



# THE AGRICULTURAL LOBBY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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# Introduction

The Common Agricultural Policy is the agricultural policy of the European Union and since mid-1999 has consisted of two pillars: market organization and rural development. The share of agricultural expenditure in the EU budget is declining but is still 38% of the total. It is until this day the biggest expenditure of the EU's budget. Environmental and animal rights groups have always been critical of the CAP, and argue that it is in desperate need of reforms. These reforms might come through the European Green Deal. The European Green Deal has the potential to reform the highly criticized CAP with its 'Farm to Fork' strategy. The 'Farm to Fork' strategy focuses on cutting pollution, cutting the use of pesticides, halting soil erosion, increasing the acreage of land cultivated by ecological standards, and protecting insect populations. The Commission's Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development and the agricultural lobby have been strongly opposing the European Green Deal and Farm to Fork strategy. Due to the importance of agriculture to the European Union, it can be argued that the agricultural lobby has been and still is highly influential in the creation of European agricultural policy. In my thesis, I will attempt to formulate an answer to my research question: "What was the strategy of the agricultural lobby's main actors to try and influence the plenary vote of the European Parliament's own-initiative report on the "Farm to Fork" strategy?"

In my first chapter I will be focussing on lobbying in the EU: what is lobbying and how is it different in Brussels, who are the lobbyists, and what is the history and what are the rules and regulations. My second chapter will attempt to describe the contemporary agricultural lobby, who they are, and what they stand for. In my third chapter I will focus on the relationship between sustainability and the agricultural sector, then explain why the original agricultural policy of the European Union was heavily criticized and why change is needed. After this, I will go into the proposed legislation of the 'Farm to Fork' strategy and then I will discuss the vote in the European Parliament on its own-initiative report and its significance. In my last chapter, chapter 4, I will be discussing the tactics and influence of the strategy of the agricultural lobby within Brussels and how they have attempted to influence the vote in the European Parliament on its own-

initiative report. More specifically I will be looking into the impact studies often cited by the Agricultural lobby.

# Chapter 1: lobbying in the European Union

## 1.1 Lobbying

Money, credibility, political backing, knowledge, competence, and information are among the resources that interest groups can draw from. In election campaigns, interest groups may contribute money to the campaign of politicians. Interest groups may also be able to confer legitimacy onto them through negotiating with certain political or bureaucratic players (particularly those who are not directly elected, such as those in the European Commission). Most importantly, interest groups have information, knowledge, and skills that make the decision-making process of politicians easier.<sup>1</sup> There are between 25.000 to 30.000 people active within the lobbying sector in 13632 registered different political pressure groups in Brussels. It is impossible to determine the precise number of lobbyists involved in EU policy-making.<sup>2</sup> These Brussel-based groups' goal is to influence the European Commissioners and Euro-Parliamentarians and influence the EU's decision-making process. Among the different pressure groups within the EU are global corporations, unions, NGOs, and social groups. Lobbying in the European Union is officially referred to as European interest representation. On the European level, A lobby group is then any organization or entity that tries to influence European decision-making, regardless of how it carries out this activity. All groups have different interests and compete with one another to make their voices be heard. Lobbying is described by LobbyEU as:

*“Lobbying often involves possessing specific knowledge about complex areas of regulation. To name a few, lobbying can occur with regards to packaging requirements, product safety, intellectual property, fair trading, civil rights, economic and environmental issues, energy, technology, finance, agriculture, fisheries, healthcare and pharmaceuticals, travel services, transportation and mobility, drone regulation,*

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<sup>1</sup> Andreas Dür, “Interest Groups in the European Union: How Powerful Are They?,” *West European Politics* 31, no. 6 (2008): pp. 1212-1230, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402380802372662>.

<sup>2</sup> University of Applied Sciences for Mgmt and Comm Vienna, Author: University of Applied Sciences for Mgmt and Comm Vienna, and Author: “Mostly True: „between 25.000 to 30.000 Lobbyists’ Are Working in Brussels,” [eufactcheck.eu](https://eufactcheck.eu), accessed March 13, 2022, <https://eufactcheck.eu/factcheck/mostly-true-between-25-000-to-30-000-lobbyists-are-working-in-brussels/#:~:text=Hoedeman%20of%20ALTER%20DEU%20explains,a%20total%20of%2023.646%20lobbyists>.

*electronic cigarettes, genetically modified food, internet data privacy, banking, climate change, fracking, tobacco regulation, pesticides regulation... And the list goes on and on."*

Given the complexity of law and regulation, interest groups play a crucial role by offering their special knowledge and insight, which frequently proves to be crucial for attaining effective laws. They actively try to enhance the standard of law-making and increase the accountability of decision-makers to the general public by having the ability to voice their thoughts and petition the government. Lobby's practice influence by talking to and presenting to representatives, hiring experts, organizing events, finance studies, and campaigns. When people hear of lobbying, they frequently think of corruption and back door meetings when enormous sums of money are passed to politicians to bribe them into supporting specific policies. However, most lobbying is done in entirely legal ways and is more about conveying information to lawmakers. Politicians occasionally find it challenging to stay current on every issue they must deliberate on. Certain concerns that busy politicians might normally miss can be brought to light with the aid of lobbying.<sup>3</sup> During a legislative procedure, there are often many things that need to be taken into consideration, and it can be easy to overlook relating areas to certain policies. Lobbying can hold a positive role within society and benefit a democratic system. However, the conveying of information can be a very biased process. There are large industrial lobbies, backed by powerful corporations with large financial means and it can sometimes be difficult for NGOs to compete with these large industrial backed lobbies due to the fact that they sometimes lack these financial means. The amount of influence that interest groups may have over policy outcomes depends on both their ability to deliver resources and decision-makers need for them. Interest groups may utilize their resources to influence public actors' attitudes, ideas, cognitive frameworks, and preferences in addition to exchanging resources for mutual gain.<sup>4</sup> Within the literature, it is mostly agreed upon that interest groups with larger resources have greater capacity to influence the decision-making process and politicians. Resources can be money, legitimacy, political support, knowledge,

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<sup>3</sup> Euroballs: The Power of Lobbyists in Brussels, Youtube, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ei-NrGDFsYk>.

<sup>4</sup> Stefan Collignon and Daniela Schwarzer, "Introduction," in *Private Sector Involvement in the Euro: The Power of Ideas* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 15-24.

expertise, and information. Certain interest groups will be more influential than others since not all interest groups have access to these resources equally. A group's resource allocation is influenced by structural factors including size, membership composition, internal organization, and a degree of geographic concentration.<sup>5</sup>

## **1.2 Lobbying on an EU level**

Lobbying on a European level is quite different from lobbying on a national or regional level. It takes place on a supranational level and within the framework of European legislation. European interest groups often have to be aware of many different layers of government and how they interact with one another. Different regulations have different motives and can derive from national, international, transnational, or supranational input. Lobbyists have to try and take part in the policymaking process at an early stage.

<sup>6</sup> It is important for lobby groups to interact with the Commission even before they put a legislative proposal on the table. The European Commission is the executive organ of the EU. The Commission is the only organ of the European Union that can put forward proposals and it can be argued that for many interest groups they are the most important organ to try and influence. Early in the legislative process, the Commission will actually often invite interest groups for consultation on the various topics they have to create legislation for. This is highly beneficial for them due to the expertise lobby groups can offer in different fields. Interest groups can also act as a representation of citizens in different (economic and social) sectors. The lobby groups will need to provide facts, figures, and research for their proposals. This is also a good way for the commission to hear different sides of an argument. However it can be difficult for smaller organisations to get into contact with the Commission. Although it can be argued that the Commission is the most important organ to influence for interest groups, many of them actually start interacting about legislation when a proposal reaches the European Parliament. The European Parliament together with the council of the European Union, are the legislative organs of the European Union. It is the only institution that is directly elected by the citizens of the EU. When legislation reaches the European Parliament it

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<sup>5</sup> Andreas Dür and Gemma Mateo, "Gaining Access or Going Public? Interest Group Strategies in Five European Countries," *European Journal of Political Research* 52, no. 5 (April 2013): pp. 660-686, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12012>.

<sup>6</sup> "What Is Lobbying?," SEAP, accessed April 3, 2022, <https://seap.be/lobbying/>.

often becomes more prominent in European political discourse and starts to get more media attention. The power of the Parliament has grown over the last years due to a constant demand for the democratization of the working of the European Union. Interesting within the European Parliament is that Members of Parliament sit with their political group and not necessarily with MP's of their own country. This has created a very wide variety of political beliefs within one political party within the European Parliament due to the incongruity within political beliefs in different countries. Being part of a leftist party has, for example, a very different meaning in Denmark than it does in Spain, and being far-right in Hungary has a very different meaning than it does in the Netherlands. These people with very widespread opinions will however share the same political group in the European Parliament. Therefore it is important for lobbyists that work on the EU level not to simply think about the political group, but also take into account the nationality of the political actor you are dealing with and what this means for their political aspirations. This is generally the case when working in European politics, the importance of understanding what a political affiliation means within different European countries. However, due to the size and role of the EP, it is most notable here. When trying to lobby around the European Parliament, many organizations will often first make contact with assistants of the Members of Parliament. Every MP usually has a budget to hire 1 or 2 assistants that assist them by providing information about the various topics of legislation they will have to decide on. For smaller/lesser known interest groups, it can be possible to get into contact with these assistants. Generally speaking, the European parliament is one of the more accessible institutions for interest groups.<sup>78</sup>

When it comes to the Council of the European Union, different factors have to be taken into account. The council is far less accessible compared to the European Parliament and European Commission. There exists a certain lack of transparency and fragmentation and there are multiple layers, fewer permanent personnel, and informal decision-making norms. (this is even more prevalent for the European Council). The

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<sup>7</sup> YouTube. YouTube, 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QYkYVYQtvw>.

