

Eco Ready

Policy brochure

Strengthening Europe's food security through sustainable and resilient food systems: ECO-READY's conclusions and policy recommendations

November 2026

Key messages

- **Food security depends on climate-resilience and healthy ecosystems:** in the face of climate shocks threatening food security, biodiversity is a resilience factor towards long-term stability. Integrating agriculture, biodiversity and climate policies is essential to strengthen Europe's food security. This requires greater coherence between legislations and the promotion of agricultural practices that deliver co-benefits for the climate and nature, in particular Nature-based Solutions, agroecology and organic farming.

- **Better data and monitoring are essential to inform policy and action:** harmonised indicators, interoperable databases and trustworthy agricultural data-sharing frameworks can improve environmental monitoring, reduce administrative burdens and support more informed decision-making by public authorities and farmers.

- **Farmers need the right support to drive the transition:** adopting more sustainable and climate-resilient farming practices requires more than appropriate financial incentives. Accessible advisory services, tailored training, strengthened knowledge exchange should empower farmers to turn environmental objectives into viable practices on the ground.

- **Sustainable food consumption must become more accessible and affordable:** consumers can contribute to the transition towards resilient food systems, but their choices are shaped by economic conditions. Public procurement, economic instruments and food promotion policies should address the food affordability challenge.

- **Food security requires a more systemic and inclusive approach:** genuine policy integration breaking down silos, evidence-based dialogue, transparent consideration of trade-offs and meaningful stakeholder engagement at European, national and regional levels are essential to achieve a systemic approach of Europe's food systems.

Introduction

Food security has become an increasingly prominent priority on the European policy agenda. **Public health, geopolitical and climate crises have exposed vulnerabilities in food supply chains** and highlighted the importance of strengthening Europe's capacity to anticipate, withstand and recover from shocks.

The European Union has responded by reinforcing its crisis preparedness, notably through its contingency plan for food supply and food security, the European Food Security Crisis preparedness and response Mechanism (EFSCM), and its recent Framework for Climate Resilience. At the same time, the debate on Europe's food security is closely connected the Union's **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and its ability to deliver on food availability, stability, affordability, and utilisation.**

At a time when the CAP is undergoing reform and the EFSCM's mandate was renewed, the **ECO-READY Horizon Europe project** has investigated how to achieve ecological resilient dynamism for the European food system through consumer-driven policies, socio-ecological challenges, biodiversity, data-driven policy, sustainable futures.

Building on the project's scientific findings and exchanges with stakeholders through its network of ten Living Labs, **ECO-READY puts forward five complementary policy priorities to drive Europe's food security.** This policy brochure presents the project's full set of conclusions and associated policy recommendations.

Together, these recommendations aim to inform ongoing European policy discussions and **contribute to a food system** that is not only prepared to respond to immediate crises but also **equipped to safeguard food security over the long term.**

Integrating agriculture, biodiversity, and climate policies for food security

Climate change affects all four pillars of food security. Impacts on agricultural production and yields directly constrain food availability, with knock-on effects on the stability of food supplies and, consequently, food prices and affordability. Food utilisation is also affected, as climate change can compromise the nutritional quality of certain food products.

Conversely, biodiversity plays an important role in sustaining food security. Complementary interactions between species and the benefits provided by Nature-based Solutions can enhance agricultural productivity and food availability, while strengthening the long-term stability of food supplies. Biodiversity also contributes to food utilisation by supporting the production of nutrient-rich foods.

Biodiversity can therefore help mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change and act as a key driver of food-system resilience and long-term food security. However, the ECO-READY modelling results indicate that the current policy trajectory poses significant risks to biodiversity, potentially undermining the health and functioning of the ecosystems upon which agricultural production depends.



Policy recommendations

1

The European Commission, European Council, and European Parliament should establish a fully EU-funded, sub-ringfenced budget for agri-environmental climate actions in the next CAP, to deliver on biodiversity and climate, thus ensure EU food security. Policy frameworks must support farmers in the transition towards a more sustainable and resilient food system.

