



# **Agroecology to make the EU Livestock Strategy truly sustainable, crisis-resilient, and adapted to the European territorial diversity**

Agroecology Europe's Response to the EU Public Consultation on  
the EU Livestock Strategy

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Agroecology Europe thanks the European Commission for consulting with stakeholders on the call for evidence for the EU livestock strategy initiative.

Agroecology Europe wishes to highlight the importance of the multifunctional role that agroecological livestock systems delivers for resilient farmers' livelihoods, generational renewal, nutrient recycling, food security and safety, gastronomy and cultural heritage, rural economy, environment, health, welfare and much more.

The [EU Vision on Agriculture and Food](#) states that agriculture and nature go hand in hand. This livestock strategy shall therefore contribute to its implementation, and in particular to the commitments for **“better implementation, streamlining and enforcement of existing legislations”**. The livestock strategy shall boost policy coherence among EU and national policies such as the EU Nature Restoration Regulation, Free-Trade agreements and the upcoming EU protein plan, especially as regards the protection of small-medium, agroecological livestock farmers, animal welfare, pesticide reductions, soil health, pollinator and habitat restoration that are negatively impacted by unsustainable and unfair market and policies.

**Very importantly, the strategy shall set up a clear set of measurable targets and indicators for monitoring its effective implementation and achievements**, relying as much as possible on existing data sources, and when data gaps emerge, by strengthening the interoperability of anonymised, GDPR-compliant datasets from value chain actors towards public accountability and policy making. The reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, livestock intensity, long animal movements and food supply chains, pesticide use, nitrate surplus, protein and feed imports from non-EU countries, antimicrobial use, and other soil health, nature restoration, and other farmers' and animal welfare indicators shall be included in the list of primary targets directly addressed by the livestock strategy.

Key evidence suggests that the EU livestock strategy should include the following recommendations among iii) *“the initiatives set out to improve the performance and address vulnerabilities of the sector”*:

**1. Set up clear and measurable EU objectives and substantial interventions to reduce livestock intensity and dependencies on external inputs**, accompanied by structural adjustments throughout the whole supply chain. The price of compound inputs such as chemical fertilisers, feed, energy, plant protection products, and veterinary costs are volatile and steadily increasing across the EU Member States (Donnellan et al, 2026). This requires first of all better coordination with national and regional livestock policies. Secondly, the Member States should be encouraged to engage regional and local stakeholders in tailoring the EU Livestock Strategy to their local realities, and move all together towards the adoption of more resilient and holistic livestock systems, such as those based on organic and agroecological principles. These frameworks shall be priorities not only for their high input/output performances, but also for their inclusive, fair, and long-lasting governance arrangements. Furthermore, they promote energy efficiencies and closing of input cycles at territorial level.