<sup>8</sup> Coen, David, Jeremy Richardson, and Fiona Hayes-Renshaw. "Chapter 4." Essay. In *Lobbying the European Union Institutions, Actors and Issues*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.



Council of the European Union meets in 10 different configurations of 27 national ministers. Every country will send one minister to sit on the Council, depending on the legislation under conversation. The health council will be made up of the 27 health ministers of every member state. These ministers will however only meet a couple of times per year and their main position is being a minister for their country. In between the meetings are prepared by lower hierarchical levels. When it comes to lobbying, these are often the people that meet with interest groups.<sup>9</sup> When the Parliament is being re-elected and the new commission is being established, it is a highly intriguing period for a lobbyist. After the elections, one of the first jobs of the parliament is to pick a new head of the European Commission. The political agenda for the next five years will be shaped by the outcome of the European elections. An example of this is the 'European Green Deal' package that the commission presented after its formation. After this, they will translate their priorities into more concrete action plans and later these will become proposals. The part of the political European cycle that is the busiest for lobbyists is when laws will start to go into the European legislative process.

People who work in the lobbying industry frequently have degrees in languages as well as political science, law, and economics. Most organizations and sectors you can think

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<sup>9</sup> Coen, David, Jeremy Richardson, and Fiona Hayes-Renshaw. "Chapter 4." Essay. In *Lobbying the European Union Institutions, Actors and Issues*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

of will have some type of representative body in Brussels. Figure 1 depicts the different types of interest groups listed in the transparency register of the EU.

Professional consultancies	411
Law firms	52
Self-employed individuals	138
Companies & groups	2,182
Trade and business associations	2,148
Trade unions and professional associations	820
Non-governmental organisations, platforms and networks and similar	2,557
Think tanks and research institutions	416
Academic institutions	243
Organisations representing churches and religious communities	40
Associations and networks of public authorities	111
Entities, offices or networks established by third countries	4
Other organisations, public or mixed entities	357

*Figure 1: Categories of registrants in the EU's transparency register*

### 1.3 Background, rules, and regulations

Since the foundation of the European Coal and Steel Community, interest groups have been trying to influence policymaking on a European level. This was because of the newly gained competencies of the Community as the effect of European integration. Before there existed any form of European integration, there existed no need for interest groups to influence policymaking on a supranational level. Because of the transfer of competencies to supranational and transnational institutions, interest groups had to adapt and create new channels. During the early years of the European Coal and Steel Community, there existed mainly European lobby groups that represented the sectors affected by the new European collaboration. After the treaty of Rome (1957) was signed and the European Economic Community was created, many new European interest groups were established. In 1958 UNICE (now: The Confederation of European Business, shortened: BusinessEurope) was created. BusinessEurope is a highly influential lobby group that represents enterprises in the European Union. In the same year the agricultural organization COPA was created (now Copa-Cogeca, the union of

the two large agricultural umbrella organizations COPA and COGECA). Both BusinessEurope and Copa-Cogeca are known until this day as very powerful lobby organizations in Europe. Over the years after the creation of the EEC, increasingly more groups unified when spillover effects of deeper integration were felt in more sectors. During this period the Commission actively supported the creation of European interest groups, for example, the creation of the ‘Bureau Européen des Unions de Consommateurs’. The creation of interest groups was seen as a deepening of European integration. During the 1960s, the number of interest groups on a European level stagnated. During these years French withdrew its officials from Brussels and delayed the common market by 25 years and used its veto against the UK from joining EEC. During the 1970s, the number of interest groups started to rise again.<sup>10</sup> During the 1970s, the EEC started gaining more power which had stagnated during the 60s. The enlargement of the EU occurred and the Parliament gained significantly more power. During the 80s the European project was back on track and this created a larger demand for influence on the European decision-making process.<sup>11</sup> Right before the creation of the Single European Act and Schengen agreement in 1985, there existed about 659 lobby groups with representation in Brussels. The Schengen agreement led to the abolishment of the national borders of most EU-member states and The single European act was a 5-year program aimed at the creation of a common market. The Single European act created important institutional changes. It initiated the single market and the amount of European competence significantly grew. The importance of the European Council diminished and that of the supranational branches grew. Due to this change, it became vastly more important for interest groups to lobby on the European level.<sup>12</sup> Many different lobby groups came into existence, also additional lobby groups were created within similar sectors since it became increasingly difficult to represent the differences in opinion. Multilevel governance also made its way into the lobby structure. Cooperation between the national, international, and supranational levels started to appear. Also after the creation of the Single European Act, a more American

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<sup>10</sup> Peter Bursens, “De Europese Lobby's En De Europese Instellingen,” *Res Publica* 38, no. 1 (1996): pp. 113-134, <https://doi.org/10.21825/rp.v38i1.18654>.

<sup>11</sup> “History of the EU,” European Union, accessed March 31, 2022, [https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/history-eu\\_en](https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/history-eu_en).

<sup>12</sup> Peter Bursens, “De Europese Lobby's En De Europese Instellingen,” *Res Publica* 38, no. 1 (1996): pp. 113-134, <https://doi.org/10.21825/rp.v38i1.18654>.

form of lobbying started to appear, and the sector became increasingly professionalized. Due to the creation of the Single market, more international non-European stakeholders were interested in being represented in Brussels. The creation of the Single market meant that Europe could now be seen as a single front when it came to the operation of its economy. For large internationals, this meant that it would be more fruitful to lobby on the supranational level instead of the national level.<sup>13</sup> After the completion of the Single Market in 1993, it was estimated that around 3000 interest groups were trying to influence policymaking on the European level.

The increase of lobbyists in Brussels gradually became a larger concern. And even though interest groups had existed for multiple decennia, only in 1996 did the first regulations for this sector come into being. The first regulation stated that the European Parliament regulates the lobby groups with a pass system. According to this, every person who represented an interest group had to register which organization they were working for and what the purpose of their interest group would be. They also had to abide by ethical standards set by the European Union. In the 2000s the number of interest groups kept growing and more regulation was needed. There existed a push and pull between the positive sides and negative sides of lobbying. It was important that interest groups could still influence policymaking because the representation of interest groups is important in a functioning democracy. But on the other side, there was the problem of abusing freedom and misconduct within the open system. In 2005 the European Transparency initiative was introduced.

To try and show their dedication to openness and transparency, the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the Council of the European Union have created a joint transparency register. People may more easily acquire information on interest representation activities taking place in relation to EU institutions, as well as statistical data on all registered parties, thanks to the Transparency Register. Although participation in the transparency register is optional, it is very difficult for interest organizations to operate outside of it. For instance, requesting an access card to the European Parliament requires registration. Such access may only be requested online by registered interest representatives. For each report, the rapporteurs, shadow rapporteurs,

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<sup>13</sup> M Petite, "Les Lobbies Européens," *Pouvoirs* 48 (1989): pp. 89-95.

and committee chairmen are obligated to post online details of the meetings they have planned with interest representatives that fall within the purview of the transparency register. Only lobby organizations that have registered with the Transparency Register are permitted to take part in intergroup or other unofficial group activities on the grounds of Parliament by supporting them or hosting their events.<sup>14</sup> The Lisbon Treaty gave lobbying a formal role in the European legal system. The treaty stated that:

*“The institutions shall, by appropriate means, give citizens and representative associations the opportunity to make known and publicly exchange their views in all areas of Union action; in addition, the institutions shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society”*

This shows the importance of lobbying within the political structure on the European level. The Treaty on the European Union establishes a framework and aims to promote ethical and transparent interactions between civil society and representative organizations and European institutions and political leaders.

## **Conclusion**

A national or regional level of lobbying is very different from a European level of lobbying. Transnational lobbying frequently represents a far wider range of interests than national lobbying. It occurs within the parameters of European law and on a supranational scale. Interest groups in Europe frequently need to understand the multiple levels of government and how they interact. Interest groups have been attempting to sway policy decisions at the European level ever since the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community. This was a result of the Community gaining additional competencies as a result of European integration. Before there existed any sort of European integration, there existed no need for interest groups to influence government on a supranational level. Because of the transfer of powers to supranational entities, interest groups had to adjust and find new channels. Since the late 1980s, when the EU began assuming increasing authority over several aspects of policy, lobbying has

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<sup>14</sup> “Transparency Register,” European Commission - European Commission, October 11, 2018, [https://ec.europa.eu/info/about-european-commission/service-standards-and-principles/transparency/transparency-register\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/about-european-commission/service-standards-and-principles/transparency/transparency-register_en).

considerably increased in Brussels. Today, a wide spectrum of special interests lobby the EU, making the capital of Belgium one of the biggest lobbying hubs on the planet. Lobbying has now become an integral part of the Brussels landscape and aids in the democratic structure of the European Union

## **Chapter 2: Arena analyses of the agricultural lobby in Brussels**

This chapter will focus on the contemporary agricultural lobby, who they are, and what they stand for. To start, what is the European agricultural lobby exactly? One could argue that Oxfam Novib for example is also part of it due to the fact that it is an interest group that represents the needs of farmers. Due to the fact that the agricultural lobby is such a wide-ranging concept, I will be attempting to provide a definition of the agricultural lobby. Apart from defining the actors within the agricultural lobby, I will also be focussing on their interests and who they are representing. Within the formulation of the 'farm to fork' strategy of the commission, agricultural interest groups weren't the only lobby groups trying the practice influence. Also relevant to the creation of the 'Farm to Fork' strategy are the interest groups representing the opposite side of the agricultural lobby. These are often the animal rights and environmentalist interest groups.

