole impact of livestock production, it is essential to support scientifically sound environmental assessments that consider the entire life cycle of products rather than promoting biased narratives that ignore the contribution of well-managed livestock production to sustainability.
- Life Cycle Assessments (LCA) show that innovative livestock practices, precision farming and pasture-based livestock systems improve soil fertility, enhance carbon sequestration, and preserve biodiversity. The assumption that a shift only to plant-based diets would automatically reduce the environmental footprint is a misconception.
- Unlike fossil-based greenhouse gases, which remain in the atmosphere for centuries, methane produced by ruminants disappears within a decade. Recognizing this difference is essential to define balanced environmental policies based on scientific evidence and avoid oversimplifications that promote one-sided solutions, such as the indiscriminate increase in plant-based food consumption without a comprehensive assessment of the environmental impact;
- Livestock farming utilizes non-agricultural land and is complementary to other types of agricultural production. Therefore, a differentiated approach is needed, rather than directly comparing different systems without considering their specificities and contributions.
- In organic farming, the only fertilizer allowed by regulations is of natural origin, derived from livestock. Livestock, therefore, plays a crucial role. Manure – digestate in particular - nourishes the soil naturally, eliminating the need for chemical fertilizers. Consequently, reducing livestock leads to lower availability of natural fertilizer, resulting in greater reliance on chemical fertilizers.

Europe needs to support a diversified and resilient food system that harmoniously integrates crop and livestock production. Only in this way can true sustainability be achieved, ensuring food security and promoting prosperity for both farmers and consumers. This strategy is based on sound science and experimental methods, considering the unintended consequences of ideological policies in recent years, which have weakened European competitiveness, increased inflation, and impoverished the agricultural sector.

We therefore urge EU policymakers to:

- Develop a holistic EU Food Strategy based on the scientific method of experimentation, integrating both crop and livestock farming while ensuring fair treatment for all agricultural sectors.
- Support scientifically based environmental assessments that consider the full life cycle of food products, avoiding misleading interpretations that unfairly penalise livestock farming, potentially encouraging imports and thus increasing emissions.
- Support science-based nutritional assessments that confirm the importance of animal-based foods for human health, particularly for vulnerable populations such as children, the elderly, and those with nutritional deficiencies.

We call on the European Commission to base future food policy on the scientific method of experimentation, moving away from ideological approaches that have unintended consequences and risk undermining the competitiveness and resilience of the agri-food system. This is the only way to ensure healthy, balanced and sustainable diets for European and global citizens in the long term.