- 2. Recognise agroecological and organic livestock systems as systemic, science-based livestock approaches to sustain viable farmers' livelihoods and healthy food.** This can be reflected with more targeted support, such as a dedicated **“CAP post-2027 transition payment for agroecological livestock systems”**, i.e. extensive livestock grazing. Evidence shows that small-medium extensive grazing systems, mixed livestock and mixed crops-livestock systems, and livestock farmers that are engaged in other gainful activities (e.g. on-farm food processing, direct selling, social farming) provide economic, social, and environmental contributions to sustainable agri-food systems and territorial development. Some of these contributions include job creation (Almeida-Furtado, 2025), standard outputs per AWU (European Commission, 2025), nutrient recycling and reduction of surplus (Bielza et al, 2025), animal welfare (Pisseri, 2023), soil health improvements, from organic carbon, fertility, and biodiversity perspectives (Su et al, 2023).
- 3. Embed the Livestock Strategy within a broader One Welfare policy framework** (Pinillos, 2018), maintaining a strong animal welfare legislative basis across the diversity of EU livestock systems, ensuring that the livestock strategy interventions simultaneously address farmers well-being, environmental sustainability, and food system resilience. Animal welfare improvements in livestock systems generate co-benefits for human well-being, farm sustainability, and environmental outcomes, but remain insufficiently integrated into policy design. Evidence from the *One Welfare* framework shows that animal health and welfare are directly linked to farmer well-being, food security, and environmental protection, with poor welfare conditions often reflecting broader systemic weaknesses in livestock production systems (Pinillos, 2018). Despite this, EU livestock policies continue to address animal welfare largely as a standalone regulatory issue rather than as part of a wider socio-ecological system.
- 4. Link coherently the EU Livestock Strategy with the upcoming EU protein plan via agroecological systems**, particularly in relation to protein autonomy, diversification, reduction of chemical pesticides and fertilisers, rules and just policies for the maintenance of permanent grasslands and long-term crop rotations. Agroecology is an agri-food approach that can coherently integrate the EU livestock strategy and the upcoming EU Protein Plan, particularly by enabling protein diversification through the combination of crop–livestock systems, reduced livestock densities, and the expansion of plant-based protein production within circular and territorial food systems (Picot, 2026).
- 5. In line with Article 14 (10-11) of the EU Nature Restoration Regulation, the Livestock Strategy shall include clear provisions on the financial support from the CAP post-2027 and Nature Restoration in order to create long-term synergies between livestock systems and nature.** Restoring nature via agroforestry or agroecology is not against livestock systems, especially for honeybees and other extensive grazing systems. Restored agricultural habitats provide nesting, floral resources, shelter for pollinators (EU CAP Network, 2025; European Environment Agency, 2025). Grasslands, long-term crop rotations, landscape features, nature corridors and connectivity provide water filtration, nutrient retention, flood migration, buffer from pollutants, stable nectar and pollen resources, biodiversity, nutritious animal feed, and reduce climate change risks via both adaptation and mitigation, such as prevention of fires, floods, reparation from high heat and droughts negatively impacting livestock systems (Dubeux, 2022; Sanderson et Scullion, 2024; Schils et al, 2019; Ritzema et al. 2016). The CAP shall provide tailored

interventions to reduce pesticide use and restore pollinator resources that are key for today's vulnerable EU honey and beekeeping sector, as well as for wild pollinators.

**6. The upcoming EU livestock strategy shall build up and be integrated with the EU research investments made in the Agroecological Partnership** (European Commission and 111 partners across 31 Member States, Associated Countries, and Third Countries), as well as with the wider **European, National and Regional Agro-Ecological Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AEKIS)**. Livestock systems and operators need a dedicated fund for agroecological transitions as shown in Belgium (Riera, 2026) and other parts of the world (Duru et al. 2025), addressing topics such as genetic diversity, local food processing, food safety, animal welfare, territorial governance, feed and protein autonomy, all of which are at the core of EU sustainable food systems. Science shows that long-term agroecological diversification increases farms' financial profitability, biodiversity, and ecosystem services such as water regulation, nutrient cycling, soil fertility (Raveloaritiana et Wanger, 2026).

**7. The EU livestock strategy shall build up and be integrated with the missions and work of SCAR Collaborative Working Group Sustainable Animal Production**, which is based on systems thinking and exchange initiatives in related fields like animal health & welfare, food systems, agroecology and/or bioeconomy.

**For more recommendations and evidence, please refer to our position paper “A Fair Transition of Livestock Systems through Agroecology”** (Gliessman, 2026) **and our expert input to the European Commission's Livestock Workstream on 23 October 2025** <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/expert-groups-register/screen/meetings/consult?lang=en&meetingId=65268&fromExpertGroups=3879>

In particular, these evidence recall on the important to include the following aspects in the livestock strategy: territorial livestock systems, reduction food waste, worker security and safety in farms and food processing units, shortages of skilled labours and fair remuneration, gender inclusion and generational renewal, unlocking feed and other path-dependencies, shifting diets and reducing meat consumption especially from intensive farming systems that have feed/food trade-offs, the diversification and relocalisation of plant protein, strong animal welfare and food safety regulation, vet and farm administrative support.

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