2

The European Commission should adopt a science-based granular methodology to define the budget coefficients for each CAP intervention aimed at environmental objectives in future Multiannual Financial Frameworks, to accurately measure the environmental performance of CAP interventions.

Comprehensive and evidence-based studies must be conducted over the coming years to ensure a realistic translation of the findings into the policies and programmes of the post-2034 Multiannual Financial Framework.

3

The European Commission and Member States should ensure coherence between future National and Regional Partnership Plans (NRPPs) and the targets and measures outlined in the draft National Restoration Plans, leveraging the potential of agri-environmental and climate actions to contribute to the restoration of targeted agricultural ecosystems. Dedicated inter-ministerial dialogues and a robust coordination mechanism across the European Commission's directorates should ensure the coherence among the plans.

4

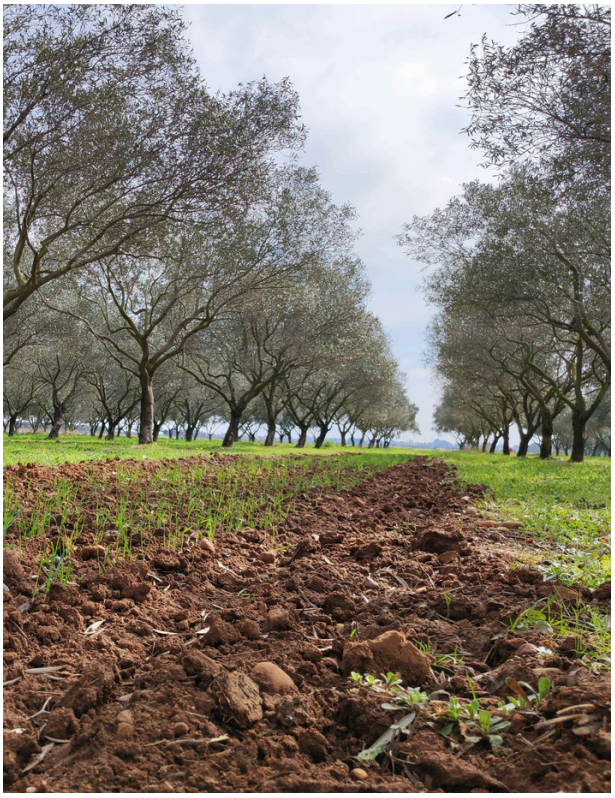
Member States should promote in their NRPPs context-specific agricultural practices that enhance biodiversity, agroecosystems and climate resilience through agri-environmental and climate actions and transition payments. Support should be directed to practices delivering multiple benefits, rather than assessing interventions in isolation, and reducing dependence on synthetic pesticides, fertilisers, fossil fuels, and other external inputs, while maintaining productive capacity. Member States should give priority to Nature-based Solutions, conversion and maintenance of organic farming, agroecological approaches, agroforestry, crop diversification, water retention, and precision farming where it contributes to reducing input use.

5

The European Commission, Member States, and relevant agri-environmental stakeholders should strengthen coherence between the CAP and the implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directive, building on existing acquis and on biodiversity's driving role for Europe's long-term food security.

6

The European Commission and Member States should recognise food security as an outcome of interconnected climate, water, soil, biodiversity, and socioeconomic risks as part of the European Climate Resilience Framework. They should encourage climate-risk assessments for agricultural production and food supply chains, including compound risks such as drought combined with heat stress, and promote Nature-based Solutions that strengthen soil health, water retention, and ecosystem resilience.



Strengthening data interoperability and governance

A lack of harmonisation in definitions, metrics, indicators and databases persists at EU level and across different levels of governance. This fragmentation hampers policy integration across agriculture, biodiversity and climate, limits data interoperability and contributes to unnecessary reporting burdens.

