

Euragri Institutional Members Workshop Summary

“Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture”

December 6, 2024

DRAFT

The workshop's objective was to consider the background to the Strategic Dialogue, spotlight its outcomes, and present some initial reflections on its implications at various levels. There were six presentations and discussions. This note aims to provide a summary of each presentation. Copies of the presentations and a link to the video are available on the Euragri website <https://www.euragri.org/workshops/reflections-on-the-eu-strategic-dialogue-on-the-future-of-eu-agriculture/>

Research Background

Gianluca Brunori outlined the shift from production-focused food policy to prioritising food security and sustainable resource use, highlighting the complex interplay of environmental, social, and economic factors in food systems. This shift has sparked significant polarisation, as evidenced by recent EU farmer protests. Achieving stakeholder consensus is critical to addressing key challenges, including food security, environmental crises, geopolitical risks, inequality, and corporate concentration.



The Strategic Dialogue (SD): Purpose and Recommendations

Uno Svedin described how the EU Commission President convened 29 key stakeholders from agrifood sectors, civil society, rural communities, and academia to develop the *Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture*. The aim was to create a shared vision for farming and food systems. The central questions addressed were:

1. How can **farmers and rural communities** achieve better prospects and a fair standard of living?
2. How can agriculture operate **within planetary boundaries** and ecosystems?
3. How can **knowledge and technological innovation** be better utilised?
4. How can **Europe's food system** thrive in a competitive world?

The *Strategic Dialogue Report*, published in early September 2024, outlined challenges, opportunities, and recommendations to guide the EU's agriculture and food systems towards sustainability while preserving quality of life.

Key Recommendations: Ten Political Principles

The report introduced ten principles to align economic, environmental, and social dimensions across the food chain:

1. The time for change is now.
2. Cooperation and dialogue across the food value chain are essential.
3. Policy measures must create enabling environments through coherence and synergy.
4. Food and agriculture are strategic to European security.
5. Young farmers and the diversity of farming systems are key assets.
6. Sustainability (economic, environmental, and social) can reinforce each other.
7. Markets should drive sustainability and internalise externalities.
8. Technology and innovation must support sustainable agrifood systems.
9. Transitioning to healthier, sustainable diets is vital.
10. Attractive rural areas are crucial for food security, society, and democracy.

These principles will shape the new Commission's *Vision for Agriculture and Food* to be published in spring 2025.

The SD also recommended the establishment of the *European Board on Agriculture & Food* to maintain dialogue and trust among stakeholders. The Board will include up to 30 organisations representing farming, supply chains, civil society, environmental, climate, animal welfare, and consumer groups.



Innovation, Bioeconomy, and Research

Rosalinda Scalia emphasised the bioeconomy as an engine for innovation in agriculture and rural development. It aligns with the SD's recommendations and builds on frameworks like the *Food 2030 Research Policy* and the *EU Bioeconomy Strategy*. Upcoming strategies, including the *Life Science Strategy* and the *EU Start-up and Scale-up Strategy*, will complement the new vision.

The next EU Research Framework Programme (FP10), set to launch in 2028, is already being shaped. The *Heitor Report (2024)* provided 12 recommendations to enhance the EU's R&I programs, focusing on:

- Greater program unity,
- Adequate funding,
- Support for industrial competitiveness and societal challenges, and
- Increased Member State investment in R&I.

Challenges and Dilemmas for EU Agriculture

The WUR Perspective

Sjoukje Heimovaara highlighted key dilemmas in moving forward:

1. How much should the EU prioritise self-sufficiency in food and biomass?
2. What roles should animal husbandry play?
3. How can food production coexist with biodiversity and climate targets?
4. Should climate and biodiversity goals be shared or tailored to Member States?
5. To what extent should policies influence consumer behaviour?



She emphasised the need for collective decision-making and systemic approaches to resolve trade-offs.

The INRAe Perspective.



Cecile-Detang Dessendre echoed the systemic approach, underscoring five priorities:

1. Addressing environmental challenges.
2. Accelerating agroecological transitions.
3. Building bioeconomies through circular resource use.
4. Promoting holistic health approaches.
5. Leveraging digital technologies for transitions.

Cecile and Sjoukje stressed that sustainability requires difficult trade-offs, and science will play a key role as an honest broker in navigating these transitions.



Irish Perspective

Trevor Donnellan highlighted how the SD aligns with Irish agriculture's key concerns, including:

- Generational renewal,
- Low land mobility,
- Diverse farm characteristics,
- Prevalence of part-time farming,
- Farmer alienation.

Ireland's positive aspects include recognition of farmers' roles in sustainability, commitments to land mobility and generational renewal, and a focus on innovation to address challenges. The negative aspects included overregulation, lack of specificity, and mistrust about motivation (just to keep the farmers happy with no plans to change).