### **2.1 The influence of the European Agricultural Lobby**

Agriculture has always been the EU's largest budgetary policy sector. Two conflicting viewpoints have emerged since the formation of the Common Agricultural Policy . The first believes that the measures should be intended at speeding up agricultural structural reforms that would boost production and lead to the progressive withdrawal of farmer subsidies, resulting in lower costs. The second point of view, which has commercial inclinations, advocates for the maintenance of government subsidies to secure the survival of a significant number of farmers in the industry. The agricultural lobby is an integral part of the process of altering agricultural policy. Its strong position in the EU has had a significant impact on efforts to reform the CAP to make it more liberal. The EU budget deficit created through the CAP is the primary source of reform pressure, which is accompanied by growing amount of pressure from international trade partners and environmental concerns. The early political proposals for a CAP were based on the concept that agriculture needed to be saved in order for farmers to be able to compete on the global market. This idea became prevalent after the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community, due to the enormous negative impact of the second world war on the agricultural sector. The belief that the CAP is of essential importance for both farmers and the European Union as an institution is an important belief held by the

agricultural lobby. The agricultural lobby's most important institutional advantage is that it is seen as an integral longstanding part of the European political climate. It can be argued that farmers are also disproportionately favoured by national governments. Organized agriculture has a specific interaction with representatives from the relevant ministries in the EU Member States. The unanimity and unilateral character of the agricultural lobby's interests also contribute to their strong status. Because they are a homogenous and cohesive group, they are quite well organized when advocating their objectives. The capacity of the agricultural lobby to win over lawmakers, customers, and tax payers is yet another crucial trait. But also the fact that they have the ability to emphasize on the indispensable role of agriculture in our society plays an important role in influencing policy making.<sup>1516</sup> This is for example very visible in the way the Agricultural lobby is responding to the Russo-Ukrainian War. When the EU came out with its proposal of halving pesticide use by 2030 as part of its ambitious Farm to Fork agenda, the issue of the Russo-Ukraine war came up. The "sustainable use of pesticides regulation" will be the first legally enforceable EU rule requiring farmers to limit chemical use. Agricultural interest groups and a number of member states, are passionately opposed to the tougher standards, and several have urged officials to weaken the measures due to fears of a food catastrophe that has been fuelled by the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. They argue that during this time it is more important than ever to focus on a strong agricultural sector and not limit it through binding legislation.<sup>17</sup> Also apart from the "sustainable use of pesticide regulation", the agricultural interest organizations frequently have utilized the Russo-Ukraine conflict to draw attention to the importance of agricultural independence.

## **2.2 Arena analyses of the agricultural lobby and its actors**

As stated before, the European agricultural lobby is difficult to exactly define. Different interest groups representing farmers will often have opposing opinions. The pursuits of the largest agricultural firm or meat processing factory will of course differ from a small

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<sup>16</sup> Zuzana Bednaříková and Jiřina Jílková, "Why Is the Agricultural Lobby In the European Union Member States So Effective," *Ekonomie a Management* 2 (2012): pp. 26-37.

<sup>17</sup> Reuters Institute, "[Interview] 'without Pesticide Reduction, We'll Have a Food Crisis in Europe'," EUobserver, accessed June 21, 2022, <https://euobserver.com/green-economy/155265>.



family-owned bio farm. Apart from farmer representation, there are many more actors who are interested in having a stake in the formulation of the European Agricultural Policy. The actors that I will be focussing on are the interest groups related to agricultural representation that have been most influential in the formulation of the 'Farm to Fork strategy'. The interest groups I will be focussing on are all long-existing, large and influential lobby groups that are well known in Brussels. More specifically, I will be focussing on five large interest groups that have funded studies in opposition to the 'Farm to Fork' strategy before the vote on an own-initiative report took place in the European Parliament. The consequences of the goals established by the European Commission when they unveiled the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity policies in May 2020 were evaluated and measured in these publications and studies. However, apart from these interests groups, there was a large collaboration between agricultural lobby organizations to oppose the 'Farm to Fork' strategy. (see page 15). Based on findings from studies they sponsored themselves, these organizations joined together to sign a joint proclamation.

<p>Agriculture and Progress – European Platform for Sustainable Agricultural Production</p> <p>Agri-Food Chain Coalition – European agri-food chain joint initiative</p> <p>AnimalHealthEurope - European Animal Medicines Industry</p> <p>AVEC – European Association of Poultry Processors and Poultry Trade</p> <p>CEFS - European Association of Sugar Manufacturers</p> <p>CEJA – European Council of Young Farmers</p> <p>CEMA - European Agricultural Machinery Industry</p> <p>CEPM – European Confederation of Maize Production</p> <p>CEVI - European Confederation of Independent Winegrowers</p> <p>CIBE - International Confederation of European Beet Growers</p> <p>Clitravi - Liaison Centre for the Meat Processing Industry in the European Union</p> <p>COCERAL - European association of trade in cereals, oilseeds, pulses, olive oil, oils and fats, animal feed and agrosupply</p> <p>Copa-Cogeca - European Farmers and Agri-Cooperatives</p> <p>CropLife Europe - Europe's Crop Protection Industry</p>
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EBB - European Biodiesel Board
EDA –European Dairy Association
EFFAB - European Forum of Farm Animal Breeders
ELO - European Landowners’ Organization
European Livestock Voice – European Platform of the Livestock Food Chain
Euro Foie Gras - European Federation of Foie Gras
Euroseeds - European Seed Sector
ePURE - European Renewable Ethanol Industry
UECBV - European Livestock and Meat Trades Union
FEFAC - European Feed Manufacturers' Federation
FEFANA - European Association of Specialty Feed Ingredients and their
Mixtures Fertilizers Europe – European Fertilizer Producers
IBC – International Butchers’ Confederation <sup>18</sup>

For the arena analyses of the European agricultural lobby, 5 interest groups will be discussed. Firstly the largest of the interest groups that will be discussed is Copa-Cogeca. The forerunner of the lobby group of Copa-Cogeca: 'Copa' was founded the year after the Treaty of Rome. Since the 1950s, Copa-Cogeca has been the largest EU farm lobby organization and has contributed to the Common Agricultural Policies development. Copa-Cogeca continues to be a significant actor in CAP discussions despite a 50-year history of members having divergent objectives.<sup>19</sup> The interest group describes itself as:

*“Copa and Cogeca are the united voice of farmers and agri-cooperatives in the EU. Together, we ensure that EU agriculture is sustainable, innovative and competitive, while guaranteeing food security for 500 million people throughout Europe.”<sup>20</sup>*

Copa-Cogeca should thus be an interest group that acts in the interest of farmers all over Europe. However critics of the interest group argue that Copa and Cogeca is mainly

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<sup>18</sup> October 12, 2021, [http://www.coceral.com/data/1634134471Joint\\_Declaration\\_-\\_FARM\\_TO\\_FORK\\_-\\_IT\\_IS\\_TIME\\_TO\\_LISTEN\\_TO\\_WHAT\\_THE\\_DATA\\_SAYS\\_\\_211012.pdf](http://www.coceral.com/data/1634134471Joint_Declaration_-_FARM_TO_FORK_-_IT_IS_TIME_TO_LISTEN_TO_WHAT_THE_DATA_SAYS__211012.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> Ewa Kiryluk-Dryjska and Agnieszka Baer-Nawrocka, “Reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy of the EU: Expected Results and Their Social Acceptance,” *Journal of Policy Modeling* 41, no. 4 (2019): pp. 607-622, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpolmod.2019.01.003>.

<sup>20</sup> “Copa Cogeca,” accessed May 6, 2022, <https://www.copa-cogeca.eu/>.

looking out for the agricultural business and not so much for the individual farmers and that they completely deny the part the agricultural sector plays in global warming. It is argued by Corporate Europe (2021) That Copa-Cogeca and its members have been the “unofficial, self-appointed, co-managers of the Common Agricultural Policy.” They hold considerable influence within the European Union and also have strong ties to national governments and organisations. A significant amount of European politicians will turn to Copa-Cogeca if they need advice on legislation tied to agriculture. <sup>21</sup>Copa-Cogeca has a yearly budget of around 1,500,000€ - 1,749,999€ and employs 19 people. From the early process of the formulation of the Green Deal and Farm to Fork strategy they have had the opportunity to have frequent meetings with the Commission to discuss these new policies. It can be argued that Copa-Cogeca is the most influential player in the agricultural lobby compared to the other interest groups active in trying to influence the vote in the European Parliament on its own initiative report.<sup>22</sup>

The second lobby group is the Liaison Centre for the Meat Processing in the European Union (Clitravi). Clitravi is also one of the older interest groups based in Brussels and was founded in the same year as Copa-Cogeca: 1958. Clitravi (2020) claims that its main objective is to: “protect and advance the legitimate interest of the European Meat Processing Industry.”<sup>23</sup> Clitravi has a budget of around 300,000€ - 399,999€ and has 2.25 full time employees. When it comes to meetings with the commission with the topic of the farm to fork strategy, they’ve had significantly less compared to the larger Copa Cogeca. They did however have a meeting with Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans - Exchange on Farm to Fork Strategy with European Livestock Voice (DG European Green Deal). <sup>24</sup> Clitravi does have 26 member organisations that it is representing on EU level which are based in different member states.

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<sup>21</sup> “Copa-COGECA: Defending Farmers in Public and the Agribusiness Industry in Private?,” Corporate Europe Observatory, accessed May 6, 2022, <https://corporateeurope.org/en/2021/01/copa-cogeca-defending-farmers-public-and-agribusiness-industry-private>.

<sup>22</sup> “European Farmers (Copa),” LobbyFacts Database, accessed May 6, 2022, <https://lobbyfacts.eu/representative/5a51af5384b94c0bb3ecff70ea1067a7>.

<sup>23</sup> “Home,” clitravi, July 29, 2020, <http://www.clitravi.com/>.

<sup>24</sup> “Centre De Liaison Des Industries Transformatrices De Viande De L'ue (CLITRAVI),” LobbyFacts Database, accessed May 6, 2022, <https://lobbyfacts.eu/representative/be2e1c1f34dc40f188db14e359d02bef/centre-de-liaison-des-industries-transformatrices-de-viande-de-l-ue>.