Better use of agricultural and environmental data can inform policy making, strengthen farm resilience and contribute to food security. In the face of climate change and biodiversity loss, making relevant and reliable data more accessible and actionable can help farmers better understand environmental pressures, assess risks and adapt their practices accordingly. **Effective agricultural data sharing is essential to improving interoperability and enabling more informed decision-making.** However, a secure and trustworthy European framework for data sharing and governance is still lacking, limiting the potential to connect existing data sources and make better use of the information they contain.

Policy recommendations

1

The European Commission should strengthen monitoring of environmental outcomes under the CAP. Robust indicators on biodiversity loss and restoration and indicators relevant to climate shocks, such as soil health and water retention indicators, should help

assess the CAP performance for food security. Biodiversity monitoring associated with agricultural policies should track outcomes for different taxonomic groups rather than relying exclusively on aggregate biodiversity indicators.

2

The European Commission and Member States should seek to improve harmonisation and data interoperability across agriculture, climate change and biodiversity. This requires greater alignment of definitions, indicators, and data formats across regulations and administrations. This would enable the same high-quality dataset to fulfil multiple reporting requirements, enhance the comparability of environmental outcomes across policy frameworks and reduce the red tape associated with duplicated reporting processes. Data interoperability within the CAP operational databases should also be a priority to allow for standardised fields and units for soil health, chemical inputs, and yield metrics at EU, national, and local levels. Member States should explore National Interoperability Platforms for single-point data entry.

3

The European Commission should establish an Agri-Data Ethical Infrastructure to facilitate the sharing of agricultural data and its contribution to data-driven decision-making for food security. Such an infrastructure should be co-developed with farmers, ensure farmers' data ownership, and apply the FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable). This would facilitate private farm management systems to safely feed into public monitoring databases.

4

National and regional authorities should support the use of Farm Advisory Services to act as data intermediaries, helping farmers translate raw farm data into actionable insights for their own productivity in the face of climate shocks and biodiversity loss, not just for compliance.

Empowering farmers in the transition

Farmers are key providers of food security and central actors in the transition towards more resilient and sustainable food systems. **They need to be better equipped to anticipate and adapt to climate shocks while adopting farming practices that enhance biodiversity.** Recognising their role requires going beyond financial incentives to truly empower them to drive the transition by providing the knowledge, skills, advisory support.

The availability of advisory services, especially those competent in agroecological transitions, **remains a critical gap in the transformation of food systems.** Farmers have limited access to agricultural advice and expertise that adequately address the agroecological transition and climate-resilient production, hindering their ability to translate sustainability objectives into practice.

Policy recommendations

1

Member States should ensure NRPPs fund regional advisory networks that connect non-profit advisors specialised in agroecological practices to foster the environmental performance of farms. These networks may link to certified training centres of excellence, regional hubs across the EU, providing training, education, and knowledge exchange for farmers and advisors tailored to their local, regional challenges, legislative context, and environmental conditions. Further, Member States should set aside funding for advisory support to farmers to help them understand and implement the new CAP without extra financial or administrative burden.

2

Member States should prioritise, under the starter pack for young farmers, providing access to advisory services and training programmes rooted in farmers' local knowledge and intergenerational peer learning and focused on knowledge exchanges on organic and agroecological systems to leverage the high interest of new entrants in sustainable farming.

3

European and national CAP networks, supported by on-the-ground advisory services, should guide farmers in the adoption of Nature-based Solutions in agriculture to harness the benefits that biodiversity brings to agricultural productivity and the resilience of agricultural landscapes in the face of climate change.

4

Member States should support crop diversification and facilitate farmers' access to drought-resistant seeds, suitable machinery and tailored advisory services. Innovation pilots and knowledge exchange can help establish which interventions are effective in different farming systems and under different pedo-climatic conditions.

5

The private sector must step in to spread and manage risks of farmers who embark on an agroecological journey. Insurance companies should collaborate with advisory services and draw up insurance schemes that incentivise and reward agroecological practices and cover potential losses. Member States can complement these finance efforts by tax breaks on land property linked to agroecological practices.



