

# Final Report of the Strategic Dialogue on the future of EU agriculture

4 September 2024

**REFLECTIONS ON THE SUMMARY TEXT BY THE CHAIR OF  
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# Context

FOOD IS OF CENTRAL CONCERN - societal and nature-based functions

- Our **life and coexistence in complex societies** depend primarily on the continuous provision of food produced from and **within an environmentally well-functioning nature.**

In Europe, this is achieved by **agricultural and food systems that operate with the utmost reliability and produce impressively high levels of food quality and variety.**



**Nevertheless, the constellation of farming and nature has become increasingly tense in modern societies for several reasons.**

- Like our entire civilisation, today's forms of the production and processing of food contribute significantly to the overexploitation of natural capital,
- which is both a prerequisite for this production and a public good, namely **climate, biodiversity, soil, water and air quality, animal welfare or landscape.**
- The triple environmental crisis makes this overexploitation obvious.

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# Environmental challenge

The environmental crisis makes this overexploitation obvious.

General productivity gains through **technological developments, intensification, expansion, or standardisation** of agricultural production

But do not guarantee decent profitability and social sustainability for all farmers.

# Global Shock Events

Not only actual global shock events or the geo-political 'weaponisation' of supply chains, are threatening but also

These **structural changes**, in particular, were demonstrated by the farmers' protests throughout Europe during the working phase of the Strategic Dialogue.

**Agricultural production and its natural preconditions have become entangled in a lose-lose constellation.**



# Lose-Lose Scenario

This is sometimes articulated as a rivalry of decline between the various stakeholders, which juxtaposes farm and species extinction, income crisis and biodiversity crisis, or productivity and nature loss as mutually exclusive dichotomies.

With a view to the equal necessity of food and natural resources, **it is clear, however, that this lose-lose situation cannot be resolved in either direction alone**



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Dialogue  
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**“Agri-food and  
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neither through the **promotion of environmentally incompatible food production,**

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nor **through environmental protection** that ignores the socio-economic conditions of farming, nor through a mere postponement of one or the other.

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Rather, it is about enabling win-win situations so that, as the mandate of the Strategic Dialogue states, **“agriculture and the protection of the natural world can go hand in hand”**.

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At the same time, this facilitation must be developed under the conditions of broader trends that **profoundly change societal expectations of the agricultural and food systems**

# Changing societal expectations of the agricultural and food systems

Through **social differentiation, technologisation, urbanisation, changes in dietary and culinary styles, or animal ethical standards.**

Agriculture is one of the central fields on which contemporary societies have always and will continue to negotiate essential aspects of their self-understanding. It includes:

- the relationship between humans and animals or
- nature and culture
- social structures / such as town and village
- temporal orders such as those of tradition/ and progress.



A variety of  
internal tensions  
characterise agri-  
food discourses in  
modern societies

Society's expectations of agriculture, for example,  
are often in favour of small-scale farming in  
harmony with nature,

while

The supra-regional and supra-seasonal  
availability of low-price foodstuffs is expected

# Political Level

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In-coherent public funding and regulation lead to contradictory requirements and leaving the risk of failure largely to the sector itself.

# Perceptions

Farmers' self-conceptions sometimes contain uncoordinated elements, when they try to strike a balance between

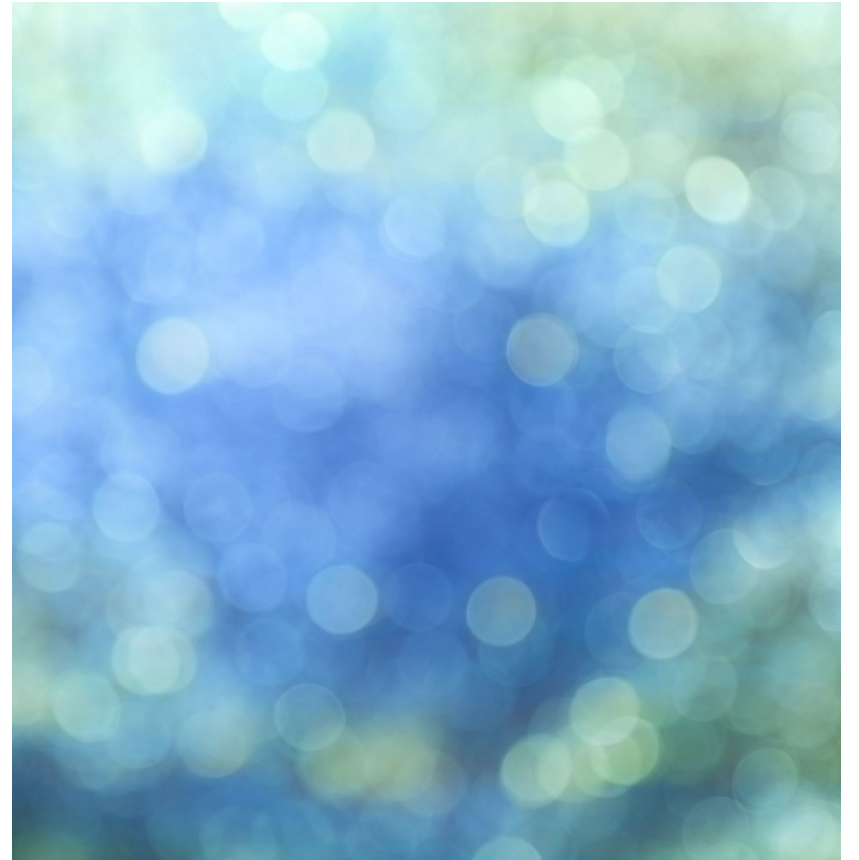
positioning themselves as victims of the planetary crisis

Realising the sector's own environmental footprint.