European Livestock Voice, is compared to the others a more modern interest group. It has a strong social media presence and is seems engaging with it's audience. They often use the hashtag: "meat the facts" (#meatthefacts) in order to open or respond to a discussion on European livestock. European Livestock presents the ideals of the general green politicians as strongly dystopian on its website. They present themselves and the importance of livestock as the better and greener alternative to policies being discussed right now. They put a large emphasis on the fact that EU livestock farming is more environmentally friendly than other models. They state on their website that:

*"The EU livestock farming model, based on diversified, local and family farm structures, is the backbone of EU's rural areas. It supports a great number of jobs and industries, it contributes to a circular and bio-economy, while also ensuring a steady and affordable supply of nutritious foods, needed for a balanced diet. While the sector is both fully aware of and acting on many challenges, the removal of livestock farming from Europe – a "Livestock Exit" – would have severe consequences. European Livestock Voice aims to bring forward the facts from the "boots on the ground" side of the story and offer some balance to the debate on the future of livestock." (European Livestock Voice, 2022)<sup>25</sup>*

They have a yearly budget of 500,000€ - 599,999€ per year and have 6 lobbyist declared. They have a significant amount of meetings with EU officials regarding the Farm to Fork strategy..<sup>26</sup>

The European Dairy Association presents itself as one of multiple voices of representation of the dairy industry within the European Union and in Brussels. It however can be defined as the largest and most important one. The European Dairy Association is a platform and benchmark for multiple organisations in the same field. Its goal is to unify the diverse market of dairy producers. It acknowledges the fact that there exist many different types of dairy companies and it sets itself out to try and unite the interest of producers of different scales. The European Dairy Association is mainly a

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<sup>25</sup> "European Livestock Voice," European Livestock Voice, accessed June 2, 2022, <https://meatthefacts.eu/>.

<sup>26</sup> "Union Européenne Du Commerce Du Bétail Et Des Métiers De La Viande (U.E.C.B.V.)," LobbyFacts Database, accessed June 2, 2022, <https://lobbyfacts.eu/representative/bd15fc5a024a43919cf2909c60afc86a>.

thinktank that tries and create new opportunities for the dairy sector. Their main goals are: “*securing the European milk base, uncorking the potential of the EU internal markets and making most of the growth in the world.*” (EDA, 2022). They have created an international dialogue with their forum also outside of Europe.<sup>27</sup> They’ve produced multiple factsheets on creating a more sustainable dairy industry with a strong focus on circularity and zero-waste industry. They state that they want to strive towards a smaller environmental footprint and common water reutilisation practice. They present dairy farming within Europe as a sustainable and circular practice. They argue that the emissions from the dairy sector are much lower than often presented and that because of the grasslands created by the sector much more carbon emissions are held in place.<sup>28</sup>

CropLife Europe is the last interest group I will be discussing who tried to influence the vote on the Parliaments own-initiative report related to the Farm to Fork strategy. CropLife Europe has a budget of 600,000€ - 699,999€ and employs 2,5 full time workers. It is an interest group that focusses mainly on research and development. Its goal is to advance European policies in regards to the research and development of crop protection. CropLife Europe states that its aims to encourage sustainable developments in the agricultural sector. It represents the interests of agricultural biotech.<sup>29</sup> They state on their website that:

*“CropLife Europe members are committed to delivering truly sustainable agriculture. Innovative farming tools, used in combination with good agronomic practices, are needed to meet ever-evolving consumer demands for food that is safe, tasty, diverse and affordable. More sustainable agriculture that makes the best use of all of the latest technology will ensure a more sustainable future.*

*We provide a wide variety of innovative farm solutions, from biopesticides to plant biotechnology; from organic solutions to conventional applications:*

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<sup>27</sup> Eda.euromilk.org, accessed June 2, 2022, <https://eda.euromilk.org/about-eda/mission.html>.

<sup>28</sup> “EDA Factsheet,” September 2018.

<sup>29</sup> “CropLife Europe,” LobbyFacts Database, accessed June 2, 2022, <https://lobbyfacts.eu/representative/6ab5f09b55824f95b227c953b4097ceb/croplife-europe>.

- *Our members are market leading companies that develop and supply pesticides and biopesticides to organic, conservation (low till, no till), agroforestry and conventional agriculture models*<sup>30</sup>
- *Our members invest in digital and precision agriculture, which enable delivery of the minimum amount of product, at the right place, at the right time.*<sup>31</sup>
- *Our members look for future plant biotechnology traits that will enable crops to thrive in difficult conditions or provide greater benefit in people's diets.*

*Our mandate is to support and advance sustainable agriculture, providing the largest toolbox possible for farmers, so that they can choose the production model they want to use – knowing it is safe for the environment, for consumers and for themselves.”*<sup>30</sup>

Even though Croplife Europe presents itself as a sustainable thinktank, it is argued by critics that it is an interest group that is trying to weaken ambitious sustainable targets presented through the Green Deal. It is argued by Corporate Europe that the organisation is using greenwashing tactics to avoid binding legislation in regard to pesticide.<sup>31</sup>

The five interest groups discussed are very diverse but all related to the agricultural sector in some way. Overly strict regulation would negatively impact the people and organisations that they are representing. They all play an important role in voicing the opinions and interests of their sector and often see overlap in their interest. All claim to have an interest in a sustainable eco-friendly development of the European agricultural sector. Often opposing these agricultural interest groups are lobbyists related to sustainability, animal rights, and biodiversity. These lobby groups also have a considerable influence in the lobby arena in Brussels.

## **2.3 Environmental and Animal rights lobby groups**

The interest groups that will be discussed are in favour of stricter regulation with regard to the European Green Deal and the Farm to Fork strategy, opposing the organisations discussed before who are in favour of more flexible regulation so that the agricultural

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<sup>30</sup> “More with Less,” CropLife Europe, April 1, 2021, <https://croplifeeurope.eu/more-with-less/>.

<sup>31</sup> “A Loud Lobby for a Silent Spring,” Corporate Europe Observatory, accessed June 2, 2022, <https://corporateeurope.org/en/2022/03/loud-lobby-silent-spring>.

sector can operate more effectively in their opinion. NGOs, Environmental and Animal rights lobby groups have different priorities that often do not completely align with those working in the agricultural lobby. It is extremely challenging for relatively smaller NGOs to be a part of significant policy circles because of the EU's status as a supranational body. In response, they frequently participate in federations or organisations on a national or European level, such as the European Environmental Bureau. Small NGOs can often only be represented directly if they have specialized skills or fulfil a specific role. Only the largest NGOs can often afford to have a sizable representation in Brussels. NGOs must choose between two operational strategies: working with the EU through an umbrella organization, which has weaker ties to the respective constituencies of its member NGOs and whose positions are more likely to have been compromised with other member organizations; or working on their own, which increases the risk of failing to secure the EU perspective on a problem or realizing the importance of working with actors in Brussels. It is extremely important for interest groups to start influencing the decision making process from the very start at the European Commission in Brussels. The Commission will often invite lobbying groups while they are in the process of formulating legislation. It is important for interest groups to be considered influential enough if they want to partake in the part of the process. Because of this interest groups based on NGOs often have one relatively large organisation based in Brussels.<sup>32</sup>

In relation to the vote of the European Parliament on their own-initiative report, green organizations have launched their own lobbying counter-campaign on the inboxes of MEPs. In letters to lawmakers pleading with them to support the transition to green farming, organizations like Slow Food, Humane Society International, Compassion in World Farming, and the small farmers' group Via Campesina are listed, according to emails obtained by POLITICO.<sup>33</sup>

The European Environmental Bureau is one of the largest interest groups in Brussels. They have a yearly budget of 7,250,000€ - 7,499,999€ and have 32 employees. It can be

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<sup>32</sup> Lee, Julian and Rwanda Kigali. "Comparing NGO Influence in the EU and the US." Programme on NGOs and Civil (n.d.):

<sup>33</sup> Eddy Wax, "MEPs Vote on EU's Green Food Plan Amid Lobbying Blitz," POLITICO (POLITICO, October 22, 2021), <https://www.politico.eu/article/meps-vote-eus-green-food-plan-farm-to-fork/>.

seen as a network or umbrella organization of many different national environmental NGOs. They've had many meetings with the commission and emphasize on many ranging topics related to environmental development in the EU. They have focussed for example on the gender aspect of the European Green deal, discussing the question of gender equality within the transformation of many different sectors related to the European Green Deal. Their main discussion points are however: climate change, biodiversity, pollution and circular economy.<sup>34</sup> Another interest group in favor of stronger regulation in regard to the Farm to Fork strategy is Eurogroup for animals. Eurogroup for animals is an interest group lobbying for animal rights. This interest group agrees with the point the agricultural lobby makes regarding the fact that meat production within the EU is more animal friendly and sustainable. However, they point out the problem of weak enforcement of animal welfare legislation as well the need for more legislation on this topic in general.<sup>35</sup> After the European Parliament adopted the farm to fork strategy, Reineke Hameleers, CEO, Eurogroup for Animals, stated:

*“Eurogroup for Animals welcomes the overall result of the Farm to Fork Strategy own initiative report and now calls on the European Commission to make the changes needed for a sustainable, animal-friendly food system.”*

Eurogroup for animals employs 4,5 people fulltime and has a yearly budget of 900,000€ - 999,999€. Eurogroup for animals describes itself as “a federation of non-governmental organizations.”. It provides research on animal rights issues and promotes higher standards for animal welfare.<sup>36</sup>

## **Conclusion:**

Within the debate on agricultural policy of the EU there are important interest groups with significant influence often on both sides of the argument. The idea that a handful of large agricultural companies hold secret meetings behind closed doors and make all the decisions with regard to agricultural policy, can therefore be seen as obsolete idea.

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<sup>34</sup> “European Environmental Bureau (EEB),” LobbyFacts Database, accessed June 2, 2022, <https://lobbyfacts.eu/representative/f0c3ee4c1ade43caa3950cb15618b340/european-environmental-bureau>.

