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New EU Vision for Agriculture and Food overlooks market justice and non-EU farmers' rights

As the European Commission (EC) unveils its long-awaited new Vision for Agriculture and Food, the Fair Trade Advocacy Office (FTAO) welcomes the central role that agriculture is taking in the new mandate but regrets that the needed market reform to improve the agricultural sector is not being addressed. In addition, the FTAO commends the Vision's recognition of the need to tackle imbalances in the food chain, where the unfair distribution of revenues and the burden of costs disproportionately affect farmers and producers.

When it comes to improving the competitiveness of the farming sector, **the roadmap presented today appears overly reliant on CAP subsidies, failing to address the urgent need for market reforms and overlooking the role of consumers** in shaping a fairer, more sustainable food system. The viability of the EU farming sector should not depend solely on subsidies but should instead be built on fair and resilient market structures. The EC must take further action to make farming independently viable by addressing market imbalances that undermine fair compensation for agricultural production.

Virginia Enssle, International and Institutional Manager at the FTAO said, *“the EU's new Vision for Agriculture and Food represents a missed opportunity to drive essential market reforms and uphold the rights of EU and non-EU farmers. While the strategy acknowledges the need for sustainability, it fails to address the systemic inequalities that farmers, particularly smallholders, face in global supply chains.”*

“Ensuring a just agroecological transition requires both financial and non-financial support mechanisms that empower farmers to adopt sustainable practices without bearing disproportionate costs. Proper support in training, infrastructure, and market access is essential to facilitate this shift.” **Virginia adds.**

In parallel, the FTAO applauds the European Commission's ongoing commitment to tackle the issue of farmers being systematically forced to sell products below their production costs. The FTAO hopes this commitment will be reflected in the upcoming Evaluation of the Unfair Trading Practices Directive, by banning purchasing below production costs as a 'black practice', hence protecting EU and non-EU suppliers from this abusive practice.

Despite the European Commission President's ongoing commitment to ensuring fair incomes for farmers, which has been widely welcomed by the Fair Trade Movement, the FTAO regrets that the issue seems to be addressed only through the Common agricultural policy (CAP). More concrete measures to ensure fair incomes for non-EU farmers supplying the EU market are needed, understanding also that this contributes to a level playing field for EU farmers. The FTAO commends the recognition of the essential value of smallholder farmers in our food systems and **hopes for concrete measures and tools to support non-EU smallholder farmers, as the FTAO has repeatedly emphasised in its [position](#) ahead of the publication of the Vision.**

Regrettably, the European Commission's Vision for Agriculture and Food fails to provide more support to the organic sector and overlooks the support needed to comply with the new EU Organic Regulation and to address its specific negative impacts on third-country farmers, an issue that has constantly been [highlighted](#) by the FTAO.

In line with its commitments on public procurement, we celebrate the Commission's move away from the lowest price criterion, which has led to a race to the bottom. Moreover, **we call for the "best value" approach to explicitly include Fair Trade as a criterion**, thereby reducing legal uncertainty for both public buyers and bidders, aligning the EU's procurement processes with broader sustainability and ethical standards and objectives.

Finally, the FTAO welcomes the introduction of new agri-food policy partnership dialogues and hopes they will meaningfully involve third country actors, particularly those where EU-imported and smallholder-driven commodities are predominant. The FTAO understands the Commission's plan to strengthen reciprocity in production standards but **stresses the need for open and meaningful stakeholder engagement in developing [inclusive, co-designed, and co-implemented mechanisms](#).**

Recognising the interconnected nature of EU food systems, the EU must ensure that its agricultural strategies address the realities and challenges faced by producers beyond its borders. Pending further analysis of the document, the FTAO urges stronger support for smallholders, a focus on fairer market structures, and inclusive dialogue with non-EU farmers and producers to ensure a truly sustainable and equitable EU agri-food system.

Contact information

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