# Farmers

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Such contradictions become apparent when the **often-idealised iconography of agriculture with the actual production practices** are compared for example, in food advertising or in the publications of agricultural associations and ministries of agriculture.



# Perceptions

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The **modernity of our conditions** is also reflected in the fact that there is always a pluralism of views

- on such fundamental questions as well as on **concrete concepts**

or

- which can be contradictory and even partly irreconcilable.

Disputes over existential issues such as agriculture, food, and nature **are unavoidable** in modern societies and an expression of their freedom. (to find solutions)

# Context

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Against this background concerning agr-food agriculture especially considering:

- its public financing and regulation must be justified under THESE changed social conditions.
- Farm income and food security are important arguments.

But they must be complemented by arguments that **credibly focus on environmental and social responsibility and the ecosystem services that agriculture should provide.**

SEPTEMBER  
2024

# Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU **Agriculture**

A shared prospect for farming and food in Europe

This is the context in which the Strategic Dialogue on the future of EU agriculture is being positioned.

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Thus Mandated “ad personam” by the President of the European Commission, its members had the task of working on four key issues relating to the–

- prospects of farmers and rural areas,
- preservation of planetary boundaries,
- opportunities of technology and innovation and
- future of the European food system (see the mandate in the Annex).





# Dialogue Process

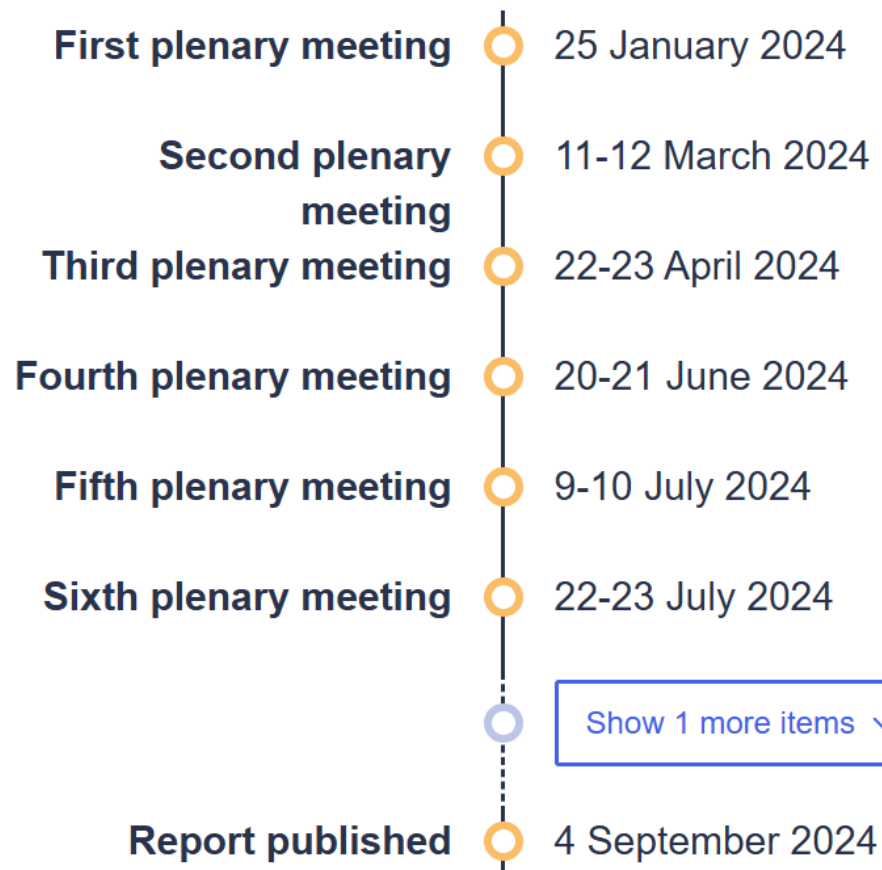
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Also an uncounted number of mainly virtual consultations and meetings of working groups or task forces.

The moderators of the working groups played an important role in the cohesion of the group of members and the development of shared perspectives.

I am just as particularly grateful for this as I am for the unwavering commitment of the Strategic Dialogue support team.