<sup>35</sup> “Farm Animals,” Eurogroup for Animals, June 1, 2022, <https://www.eurogroupforanimals.org/what-we-do/policy-areas/farm-animals>.

<sup>36</sup> “Eurogroup for Animals,” LobbyFacts Database, accessed June 2, 2022, <https://lobbyfacts.eu/representative/a49bb96ed4464fca9bad6c237ec23aaa/eurogroup-for-animals>.



However it could be argued to a certain extent that the industrial backed agricultural lobbies have a very significant amount of influence sometimes have ulterior motives than they present to have. There is a certain necessity within the political discourse of the time about take sustainability into consideration when discussing agricultural policy. This is visible within the way the agricultural interest groups present themselves to the public. To a certain extent this could be due to the fact that they also see sustainability and animal welfare as a pressing issue. However the main goal of these interest groups is to represent the people of their industry, and sustainable development would sometimes go against the wishes of the agricultural sector. This has led to a certain level of 'greenwashing' that is visible in the way these organisations present themselves to the public. On the other side it could be argued that the European agricultural sector is the most sustainable and animal friendly in the world. Therefore constraining this sector could lead to a rise in agricultural imports from less sustainable countries. Because of this it can be argued that it is important for policymakers to take into account both the side that is in favor of stricter regulation within the agricultural sector and the side that is not. The agricultural sector is a vital part of the European economy and therefore deserves strong representation within Brussels.

## **Chapter 3: The farm to fork strategy and the vote in the European parliament**

The Farm to Fork strategy was published by the European commission on 20 may 2020. The Farm to Fork strategy is part of the European Green deal . The European Green deal is the strategy of the European Union to transition into a more sustainable economy. The European green deal is a set of different packages existing out of different legislative proposals in order to create a ‘greener Europe’.

The ‘fit for 55’ is for example the package related to emission. The goal of the ‘fit for 55’ package is that Europe will become the first continent with net-zero emissions by 2050. The goal before that is that Europe should produce 55% less emissions by 2030 in comparison to 1990. <sup>37</sup> Apart from this, different packages will focus on creating a cleaner economy with less toxins, pollution, new economic possibilities and a better life quality. There exists a budget of 1.8 trillion euros for the transformation of the European Economy towards a more sustainable and cleaner economy. The European Commission proposed multiple changes within the climate, energy, transport and tax policies. The ‘Farm to Fork’ strategy is thus one of these packages of proposed legislation by the European commission in order to create a more sustainable Europe. The ‘Farm to Fork’ strategy is related to the agricultural sector which is highly debated within Europe but also within the discussion about sustainability in general. In this chapter I will focus on the relation between sustainability and the agricultural sector, then explain why the original agricultural policy of the European Union was heavily criticized and why change is needed. After this I will go into the proposed legislation of the ‘Farm to Fork’ strategy and lastly I will discuss the vote in the European Parliament on its own-initiative report and its significance. <sup>38</sup>

### **3.1 Sustainability and agriculture**

9.3 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> were produced by the agricultural sector in 2018. This amounts to about a third of the total production of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The production of

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<sup>37</sup> “Fit for 55,” Consilium, June 3, 2022, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/green-deal/fit-for-55-the-eu-plan-for-a-green-transition/>.

<sup>38</sup> “Q&A: How 'Fit for 55' Reforms Will Help EU Meet Its Climate Goals,” Carbon Brief, July 23, 2021, <https://www.carbonbrief.org/qa-how-fit-for-55-reforms-will-help-eu-meet-its-climate-goals/>.

methane and nitrous oxide contributed to by far the largest part of this 9.3 billion tonnes worldwide. This was however only taking into account the emissions within the farmland itself and does not take into account the emissions created by deforestation. Since 2000 there has been a 14 percent increase in CO<sub>2</sub> produced by the agricultural sector world wide. It is a large problem within and outside Europe and difficult to tackle due to the increase in demand for products that are higher in emissions such as dairy products and meat. The EU set national emission targets through directives, it is up to the member states themselves how they reach these targets.<sup>39</sup> Between 2005 and 2019, the emissions created by the agricultural sector within the European Union remained stable. It is however projected that there will be a small decline in these agricultural emissions up to 2030. National projections showed that there could have been a decrease of 2 percent by 2030 compared to 2005. If further legislation is implemented by member states it is expected that would have been a 5% decrease in agricultural emissions by 2030, compared to 2005. However, even this would mean that the targets set out for member states will not be met.<sup>40</sup>

The agricultural sector in Europe produces about 10 percent of the greenhouse gases in 2015. This excludes land use and deforestation. Between 1990 and 2015, the GHG emissions produced by the agricultural sector did strongly decline, by 20%. This was mainly driven by the drop in the usage of nitrogenous fertilizers and a decrease in livestock. Also imports from outside of Europe have increased firmly since the 90s. There has been a sharp contrast between member states in regards to the increase or decrease in agricultural emissions. The largest source of these emissions comes from methane, produced by enteric fermentation through livestock. There also exists a strong variation in emissions per utilised agricultural area all throughout the EU, even though France produces the most emissions related to agriculture, the emissions intensity is much higher in member states such as the Netherlands and Belgium.<sup>41</sup> The measures

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<sup>39</sup> "Emissions Due to Agriculture Global, Regional and Country Trends 2000–2018" (food and agriculture organization of the united nations , n.d.).

<sup>40</sup> "Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Agriculture in Europe," Site, accessed June 16, 2022, <https://www.eea.europa.eu/ims/greenhouse-gas-emissions-from-agriculture#:~:text=Greenhouse%20gas%20emissions%20from%20the,2030%20compared%20with%202005%20levels>.

<sup>41</sup> "Archive:Agri-Environmental Indicator - Greenhouse Gas Emissions," Archive:Agri-environmental indicator - greenhouse gas emissions - Statistics Explained (Eurostat), accessed June 16, 2022, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Archive%3A%20Agri-](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Archive%3A%20Agri-Environmental%20Indicator%20-%20Greenhouse%20Gas%20Emissions)

implemented to reduce emissions in agriculture through the common agricultural policy have not been as successful as hoped. Most measures seem to have been applied infrequently throughout the member states. The best way to reduce the emissions produced by agriculture would be through reducing the EU production, especially reducing the production of emission-intense products often produced by livestock. However, this could lead to an increase in foreign emissions outside of the EU while fading out job opportunities within Europe. As stated before, the European agricultural sector is more environmentally and animal friendly compared to other markets. An option would be to decrease demand for products that produce high levels of GHG emissions. However, this has proven to be a difficult undertaking. Options for this would be to decrease food waste all over Europe or to change the diet of Europeans towards a more planted-based one. Diet changes to planted-based protein sources could have a large influence on the decrease in emissions and have positive effects on ecosystems. It would have the option to clear up large pieces of land that are now being utilized for livestock. Especially because the ‘Farm to Fork’ strategy and other EU incentives also focus on the increase of organic farming, which often requires more land.

As stated before, between 2005 and 2019, emissions within Europe coming from the agricultural sector remained stable and only a small decline was expected. This means that member states will have to make significant reductions of their produced emissions in other parts of the Effort Sharing Regulation (ESR). The Effort Sharing Regulation include decreases in emissions in fields that are not part of the European Union Emissions Trading System. These fields include: “road transport, heating of buildings, agriculture, small industrial installations and waste management”. Even though they are not included in the EU ETS (which is one of the most important tools of the EU in reducing emissions) they make up about 60 % of all emissions produced by member states. The commission has proposed a 40 percent reduction of fields included in the ESR in order to reach the targets set for 2030. This also goes in accordance with the ‘Farm to Fork’ strategy which hopes to ensure that more significant decreases in

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environmental\_indicator\_-\_greenhouse\_gas\_emissions&oldid=374989#:~:text=The%20EU's%20agricultural%20sector%20accounted,greenhouse%20gases%20(Table%201).

emissions will be reached within that sector. The 'Farm to Fork' strategy could also include more binding legislation, to ensure that member states will reduce their emissions from agriculture, to ensure that the targets that were set will be reached.

### **3.2 Why did we need a change in the European food sector?**

The Farm to Fork policy is the part of the European Green deal which focuses on the production and consumption of food. Currently the Common Agricultural Policy is the main tool of the European Union in regards to policy regarding the agricultural sector. The CAP is an important part within the EU and takes the largest part of the EU's budget, however there is a chance that the European Regional Development Fund might become the largest receiver of the EU budget over the coming years. The Common Agricultural Policy has existed for over 60 years and has been based on two pillars since 1999: the organization of the market and rural development. The goals of the common agricultural policy is to support the agricultural sector to ensure that Europeans will always have level of food certainty and price stability. Apart from this it ensures wages and promotion within this sector, which are often lower compared to other sectors even though it's a vital part of the economy. The CAP also strives to create a more sustainable and environmentally friendly agricultural sector according to the EU, which is relatively true compared to agricultural production outside of the EU. However, the Common European Agricultural Policy has also received a lot of criticism over the years. There are very high costs related to the CAP due to the fact that it creates an artificial over-supply. By creating this over-supply the EU forces itself to buy up the surplus that they have created themselves. This also results in higher prices for the consumer within the European Union. Apart from this it also creates an unfair advantage for European farmers on the world market. The excess that the EU buys from European farmers is dumped on the world market for a much lower price, making it difficult for farmers outside of the EU to compete. Apart from this, it is also very difficult for non-EU farmers to export to the European Union. This has created international tensions. For example between the European Union and the United States, this has created major issues during trade negotiations. It also goes to a certain extent against the World Trade Organisation, which promotes free trade on the international

stage, and the Common Agricultural Policy can be seen as a protectionist policy.<sup>42</sup> Members of the European Green Party often criticize the CAP for subsidizing unsustainable agricultural practices.<sup>43</sup> This criticism led to a proposal for reform under the Junker commission in 2018. The reforms focussed on creating a more sustainable and ethical CAP, where member states had more autonomy over the subsidies. According to critics these proposals have created no to little change in regard to creating a greener Common Agricultural Policy. It was also criticized by a report, created by the European Court of Auditors, stating that the reforms had done not enough to reduce the decline of biodiversity. Researchers at the universities of Lund and Utrecht have proven that many agricultural subsidies provided by the EU have been misspent and stated that:

*“drastic change is required to reduce inequality and protect the environment”, and making concrete recommendations how to shift support to farmers for implementing environment- and climate-friendly practices.”*

The Common Agricultural Policy has to a certain extend seemed to fail European farmers and the environment. It can be argued that favours international competitiveness over the needs of especially smaller EU based farmers and the sustainability of the sector. Critics argue that the CAP has driven many European farmers into exploitation and strongly favours big land owners and companies. It has failed to provide a sustainable food system within Europe and has ensured that the impact of the agricultural sector has remained unchanged. From the beginning it was clear that the Von Der Leyen commission would take a different approach to the agricultural sector. The way the European Union has conducted agricultural policy has been criticized over many years. the ‘Farm to Fork’ strategy however creates the chance for the European Union to build a more sustainable and ethical way of conducting their agricultural policies. It is important for the CAP to be united and aligned with the ‘Farm

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<sup>42</sup> “The Common Agricultural Policy at a Glance.” European Commission - European Commission, May 12, 2022. [https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/cap-glance\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/cap-glance_en).