 International Butcher Confederation	 The Liaison Centre for the Meat Processing Industry in the European Union - Clitravi	 Danske Slagterier	 International Meat Secretariat	 Interprofession nationale porcine - Inaporc	 EAT Europe	 Farm Europe	 Asociatia Romana Acarnii	 Romalimenta	 Die Fleischer
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 Organizzazione Interprofessionale INTERCARNITALIA	 Associazione di Organizzatori Produttori AOP ITALIA ZOOTECNICA	 ASSOCARNI - Associazione Nazionale Industria Commercio Carni e Bestiame	 ASSITAMA Associazione Italiana Aziende di Macellazione	 Associazione Produttori Zootecnici Calabria OP APZ Calabria	 Cooperativa Produttori Arborea - OP ARBOREA	 Organizzazione Produttori OP Azove	 Associazione Produttori Asprocarne Piemonte
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 Associazione Produttori Carni Bovine UNICARVE	 Organizzazione Produttori Assobovini - OP ASSOVINI	 Organizzazione Produttori Vitello di Marca - OP Vitello di Marca	 Organizzazione Produttori Vitellone di Marca - OP Vitellone di Marca	 Organizzazione Produttori Bovinmarche - OP Bovinmarche	 Organizzazione Produttori Carni Sicilia OP Carni Sicilia	 Organizzazione Produttori Bovini da Carne di Qualità Certificata Unicarve - OP Unicarve	 Cooperativa Zootecnica Scaligera - OP Scaligera
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 Consorzio Carni Qualità Piemonte	 Associazione Produttori Vitelli a Carne Bianca - ALLEVIT	 Cooperativa agricola TERRAMADRE	 Associazione Produttori del Boccarone	 European Livestock and Meat Trades Union - UECBV	 Kárpáti Borzderes Tenyésztők Egyesülete (Carpathian Brown Cattle Breeders Association)	 Bábolna Brojler Kft. Bábolna Brojler Ltd.
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 Bocskai Halászati Kft. Bocskai Fishing Ltd.	 Baromfi Terméktanács - BTT (Poultry Product Board)	 EAAP - European Federation of Animal Science	 Limousin és Blonde D'Aquitaine Tenyésztők Egyesülete - Association of Hungarian Limousin and Blonde D'Aquitaine Breeders	 Nyúl Terméktanács (NyTT) (Rabbit Product Board)	 Magyar Juh- és Kecske Tenyésztők Szövetsége (MJKSz) - Hungarian Sheep and Goat Breeders Association	 Magyar Szurke Szarvasmarhat Tenyésztők Egyesülete - MSZTE
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 Magyar Bivalytenyésztők Egyesülete (MBTE) Association of Hungarian Buffalo Breeders	 Slovenská poľnohospodárska a potravinárska komora SPPK	 Tej Szakmaközi Szervezet és Terméktanács (TTT) (Milk Interprofessional Organization and Product Board)	 Juh és Kecske Ágazati Szakmaközi Szervezet - Interbranch Organisation for the Sheep and Goat Sector	 Magyar Állattenyésztők Szövetsége - MASZ (Association of Hungarian Livestock Breeders)	 Magyar Haszonállat-Génmegőrző Intézet (MGE) - Association of Hungarian Farm Animal Gene Conservation	 Mangalicatenyésztők Országos Egyesülete (MOE) - (Association of Hungarian Mangalica Breeders)
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 Magyartarka Tenyésztők Egyesülete (MTE) (Association of Hungarian Simmental)	 Nemzeti Agrárgazdasági Kamara - NAK (Hungarian Chamber of Agricultural (HCA))	 Bábolna Tetra Kft. Bábolna Tetra Ltd.	 Tej Szakmaközi Szervezet és Terméktanács (TTT) Milk Interprofessional Organization and Product Board - TEJ SZIV	 Vágóállat és Hús Szakmaközi Szervezet és Terméktanács (VHT) - Livestock and Meat Interbranch Organisation and Product Board (LMPB)	 Svaz Chovatelů Holštynského Skotu Holstein Cz	 Sdružení drubežářských podniků
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 Ceskomoravská Drubežářská Unie - Cmdu	 Ceskomoravský Svaz Mlékárensky - Cmsm	 Svaz Chovatelů Ceskeho Strakateho Skotu - Cestr	 Schp	 Český Svaz Chovatelů Masneho Skotu - Cschms	 Botillo del Bierzo IGP	 Queso Cabrales DOP	 Castaña de Galicia	 Cordero de Extramadura Corderex	 Federación Empresarial de Carnes e Industrias Cárnicas - FECIC
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 Guijuelo DOP	 Jamon de Trevelz IGP	 Consello Regulador da DOP - Arzuá Ulloa	 Consejo Regulador Denominación de Origen - Queso Mahon Menorca	 Consejo Regulador Denominación de Origen - Manzana Reinaeta del Bierzo	 Mexillon de Galicia DOP	 Mel de Galicia IGP	 Peras de Rincón de Soto DOP - La Rioja	 Queso de la Serena DOP	 Denominación de Origen Queso Majorero
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 Queso Murcia al Vino DOP	 Queixo Tetilla DOP	 Consejo Regulador Denominación de Origen - Queso Zamorano	 Ternasco de Aragón - TA	 Ternera Gallega IGP	 Origen España	 Agrarni Komora Ceske Republiky	 Consorzio di Tutela della Bresaola Valtellina	 Associazione Produttori Coppa di Parma	 Český svaz zpracovatelu masa CSZM	 Consorzio di Tutela Ciufatello di Zibello
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 Polski Związek Hodowców i Producentów Bydła Mięsnego - PZHBPB	 Polskie Zrzeszenie Producentów Bydła Mięsnego - PZPB	 Polska Federacja Rolna	 Stowarzyszenie	 Polskie Mieso - Polish Meat Association	 Unia Producentów i Pracodawców Przemysłu Mięsnego - UPEMI	 Polski Związek Hodowców i Producentów Trzody Chlewniej - POLSUS	 Krajowa Rada Drobniarstwa Izba Gospodarcza - KRDIG	 Federacja Branżowych Związków Producentów Rolnych
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 Polska Platforma Zrównowazonej Wolowiny	 Krajowy Związek Pracodawców - Producentów Trzody Chlewniej - POLPIG	 Consorzio Finocchiona IGP	 Istituto Salumi Italiani Tutelati - ISIT	 Istituto Valorizzazione Salumi Italiani - IVSI	 Zvaz Chovatelů Osipany na Slovenku Družstvo - CH Kampan	 Asociación de Industrias de la Carne de España - ANICE	 Associazione Suinicoltori Italiani - ASSOSUINI	 Sostenibili Carni Sostenibili
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 Associazione Industriali delle Carni e dei Salumi - ASSICA	 Organization for an European Geographical Indications Network ORIGIN EU	 Slovenský zväz spracovateľov mäsa SZSM	 Unione Nazionale Filiere Agroalimentari Carni e Uova UNAITALIA	 Consorzio Italiano Tutela Mortadella Bologna IGP	 Consorzio del Prosciutto di Modena	 Prosciutto di Carpegna	 Prosciutto di Norcia IGP	 Prosciutto di San Daniele	 Prosciutto Toscano DOP
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 Salame Brianza DOP	 Salame di Varzi DOP	 Associazione Produttori Salame Felino	 Salame Piemonte	 Consorzio di Tutela Cacciatore Italiano alla Cacciatora	 Consorzio di Tutela Salumi di Calabria DOP	 Consorzio Salumi DOP Piacentini	 Südtiroler Speck g.g.A. Speck Alto Adige IGP	 Consorzio Zampone e Cotechino Modena IGP	 Parmigiano Reggiano	 Grana Padano
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