## Dates of the plenary meetings

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- A vertical timeline with a central line and circular markers. The markers for the first six plenary meetings and the report publication are orange, while the marker for the 'Show 1 more items' button is light blue. The text for the first six meetings is bolded.
- First plenary meeting** ○ 25 January 2024
  - Second plenary meeting** ○ 11-12 March 2024
  - Third plenary meeting** ○ 22-23 April 2024
  - Fourth plenary meeting** ○ 20-21 June 2024
  - Fifth plenary meeting** ○ 9-10 July 2024
  - Sixth plenary meeting** ○ 22-23 July 2024
  - [Show 1 more items](#) ▾
  - Report published** ○ 4 September 2024

# The working phase was

a round table around which representatives of vested interests come together to reach a common understanding.

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The Strategic Dialogue also targeted consultations with relevant European agri-food and environmental organisations.

A scientific symposium and a technical workshop in April and July 2024 promoted intensive exchange with agricultural scientists.

As a forum for depolarisation, the Strategic Dialogue brings together knowledgeable specialists from the agri-food system.

Leading representatives from agriculture, environmental, animal and consumer protection, business, worker representation, rural areas and banking work together to develop opportunities for its future prospects.

# Reconciling agriculture with nature.

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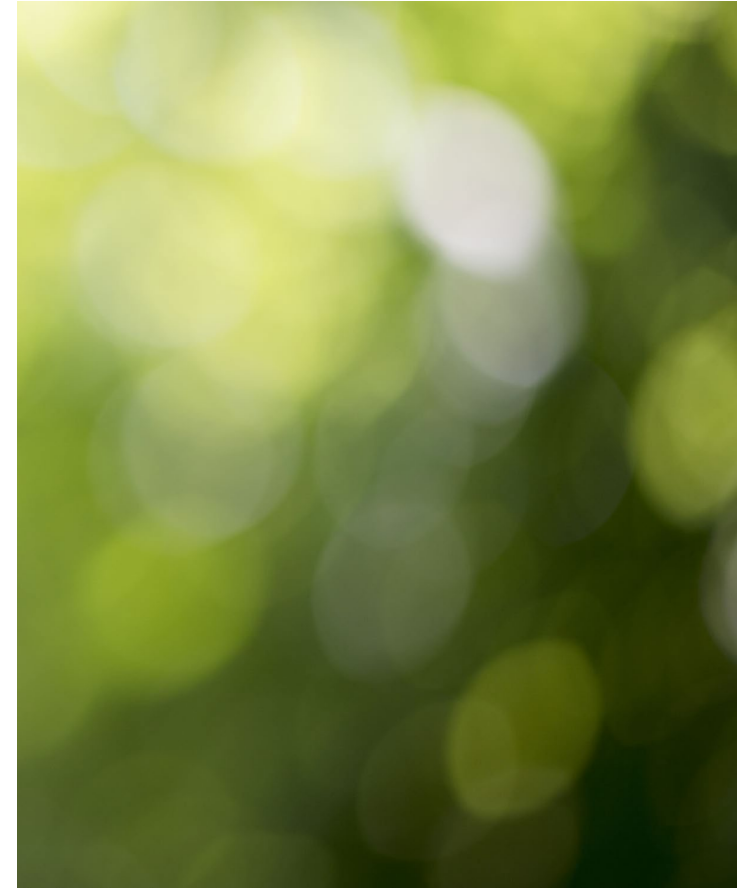
Recommendations at the European and member State level for a period of around ten to 15 years that address

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The 'Reconciliation' that the mandate speaks of is not understood as a mere compromise.

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It is the functional coordination and integration of economic, environmental, and social factors in agricultural production, as well as all upstream and downstream stages of the entire food chain, including demand-side policies and consumer behaviour.



# Success depends



on market conditions and food environments being organised so that environmentally sustainable practices are in the economic self-interest of producers, processors, retailers, traders and consumers even in the short term.



The Strategic Dialogue managed to take a broad view of the issues and considers agriculture as part of the entire food system, from the individual farm to every consumer and citizen.



A task for society as a whole.



# Strategic Dialogue on the Future of Agriculture

Prospect for farming and food in Europe

The recommendations ultimately aim at preserving our quality of life as postulated in the political guidelines 'Europe's Choice' for the European Commission 2024 to 2029.

**Peter Strohschneider**, Special Adviser to the President and Chair of the Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture



# Ten Political Principles

1. The time for change is now.
2. Cooperation and dialogue across the food value chain are critical.
3. Policy measures must be coherent and create powerful enabling environments based on fruitful synergies.
4. Food and agricultural production play a strategic role in the new geopolitical context as an essential part of European security.
5. The role of young people in agriculture and rural areas and the diversity of European food and farming systems are an important asset.

# Ten Political Principles

6. Economic, environmental, and social sustainability can reinforce each other.
7. Markets should drive sustainability and value creation across the chain and better internalize externalities.
8. The opportunities of technology and innovation should be leveraged to support the transition towards more sustainable agrifood systems.
9. The shift towards balanced diets that are healthier and more sustainable is essential for a successful transition.
10. Attractive rural areas are of crucial importance for food security, the future viability of society, and liberal democracy.