<sup>43</sup> Megan O'Brien, “Concern among EU Green Party Members over Cap Environmental Impact,” Agriland.ie, June 1, 2022, <https://www.agriland.ie/farming-news/eu-green-party-members-concerned-over-cap-policies/>.

to Fork' strategy in order to create significant change and fulfil the targets set by the EU. <sup>44</sup>

The Common Fisheries Policy is in existence inside the European Union. The CFP is the set of guidelines and mechanisms that control how European fishing fleets and stocks are managed. Founded in 1970, it underwent its most recent reformation in 2014. The Common Fisheries Policy allows all European fishing fleets equal access to EU seas with the goal of ensuring fair competition. By striking a balance between the need to maximize catches and the requirement to protect fish supplies, it seeks to increase the sustainability of European fishing. Its major goals are to guarantee fisheries management, international collaboration, fair market competition, and consumer protection regulations for seafood goods supplied in the EU, such as rules for plain product labeling. Additionally, it gives money to help coastal towns diversify their industries and to help fishermen switch to more environmentally friendly fishing techniques.. <sup>45</sup> Critics of the Common Fisheries Policy often argue that it overly centralised and has often hurt fishing communities in order to stop overfishing. It has also been criticised for being wasteful. Because the fish are too small or the wrong species, CFP rules force fishermen to dump billions of dead fish. According to an FAO study, discards in the North Atlantic amount to 1.3 tonnes per year, or 13% of total catch. <sup>46</sup>

### **3.3 The proposed regulations of the 'Farm to Fork' strategy**

The European Commission published its Communication 'The European Green Deal' on December 11, 2019, which proposed a 'Farm to Fork' sustainable food strategy to address priorities and challenges at every stage of the food chain. It claims that shifting to a sustainable food system can benefit the environment, health, and social well-being,

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<sup>44</sup> "Cap Vs Farm to Fork," Corporate Europe Observatory, accessed June 17, 2022, <https://corporateeurope.org/en/2020/10/cap-vs-farm-fork>.

<sup>46</sup> "Arguments for and against the Common Fisheries Policy," Debating Europe, accessed June 21, 2022, <https://www.debatingeurope.eu/focus/arguments-for-and-against-the-common-fisheries-policy/#.YrGsSSdBxPY>.

as well as provide economic benefits and ensure that we recover from the COVID-19 crisis on a sustainable path.

The Farm to Fork Strategy aims to hasten the transition to a more sustainable food system by: having an environmental impact that is either neutral or positive, aiding in the mitigation of climate change and adaptation to its effects, halting the decline of biodiversity, ensuring food security, nutrition, and public health by ensuring that everyone has enough, safe, nutritious, and sustainable food, maintaining food affordability while generating more equitable economic returns, boosting the EU supply sector's competitiveness, and promote fair trade. The strategy focuses on regulatory and non-regulatory initiatives. It will function within the framework of the common agricultural and fisheries policies to support and ensure a well organized transition.<sup>47</sup>

Figure 2 shows the main objectives as presented by the commission.



*Figure 2: European Commission, Farm to Fork strategy*

<sup>47</sup> "Farm to Fork Strategy," European Commission, accessed June 17, 2022, [https://ec.europa.eu/food/horizontal-topics/farm-fork-strategy\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/food/horizontal-topics/farm-fork-strategy_en).



The strategy is accompanied by an Action Plan that includes 27 legislative and non-legislative measures in total. Measures like these will be implemented between 2020 and 2024. A legislative proposal for a framework for a sustainable food system will be presented before the end of 2023, and a contingency plan for ensuring food supply and food security in times of crisis will be developed by the end of 2021.<sup>48</sup>

The action plan includes a variety of measures and proposed laws. For example, there will be schemes that incentivize the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the agriculture sector. Another example is the development of energy-saving technologies. The circular bio-based economy has a lot of untapped potential for farmers and their cooperatives. Advanced bio-refineries, such as those that generate bio-fertilizers, protein feed, bioenergy, and bio-chemicals, can assist the European economy shift to a climate-neutral state while simultaneously providing new employment in primary production. The strategy also sets out a goal of a 50 percent decrease in the usage of chemical pesticides and other potentially harmful pesticides, combined with a 20% decrease in the use of fertilisers by 2030. Chemical pesticides are harmful to both flora and fauna and contribute to soil, water, and air pollution, as well as biodiversity loss. Another major source of air, soil, and water pollution and climate impacts is an excess of nutrients (especially nitrogen and phosphorus) in the environment, which results from excessive use and the fact that not all nutrients used in agriculture are effectively absorbed by plants. In rivers, lakes, wetlands, and seas, it has reduced biodiversity. The Commission will take steps to reduce nutrient losses by at least 50% while ensuring that soil fertility does not deteriorate. By 2030, the goal is that the use of fertilizers will have decreased by at least 20%. The commission also wants to focus on a more sustainable animal sector which also focuses more on animal welfare and plant health. Animal welfare improves animal health and food quality, reduces the need for medication, and contributes to biodiversity preservation. Another point that will be brought forward is the reduction of EU sales of antimicrobials in farming and aquaculture. Currently the goal is to reduce the sales by 50 percent by 2030. Antimicrobial use has been

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<sup>48</sup> "Farm to Fork Strategy," Food Safety, accessed June 21, 2022, [https://ec.europa.eu/food/horizontal-topics/farm-fork-strategy\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/food/horizontal-topics/farm-fork-strategy_en).

documented in the rapidly expanding aquaculture industry, which could contribute to the rise of antimicrobial resistance, potentially affecting animal, human, and ecosystem health.<sup>4950</sup> The commission also wants to focus on the increase in organically farmed areas and aquaculture. They proposed that by 2030, 25 percent of all farmed land should be organic and want a substantial increase in organic aquaculture. Through the ‘Farm to Fork’ strategy, the EU also wants to introduce a new ‘unfair trading practices (UTPs) directive’.<sup>51</sup> Because of the stark imbalances between small and large operators, the agricultural sector is vulnerable to unfair trading practices. Relatively smaller farmers and small businesses in the food supply chain frequently lack the bargaining power to defend themselves. The unfair trading practices directive should in theory create a more fair balance within the highly competitive sector.<sup>52</sup>

Through the Common agricultural policy, new objectives have been created in line with the ‘Farm to Fork’ strategy. From 2023 to 2027 there are 10 key objectives to ensure better alignment of the CAP and the ‘Farm to Fork’ Strategy. These objectives, which are centered on social, environmental, and economic goals, will serve as the foundation for EU countries' CAP strategic plans. (see figure 3.)<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Daniel Schar et al., “Global Trends in Antimicrobial Use in Aquaculture,” *Scientific Reports* 10, no. 1 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-020-78849-3>.

<sup>50</sup> “On a Farm to Fork Strategy for a Fair, Healthy and Environmentally-Friendly Food System (2020/2260(INI)),” n.d.

<sup>51</sup> European Parliament, “Carriage Details: Legislative Train Schedule,” European Parliament, accessed June 21, 2022, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-a-european-green-deal/file-farm-to-fork-strategy>.

<sup>52</sup> European Parliament, “Carriage Details: Legislative Train Schedule,” European Parliament, accessed June 21, 2022, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-a-european-green-deal/file-farm-to-fork-strategy>.

<sup>53</sup> “Key Policy Objectives of the New Cap,” European Commission - European Commission, May 13, 2022, [https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/new-cap-2023-27/key-policy-objectives-new-cap\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/new-cap-2023-27/key-policy-objectives-new-cap_en).



*Figuur 3: Key policy objectives of the new CAP (European Commission)*

They will also be focussing within the ‘Farm to Fork’ strategy on creating a more sustainable seafood production in relation to the Common Fisheries Policy<sup>54</sup> It has not been clearly decided on or proposed how the ‘Farm to Fork’ policy will align itself with the CFP. It has been addressed that this is a necessity to have a successful implementation within the sector. However there have been no statements on the possibility of reducing waste which is created through the CFP. The consumer will also be a major emphasis of the Farm to Fork strategy. It aims to provide improved consumer information, as well as procurement and taxation policies, to make the shift to a healthy and sustainable diet simpler. There will be goals set for decreasing food loss and waste, including date marking. An EU code of conduct, restrictions on corporate

<sup>54</sup> “Unfair Trading Practices in the Food Chain,” European Commission - European Commission, June 13, 2022, [https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/market-measures/agri-food-supply-chain/unfair-trading-practices\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/market-measures/agri-food-supply-chain/unfair-trading-practices_en).

governance, food packaging, and marketing requirements are all designed to promote a sustainable food chain. In addition, the Commission will increase its efforts to combat food fraud in order to create a level playing field for operators and to strengthen the control and enforcement authorities' powers. For enabling the transition to a sustainable food chain, the 'Farm to Fork' strategy would rely on research and innovation, targeted investments, and improved data use, as well as international cooperation and trade policies to promote the transition to a sustainable food supply at a global level. By 2023, the strategy will be reviewed to see if the actions taken are sufficient. The strategy is an important step toward defining long-term goals for a sustainable EU food system that includes both production and consumption.

