

Mr Donald Tusk, President of the European Council
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1048 Brussels

Mr Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission
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Mr Antonio Tajani, President of the European Parliament
Rue Wiertz / Wiertzstraat 60
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26 March 2018

LESS AND BETTER: A CALL FOR POLICY ACTION ON ANIMAL FARMING

Open letter from civil society to the European Institutions

Dear President Tusk,
Dear President Juncker,
Dear President Tajani,

In recent decades, European food and farming have become heavily unbalanced in favour of industrial agricultural systems and factory farming, which produce meat, dairy and eggs unsustainably. We – **a large and diverse range of European civil society organisations**, active in the areas of farming, pastoralism, animal welfare, environment, social justice, climate, forestry, health, consumers, development, fair trade and cooperatives – demand a fundamental change.

Over nine billion land animals are raised for food each year in the European Union, supplying both internal and export markets. However, increasing scientific evidence proves that **the EU and other developed regions urgently need to reduce production and consumption of animal products** if we are to achieve the objectives set by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly in the following areas:

- **Climate:** Animal farming is one of the main sources of human-induced greenhouse gas emissions, accounting for 14.5 percent of the total according to the FAO. Manure management, fertiliser manufacturing and use in the production of animal feed, as well as ruminants' digestion process and land-use change, generate large amounts of greenhouse gases, such as nitrous oxide, methane and carbon dioxide. Reducing meat, dairy and egg production and consumption is crucial to meet the commitments of the Paris Climate Agreement.
- **Health:** The development of antimicrobial resistance, the spread of zoonotic diseases such as avian and swine flu, or Salmonella, and air pollution from ammonia emissions (90% of which comes from farming, according to the European Environment Agency) are major public health risks linked to intensive animal farming. Furthermore, diets that are high in red and processed meat are associated with non-communicable diseases such as cancer and cardiovascular diseases, increasing human suffering and healthcare costs.

- **Animal welfare:** Industrial animal farming is incompatible with animal welfare. Animals experience severe restrictions to their ability to move and express their natural behaviours, and are subject to cruel practices such as mutilations, all of which causes extreme suffering. Long-distance animal transportation within and outside the EU, and cruel slaughter practices, also stem from a lack of respect for animals as sentient beings.
- **Development and food security:** A large share of arable land and crops (over 50% in the EU and one third globally, according to the FAO) are used for animal feed, rather than for food for people. This threatens global food security and drives environmental degradation, including deforestation, in the EU and worldwide. The increasing export focus of animal farming in the EU is also disrupting markets in the developing world, challenging the livelihood of local producers.
- **Environment:** The current levels of meat, dairy and egg production and consumption in Europe harm the environment in many ways. Excessive manure, as well as fertiliser and pesticide application, pollute our air, soil and water. Agricultural intensification and expansion leads to destruction of wildlife habitats, while high nature value grasslands maintained through extensive animal farming are being abandoned, causing biodiversity to disappear at an unprecedented pace.
- **Farmers' livelihoods:** The industrial animal farming model has proven to be a dead end for many European family farms who are now on the verge of bankruptcy, trapped between high debt levels and input costs on the one hand and low market prices on the other. The meat processing and retail sectors in the EU are highly concentrated and the size of animal farms has drastically increased in the last decade, with three quarters of the farmed animals concentrated in very large farms. By contrast, the number of animals reared on small farms more than halved during the same period.

Against this backdrop, **the EU institutions cannot remain idle**. Farmers adopting more sustainable and higher welfare animal farming methods, such as organic farming, must be encouraged and rewarded. However, it is impossible to shift to more humane and less industrial farming methods while at the same time maintaining the current levels of consumption and production of animal products. If we are to meaningfully tackle some of the most serious societal and environmental crises of our time, we need to significantly reduce the production, consumption and export of meat, dairy and eggs.

It is imperative for the European Union to step up and change its policies to accelerate a transition towards healthy and sustainable diets that are higher in plant-based foods and include considerably less and better produced meat, dairy and eggs. The EU institutions should carry out a comprehensive assessment of the health and environmental impacts of the industrial animal farming sector and formulate clear policy recommendations. These should be **EU priorities, translated into all the relevant EU policies in order to protect our climate and environment, people's health, farmers' livelihoods, and farm animal welfare, both in Europe and worldwide**.

We look forward to engaging with the EU institutions as you lead this process towards a culture where we place greater value on the food we eat, the animals who provide it, and the people who produce it.

Yours sincerely,



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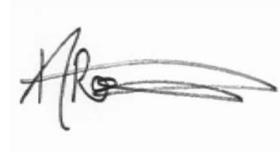
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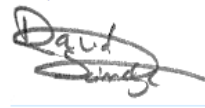
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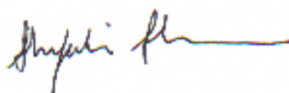
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