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Press release

Agroecology and the EU Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies are Europe's best hope for a viable and sustainable (food) future

The [study carried out by Wageningen University and Research and commissioned by CropLife Europe](#) released at the end of January 2022 concludes that the implementation of the F2F and Biodiversity strategies in the EU Green Deal would compromise the European agri-food sector to "lower agricultural yields, to price increases, less European exports and more imports of agricultural products from outside Europe".

Reductionist analysis lead to inconclusive results

Agroecology Europe underlines that this study is based on a reductionist analysis of farming and food systems, and as such does not constitute a credible basis for questioning the objectives formulated in the EU F2F and Biodiversity strategies and for undermining the perspectives for an agroecological transition in Europe.

Indeed, the study focuses only on crop production, leaving out of scope the potential impacts of the EU Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies on the animal production sector as well as changes in consumption patterns: two major areas to be transformed to achieve an agroecological transition in Europe.

Moreover this study has been only carried out in 7 country case studies and 10 crops. The entire study covers 3445 ha over a total of over 173 million ha of agricultural land in Europe. The authors state clearly that "it is important to note that the cases cannot be perceived as representative for the entire country".

One other methodological limit to be pointed out is that this study is only carried out over one cropping season which does not represent a solid enough for the agricultural sector.

Finally, another limiting aspect is the fact that the farmers interviewed in this study have not been receiving any training, tools and information on how to redesign their farming system and decrease the use of synthetic inputs.

This study concludes that there will be an important additional import and a reduced EU export without taking into consideration that the realization of the objectives to reduce the risk and use of pesticides by 50% and to reduce nutrient losses by 50% will also be accompanied by dietary changes, reduction of food waste, and innovative market within food systems.

A need to change the metrics to measure agri-food systems performance and to transform them

An increasing body of scientific literature (D'Annolfo et al. 2017, Grémillet & Fosse 2020, van der Ploeg 2019) analyzing the economic performance of agroecology leads to conclusions that are radically different from those drawn by Bremmer et al.

Indeed, regarding the supposed decline in farm income induced by the adoption of agroecological practices, van der Ploeg et al. conclude that agroecological farming currently generates farm incomes that exceed those from conventional and industrial farms (2019). Restoring soil life and optimizing the productive capacity of agroecosystems through nature-based processes leads to savings on input costs (fertilizers, pesticides) and comes together with less volatile prices and a greater diversity of productions, ensuring more stable yields over time (Grémillet & Fosse 2020).

Regarding global food security issues, the prospective study TYFA carried out by IDDRI (the French think tank "*Institut du Développement Durable et des Relations Internationales*") concludes that an agroecological European agriculture could improve EU's net contribution to the provision of calories and proteins to world markets through the reduction in the consumption of animal protein and the relocation of plant protein production (Poux & Aubert, 2018).

These different systemic and multidimensional studies lead us to completely different policy recommendations than those presented in this study.

Agroecology Europe supports the idea of a socially and environmentally ambitious European agricultural and food policy as formulated in the F2F strategy. To ensure its success, it must go hand in hand with appropriate financial and technical support to accompany European farmers on the path of agroecology.

To go further:

Grémillet A. & Fosse J. 2020. Améliorer les performances économiques et environnementales de l'agriculture : les coûts et bénéfices de l'agroécologie. France Stratégie : 74 p.

Raffaele D'Annolfo, Barbara Gemmill-Herren, Benjamin Graeub & Lucas A. Garibaldi (2017) A review of social and economic performance of agroecology, *International Journal of Agricultural Sustainability* 15, 6: 632-644. DOI: 10.1080/14735903.2017.1398123

van der Ploeg J.D, Barjolle D., Bruil J., Brunori G., Costa Madureira L.M., Dessein J., Drăg Z., Fink-Kessler A., Gasselin P., Gonzalez de Molina M., Grolach K., Jürgens K., Kinsella J., Kirwan J., Knickel K., Lucas V., Marsden T., Maye D., Migliorini P., Milone P., Noe E., Nowak P., Parrott N., Peeters A., Rossi A., Schermer M., Ventura F., Visser M., Wezel A. (2019) The economic potential of agroecology: Empirical evidence from Europe. *Journal of Rural Studies* 71: 46-61. (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2019.09.003>).

Badgley et al. 2007. Organic agriculture and the global food supply. *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems* 22, 2: 86-108.

Muller et al. 2017. Strategies for feeding the world more sustainably with organic agriculture. *Nature Communication* 8: 1290-1303.

Poux X. & Aubert P.-M. 2018. An agroecological Europe in 2050: multifunctional agriculture for healthy eating. Findings from the Ten Years For Agroecology (TYFA) modeling exercise. *IDDRI Study 09/18*: 74 pp.

Couturier C., Charru M., Doublet S. et Pointereau Ph. 2016. Le scénario Afterres 2050. *SOLAGRO* : 96 p.

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