### **3.4 The vote of the European Parliament**

The anti-Farm to Fork lobbying campaign peaked in mid-October 2021, when the European Commission held a high-level meeting on their approach on the 14th and 15th of October, and the European Parliament voted in plenary on their own 'Farm to Fork' stance on the 19th. On October 19, 2021, Parliament plenary approved an own-initiative report on the "farm to fork" strategy (votes: 452 votes in favour, 170 against, and 76 abstentions). Despite the fact that the vote has no legal significance, it determined the future of the Farm to Fork Strategy. This vote revealed how much support the Commission's plan has among Europe's political parties and what concessions will need to be made, even if their choices won't be legally enforceable on this occasion. Over 2 000 changes and the opinions of four committees were reduced into 48 compromise modifications for the report, which was the outcome of rigorous legislative activity. The 'Farm to Fork' strategy was positively received by the European Parliament, the strategy of the European Parliament could even be seen as more enthusiastic than the earlier proposals of the European Commission. To fulfill the European Green Deal's aims, the Parliament emphasizes the necessity of providing sustainable and healthful food and puts a larger emphasis on the consumption side of the 'Farm to Fork' strategy and the health of European citizens. The parliament calls for an awareness campaign against 'unhealthy' foods that have a relatively high carbon footprint. The European Parliament :

*“Highlights the recognition in the strategy that most Europeans’ diets are not in line with recommendations for healthy eating, and that a population-wide shift in consumption patterns is needed towards more healthy foods, diets and lifestyles, including increased consumption of sustainably and regionally produced plants and plant-based foods, such as fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains and legumes, and to address the overconsumption of meat and ultra-processed products, as well as products high in sugars, salt and fats, which will also benefit the environment and animal welfare and secure a more resilient economy; emphasises that EU-wide science-based recommendations, including clear objectives, for sustainable, healthy and more balanced diets, taking into account the cultural and regional diversity of European foods and diets, as well as consumers’ needs, would help and encourage consumers and inform Member States’ own efforts to integrate sustainability elements in national dietary advice; calls on the Commission to develop such recommendations and specific actions to effectively promote healthy, sustainable and more balanced diets;”<sup>55</sup>*

The resolution asks for more binding pesticide usage reduction objectives as well as aggressive greenhouse gas emission reduction targets from agricultural and related land use, with strong standards for biomass-based renewable energy. These specific goals were initially not included in the Commission's proposal. The parliament also proposed stronger legislation and action on animal welfare within the agricultural industry. The Parliament also believes it is critical to initiate stronger infringement procedures of member states who constantly do not abide by animal welfare standards set by the European Union. The parliament reaffirmed its demand on the Commission to present a legislative proposal with the goal of phase-out cage use in EU livestock farming, examining the feasibility of such a phase-out by 2027. The resolution emphasizes how animals raised in intensive production methods and maintained in close quarters are more prone to illnesses that can spread to people.<sup>56</sup> Many NGO’s and interest groups related to animal welfare and climate seemed to be very pleased with the outcome of the Parliaments plenary vote.

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<sup>55</sup> “On a Farm to Fork Strategy for a Fair, Healthy and Environmentally-Friendly Food System (2020/2260(INI)),” n.d.

<sup>56</sup> “European Parliament Emphasises Healthy Food and Animal Welfare in Eu ...,” The Brussels Times, October 24, 2021, <https://www.brusselstimes.com/190484/european-parliament-emphasises-healthy-food-and-animal-welfare-in-eu-farm-to-fork-strategy>.

## **Conclusion**

The existing food sector within the European Union has long been heavily debated. Due to the increase in political and societal discourse of the agricultural sector related to sustainability there has been a paradigm shift in the way we as a society view agricultural production and consumption. It had been made clear for a long time that a change was needed. The Farm to Fork concept is a bold initiative that can help Europe uphold its environmental commitments and save biodiversity. To function within the limits of our planet's carrying capacity, our food system must be altered. Large-scale monocultures and intensive meat production today place an undue strain on people, animals, the environment, and the climate. The contribution of the Parliament was to a plan to unite consumers and the agriculture industry and increases food production that is sustainable and show their willingness to move forward with the 'Farm to Fork' strategy.

## **Chapter 4: The strategy of the Agricultural lobby on the vote in the European Parliament**

Due to its vital function in society and the domestic and global economy, the agricultural lobby may have a more privileged position among special interest groups. The importance of agriculture to customers, merchants, farmers, and other industry employees, as well as to politicians, gives the agriculture lobby a leg up in winning over lawmakers and other decision-makers. The scientific literature is used by the agriculture lobby to support its claims. However, critics contend that the science cited by the agricultural lobby is actually "industry-friendly science" and that it is mostly utilized to support the agricultural lobby's positions. Scientists who warn of the risks of certain agribusiness goods or practices, such as the usage of specific pesticides, are disputed by studies produced by agribusiness lobbyists. Other strategies employed by agricultural lobbyists include name-dropping, bringing up ties between firms and influential government figures, and criticizing the farmers for failing to follow the rules while using pesticides on their fields, instead of looking towards stricter regulations. They often oppose binding legislation, putting the responsibility on the producers. The agricultural lobby sector is highly influential and lobbyists from the pharmaceutical, chemical, finance, and auto industries combined have had less interaction with the Commission's Trade Department than food giants, agricultural merchants, and seed producers.<sup>57</sup> In this chapter, I will be discussing their tactics and influence and focus on the strategy of the agricultural lobby within Brussels and how they have attempted to influence the vote in the European Parliament on its own-initiative report.

### **4.1 The strategy of the agricultural lobby**

Lobbyists both inside and outside the EU were highly active in relation to the "Farm to Fork" strategy, particularly among opponents who contend that the European approach will diminish agriculture production and raise food costs..<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Anthony Chambers, "The Lobbying of the EU How to Achieve Greater Transparency," *The Lobbying of the EU How to Achieve Greater Transparency* (2016).

<sup>58</sup> Eddy Wax, "MEPs Vote on EU's Green Food Plan Amid Lobbying Blitz," POLITICO (POLITICO, October 22, 2021), <https://www.politico.eu/article/meps-vote-eus-green-food-plan-farm-to-fork/>.

The anti-Farm to Fork movement reached a climax in the middle of October when the European Commission had a high-level meeting to discuss their approach and the European Parliament held the plenary vote on its own Farm to Fork stance the week after. An alliance of farmers' representatives, agricultural tech and chemicals lobbies, and industrial livestock industry lobbies coordinated and collaborated on their argument against the Farm to Fork targets across the agri-food sector. Collaboration among lobbying groups is a key strategy for boosting the impact of interest groups on the decision-making process. In this instance, all of the groups are interested in the same thing, but even if that weren't the case, it would still be beneficial to agree to collaborate to a certain extent and create a network that could be used to circulate information, find possible partners, and speak with one voice to decision-makers.<sup>59</sup> The agricultural lobby groups featured on page 15, released a joint declaration on the 12<sup>th</sup> of October against the current form of the 'Farm to Fork' strategy. They claimed that all participants in the food chain agreed with the fundamental ideas outlined in the Farm to Fork strategy and are keenly aware that ongoing, significant improvement is required to ensure a more sustainable approach to our food systems. However, they draw attention to and cite a number of self-funded studies that have been published on the Farm to Fork plan and show that, if implemented as suggested, the present aims will have a significant impact on EU farmers and the viability of the whole European agriculture industry.<sup>60</sup>

A PowerPoint presentation delivered internally to Copa-Cogeca members on September 27, 2021, stated rejection of the suggested targets supported by a number of impact studies funded by the agricultural lobby themselves. These studies played an important role in the strategy of the agricultural lobby. However, the analysis by the European Commission made it abundantly evident that there were significant methodological issues that prevented proper modeling of the Farm to Fork Strategy's effects. Copa-Cogeca employed a summary PowerPoint of all industry-funded studies, but it didn't mention the studies' flaws or underlying premises. A crucial component of the anti-

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<sup>59</sup> Fernando M. Ruiz, Florent Hainaut, and Nathalie Schiffrino, "The Lobbies' Network at the EU Policy Level: The Case of Security and Defense," *Defence and Peace Economics* 27, no. 6 (2015): pp. 774-793, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10242694.2015.1072376>.

<sup>60</sup> October 12, 2021, [http://www.coceral.com/data/1634134471Joint\\_Declaration\\_-\\_FARM\\_TO\\_FORK\\_-\\_IT\\_IS\\_TIME\\_TO\\_LISTEN\\_TO\\_WHAT\\_THE\\_DATA\\_SAYS\\_\\_211012.pdf](http://www.coceral.com/data/1634134471Joint_Declaration_-_FARM_TO_FORK_-_IT_IS_TIME_TO_LISTEN_TO_WHAT_THE_DATA_SAYS__211012.pdf).