Supporting consumers in the transition to resilient and sustainable food systems

Consumers show a willingness to adopt more sustainable eating patterns, but translating this willingness into behavioural change requires an enabling environment. Economic barriers, particularly **the affordability of sustainable food, remain a key constraint.** With only **52.8% of consumers willing to pay more** for sustainable food products, ensuring that sustainable food choices are accessible and affordable across different income groups is essential to making the transition effective and to ensuring food security.

The results of the ECO-READY modelling suggest that a win-win scenario in terms of agricultural production, environmental benefits and food security is possible with **inclusive growth policies** and a **transition towards more plant-based diets.**



Policy recommendations

1

National, regional, and local authorities should embrace the newly proposed environmental quality criteria in future public procurement to capitalise on the potential of public canteens, particularly in schools, to champion sustainable consumption. The European Commission's DG GROW should facilitate the exchange of good practices at the EU level, build capacities, and help address implementation challenges.

2

National, regional, and local authorities should further explore the available economic instruments, including tax incentives and local Food Social Security pilots, to improve the affordability of sustainable food for vulnerable groups.

3

European, national, regional, and local authorities should promote plant-based diets in Europe to support environmental objectives and recognise the role of food consumption as a key driver of food-system transformation. A detailed analysis of the synergies and trade-offs between food consumption and biodiversity conservation and restoration should inform the coherent development of associated food policies at EU, national, and regional levels.

4

The European Commission should reconsider its EU promotion policy, increasing opportunities to promote sustainable products and organic food in future calls, to improve awareness of, and uptake of, sustainable food choices.

5

The European Commission's DG RTD should strengthen research on sustainable food consumption in the next Horizon Europe programme. Further research should improve understanding of consumer behaviour in relation to environmental sustainability criteria, particularly the impact of food on biodiversity and climate, as well as the impact of marketing, sustainability labelling, and advertising rules.



Improving food systems governance to achieve food security

Policy design and implementation still lack the adequate level of integration needed to reflect the interdependencies between agriculture, climate and biodiversity. This fragmentation between governance levels and administrations undermines policy coherence and weakens policy efficiency.

In addition, **inconsistent and incomplete policy narratives hinder the development of a comprehensive approach to food security.** They also limit meaningful stakeholder engagement in policy processes, reducing the relevance, effectiveness and uptake of the resulting policy measures.

Food security policy dialogue would benefit from a granular analysis of the trade-offs within food systems, particularly between agricultural productivity and environmental sustainability. ECO-READY's modelling results demonstrate that **a decline in food availability does not necessarily translate into reduced food security**, provided that complementary policy measures are in place.

Policy recommendations

1

The European Commission should initiate an inclusive and science-based European food debate as envisaged in the Farm to Fork Strategy. This debate should discuss sustainable food production and

consumption, openly addressing the associated benefits and trade-offs in order to build a shared roadmap for food security in Europe.

2

Public authorities at all levels should adopt a food systems design approach to break down silos and unlock synergies between agriculture, climate, and biodiversity. This requires reinforced multi-level governance and meaningful multi stakeholders' engagement across institutions and sectors, including consumers.

References

Camus, B., Champseix, E., Bozsogi, B., Moghayer, S., Tomos, B., Oosterwijk, A., Levin-Koopman, J., Anastasiadis, F., Tsolakis, N. (2026) ECO-READY policy recommendations for a food security model grounded in an ecologically resilient food system.

Anastasiadis, F., Bevivino, A., Camus, B., Champseix, E., Di Gregorio, L., Galema, S., Latini, A., Levin-Koopman, J., Louvrou, N., Mattas, K., Oosterwijk, A., Moghayer, S., Schiefer, G., Vu, N. (2025) From research and practice to policy: ECO-READY policy conclusions for an ecologically resilient European food system.



Eco Ready

This project has received funding from the European Union's HORIZON-CL6-2022 research and Innovation programme under grant agreement N ◦ 101084201. This publication reflects only the views of the author. The European Commission and Research Executive Agency cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.