



Concluding remarks and recommendations by organisers

Drawing on common themes from the questions and comments made during the webinar “**New opportunities for health in European food & agricultural policies**”, held on 11 May 2020 [[link](#)].

1. Make most of the CAP's new objective on “food and health”.

- The inclusion of a new objective on “food and health” under the CAP, which refers to safe, nutritious and sustainable food, is a major opportunity for human and planetary health ([Article 6\(i\) CAP proposal](#)).
- However, the [guidance](#) prepared by the European Commission on this objective only covers the dimension of antimicrobial resistance (AMR). While this is an important health dimension, a focus on reducing antibiotics use only does no justice to the full scope of the objective.
- While “nutritious and sustainable food” are part of the objective, there is no clear commitment to make the CAP contribute to a shift towards more sustainable diets. Such diets are healthier, more plant-rich with ‘less and better’ animal products (i.e. meat, dairy and eggs). For instance, the CAP proposal does not include a consumption-related indicator.



Make most of the CAP's new objective on "food and health" (cont.)

Recommendations:

1. The European Commission, in its guidelines on the 'food and health' objective, should include guidance on how the various existing CAP instruments can be strategically used to support a shift towards more healthy, sustainable diets.
2. A nutrition-related indicator should be added to the CAP Regulation to make sure countries reflect the links between consumption and production into their national CAP Strategic Plans.
3. During the preparation of national CAP Strategic Plans countries should include a (voluntary) nutrition-related objective and/or target to guide their intervention strategy, even if not mandated by the CAP Regulation.
4. Health stakeholders should engage both at national and European levels to make the case for and propose ways to align the CAP with sustainable dietary objectives.



2. Integrate Health (Equity) Impact Assessment into food and agricultural policies.

- Assessing the societal impacts of policy proposals is an integral component of the European Commission's 'Better Regulation' approach. Some guidance on assessing health impacts is provided ([Tool #31](#)).
- The proposal for the new CAP was accompanied by an [impact assessment](#), including reference to health dimensions. It cannot, however, be seen as a systematic, evidence-led assessment of the main agriculture-related health impacts and the likely differential effects of different policy options.
- The CAP proposal does not use the term 'impact assessment' when addressing the design of national CAP Strategic Plans. Nonetheless, national plans should be based on an "assessment of needs" and a "SWOT analysis". Also, the proposed "intervention strategy" needs to demonstrate its internal policy consistency and countries should evaluate their plans in advance so as to enhance their effectiveness (see [Title V CAP Proposal](#)). These conditions imply the need to understand the impacts of different policy options on various societal dimensions.



Integrat Health (Equity) Impact Assessment into food and agricultural policies (cont.)

- Few comprehensive Health Impact Assessments of agricultural policy have been conducted in Europe. The best-known example was performed in [Slovenia in 2003](#). A 2003 Swedish report covering several health-related aspects of the CAP (i.e. fruit and vegetables, dairy, wine tobacco) is another example of an in-depth analysis.

Recommendations:

1. Public health researchers should put more priority and attention to exploring the links between public health and agricultural policy, especially the CAP. This will serve to enhance evidence, improve Health Impact Assessment methodologies and raise attention to this topic.
2. Despite the CAP being one of the EU's oldest policies, the Commission has never assessed the links between agricultural policy and health. The Commission should perform a comprehensive [sustainability evaluation](#) of the CAP in relation to key public health dimensions.



3. Ensure meaningful involvement in the design of national CAP Strategic Plans.

- The proposal to strengthen the involvement of relevant stakeholders, including health authorities and civil society, in the preparation of national CAP Strategic Plans by means of a legal obligation is an important innovation and opportunity ([Article 94 CAP proposal](#)).
- However, no hard assurances are available to ensure compliance with this obligation. While the Commission needs to approve each national CAP Strategic Plan, the approval explicitly excludes assessment of the national consultation process ([see Article 106\(5\) together with 95\(2\) CAP proposal](#)).
- Big differences exist between EU countries in how national CAP consultations are organised in terms of their [inclusiveness and transparency](#).



Ensure meaningful involvement in the design of national CAP Strategic Plans (cont.)

- Preliminary results from a short [pan-European survey of public health actors](#) conducted by EPHA and EUPHA, find very low awareness of the national CAP Strategic Plan process (approx. 80% of respondents are not aware of the process) and very low awareness of the need to consult health stakeholders (over 80% are not aware that health actors should be consulted).

Recommendations:

1. Health organisations and public authorities should raise the question of their involvement in the process of designing national CAP Strategic Plans. Potential deficiencies in the national consultation process should be highlighted both nationally and to the European Commission.
2. The CAP proposal should be adapted to ensure the Commission will assess the quality of stakeholder engagement while approving national CAP Strategic Plans. A deficient process should send the draft plan back to the drawing board.



4. Align different policies, such as the CAP, F2F Strategy and trade policy for an integrated transition towards sustainable food systems.

- There is an urgent need to transform current food systems towards sustainability. No single policy can achieve this. An overarching, integrated approach is needed that binds different policies together in a coherent way – a ‘common food policy’.
- Individual policies, such as the CAP, may continue to exist but will have to be considerably transformed to align with other policies under a shared roof of common objectives.
- An important lever to achieve such integration is to stress the co-benefits that can be achieved from systemic transitions. For instance, the transition to ‘less and better’ animal products can provide multiple benefits by allowing to cut air pollution, tackle inappropriate farm antibiotics use, mitigate the climate crisis, protect biodiversity, improve nutrition and prevent non-communicable diseases (NCDs), and improve the value added for producers.



Align different policies, such as the CAP, F2F Strategy and trade policy for an integrated transition towards sustainable food systems (cont.)

- More attention is needed to introduce policies to change ‘food environments’ to make the healthier and more sustainable food options the most available, attractive and affordable. Such [policies](#) include pricing mechanisms (taxes and subsidies), regulations on marketing and advertising, nutrition labelling etc.
- Health is a central pillar of food system sustainability and provides many cross-cutting opportunities.

Recommendations:

- Health organisations and researchers should enhance their engagement in promoting an integrated approach to food policy, show the added value of health and demonstrate that the application of public health principles can enhance cross-sectoral coordination.



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