‘Farm to Fork’ campaign is the impact study and a policy paper written by academics at Wageningen University but financed by CropLife Europe. The academics from Wageningen who conducted the research also participated in a high-level lobbying meeting with the European Commission in July and are now speakers at two Euractiv lobbying events in a row. However, the corporate sponsors of the Wageningen work are not even acknowledged in the event announcements. On October 1, the Agri-Food Chain Coalition and the European Livestock Voice held a "coordination committee" On Tuesday, October 12, the agricultural interests groups: CropLife and Euractiv held a presentation on the impact studies, especially those pertaining to pesticides. On October 13, Livestock Voice Europe organized a presentation to complement the first one, and on October 14, Corteva hosted a presentation as well on the same issues.<sup>61</sup>

Apart from the impact studies an important strategy of the lobby was trying to postpone the vote until November and watering down concrete targets. The lobby's running campaign to push back the vote until November and extract last-minute amendments to that first deal is revealed in a 15-page "advocacy strategy" acquired by POLITICO. Demanding that the Commission do a comprehensive academic forecast of the potential effects of all the Farm to Fork strategy's ambitions has been one of the main lobbying goals of the interest groups opposed to it. Within the joint declaration of the agricultural lobby it was stated that (2021):

*“It is high time that the European Commission conduct a holistic impact assessment. The Farm to Fork deadline is looming. Eight years for the agricultural sector is not that long. We urgently need to see concrete proposals and a more indepth discussion about the choices we are making. That said, this must be based on better data.”*

It has however been stated by the Commission that at this moment it is impossible to make an accurate forecast of the consequences of the ‘Farm to Fork’ strategy. This demand could also be seen as a way of postponing the voting process, which the

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<sup>61</sup> “Leak: Industrial Farm Lobbies' Coordinated Attack on Farm to Fork Targets,” Corporate Europe Observatory, accessed June 23, 2022, <https://corporateeurope.org/en/2021/10/leak-industrial-farm-lobbies-coordinated-attack-farm-fork-targets>.

agricultural lobby had hoped for in order to push through more amendments to the own-initiative report.<sup>62</sup>

Together with Right-wing European Conservatives and Reformists the agricultural lobby groups ensured a vote that, if it had enough support from other organizations, might have eliminated the reference of the objectives being of a "binding character". However, the majority of the European Parliament voted against this amendment. The refusal of binding targets by the agricultural lobby, is also visible within the suggested amendments they provided to MEPs by Copa-Cogeca. These proposed amendments demonstrate a degree of denial of industrial agriculture's role in the climate crisis, opposition to any mention of healthier, plant-based diets, promotion of organic agriculture, or binding legal targets, as well as a demand for an impact analysis of the European Green Deal. Amendment 8 (Figure 5) shows the amendment proposed by Copa-Cogeca suggesting removing a reference to the cattle industry's influence on the climate. In figure 6 (amendment 9) Copa-Cogeca will not consent to a reduction in government support for damaging / industrial farming practices. The amendments proposed by Copa-Cogeca show a reluctance to accept the role agriculture plays in the creation of a more sustainable economy. In these amendments Copa-Cogeca also binding legislation in relation to the use of pesticides, fertilizers, and antibiotics. (Figure 7)<sup>63</sup>

Important strategies of the agricultural lobby in influencing the Parliaments' vote, were thus: a larger collaboration among different agricultural interest groups, greenwashing their presented values, collaboration with conservative/right wing MEPs, financing impact studies, trying to postpone the vote, going against binding legislation and presentations and meetings with EU officials.

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<sup>62</sup> Eddy Wax, "MEPs Vote on EU's Green Food Plan Amid Lobbying Blitz," POLITICO (POLITICO, October 22, 2021), <https://www.politico.eu/article/meps-vote-eus-green-food-plan-farm-to-fork/>.

<sup>63</sup> "Copa-COGECA: Defending Farmers in Public and the Agribusiness Industry in Private?," Corporate Europe Observatory, accessed June 23, 2022, <https://corporateeurope.org/en/2021/01/copa-cogeca-defending-farmers-public-and-agribusiness-industry-private>.

<p><b>Amendment 8</b></p> <p>Paragraph 4.</p> <p>Emphasises the importance of recognising the significant impact of agriculture and especially animal production on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and land use; stresses the need to enhance natural carbon sinks and reduce agricultural emissions of carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide, in particular in the feed and livestock sectors; calls for regulatory measures and targets to ensure progressive reductions in all GHG emissions in these sectors;</p>	<p><del>Emphasises the importance of recognising the significant impact of agriculture and especially animal production on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and land use; stresses the need to enhance natural carbon sinks and reduce agricultural emissions of carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide, in particular in the feed and livestock sectors; calls for regulatory measures and targets to ensure progressive reductions in all GHG emissions in these sectors;</del></p> <p><b><i>Emphasises that EU agriculture is the only major system in the world that reduced significantly greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions;</i></b></p> <p><b><i>Recalls that European agriculture and forestry plays a crucial role in addressing climate change adaptation and mitigation, as it has significant potential to reduce the emissions, to sequester carbon and to boost economies in a sustainable manner; that said, when addressing emissions stemming from agriculture, we must also recognise that these result from natural processes;</i></b></p>
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Figure 4: Amendment 8, AMENDMENTS PROPOSED BY COPA AND COGECA THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY AND THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT ON DRAFT REPORT ON A FARM TO FORK STRATEGY FOR A FAIR, HEALTHY AND ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY FOOD SYSTEM, <https://corporateeurope.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/COPA%20document%20F2F%20INI.pdf>

<p><b>Amendment 9</b></p> <p>Paragraph 6.</p> <p>Welcomes the notion of rewarding carbon sequestration in soils; stresses, however, that intensive and industrial agriculture and farming models with negative impacts on biodiversity should not receive climate funding or be incentivised; calls for the proposals to be in line with the environmental objectives and the ‘do no harm’ principle of the Green Deal;</p>	<p>Welcomes the notion of rewarding carbon sequestration in soils; <del>stresses, however, that intensive and industrial agriculture and farming models with negative impacts on biodiversity should not receive climate funding or be incentivised</del>; calls for the proposals to be in line with the environmental objectives and the ‘do no harm’ principle of the Green Deal;</p> <p><b><i>Underlines, as for carbon sequestration, there are still emissions that cannot be avoided and that are part of a natural cycle, this must be taken into account when implementing the legislative instruments on climate; a carbon market place or crediting schemes should be part of the incentivising toolbox to deliver on climate objectives; more ambition with a diminished CAP budget will not deliver if the private sector is not properly involved.</i></b></p>
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Figure 5: Amendment 9, AMENDMENTS PROPOSED BY COPA AND COGECA THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT’S COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY AND THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT ON DRAFT REPORT ON A FARM TO FORK STRATEGY FOR A FAIR, HEALTHY AND ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY FOOD SYSTEM, <https://corporateeurope.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/COPA%20document%20F2F%20INI.pdf>



<p><b>Amendment 7</b></p> <p><b><i>Building the food chain that works for consumers, producers, climate and the environment</i></b></p> <p>Paragraph 3.</p> <p>Welcomes the decision to revise the directive on the sustainable use of pesticides and the reduction targets for pesticides, fertilisers, and antibiotics; emphasises the importance of pursuing these targets through holistic and circular approaches, such as agroecological practices; insists that each Member State should establish robust quantitative reduction targets, accompanied by well-defined support measures ensuring accountability at all levels to help reach these targets; reiterates its call for the translation into legislation of the above targets and objectives and calls on the Commission to clarify how it will deal with individual Member States' contributions to Union-wide targets and to clarify the baselines for these targets;</p>	<p>Welcomes the decision to revise the directive on the sustainable use of pesticides and the reduction targets for pesticides, fertilisers, and antibiotics; emphasises the importance of pursuing these targets through holistic and circular approaches, such as agroecological practices; insists that each Member State should establish robust quantitative reduction targets, accompanied by well-defined support measures ensuring accountability at all levels to help reach these targets <b><i>as well as support for implementation at farm level and further research and development for innovative farming solutions;</i></b> <del>reiterates its call for the translation into legislation of the above targets and objectives</del> <b><i>; acknowledges that these targets could have significant negative impact on the sustainability of the sector, farmers income and food security and should therefore be subject to an impact assessment prior to setting any targeted reduction;</i></b> and calls on the Commission to clarify how it will deal with individual Member States' contributions to Union-wide targets and to clarify the baselines for these targets;</p> <p><b><i>Calls the Commission to ensure that these targets are EU targets to which all Member States must contribute through action at national level; in this context, successes already achieved, as well as Member States' different starting points, circumstances and conditions shall be taken into account, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity;</i></b></p>
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*Figuur 6: Amendment 7, AMENDMENTS PROPOSED BY COPA AND COGECA THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY AND THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT ON DRAFT REPORT ON A FARM TO FORK STRATEGY FOR A FAIR, HEALTHY AND ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY FOOD SYSTEM, <https://corporateeurope.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/COPA%20document%20F2F%20INI.pdf>*

## **4.2 The impact studies**

As stated before, the financing and use of impact studies often play a very important role in the agricultural lobby. These studies often form the base of their lobby strategy, as was the case with the strategy of the agricultural lobby to influence the vote in the European Parliament on its own-initiative report. Studies on the impact of the 'farm to fork' were conducted by the USDA (the United States Department of Agriculture), the Joint Research Centre of the EU (JRC), Kiel University, and Wageningen University. The studies conducted by Kiel University and Wageningen University were funded by actors within the agricultural lobby. The funding of these studies does not necessarily have to influence the reliability of the findings, I simply state this as it is a part of the strategy of the Agricultural lobby.

In the week leading up to the vote, doubts about Farm to Fork were raised by the research from the Joint Research Centre of the Commission, which it is said the Commission waited on for six months before discreetly releasing. The Farm to Fork aims would "significantly improve the environment," according to the JRC report, but it also warned of a potential "reduction in EU output and changes in pricing and revenue for selected agricultural goods." The research. According to that analysis, the "Farm to Fork" plan may result in a decrease in food output, albeit much will depend on how aggressively nations execute the next EU farm policy. It also points out that the forecasting model used by the Commission was unable to take everything into account, including the potential environmental benefits of Farm to Fork as well as anticipated changes in consumer expectations and upcoming technological advancements. According to the JRC analysis, the predicted reduction in GHG emissions from European agriculture of between 40 and 60 percent as a result of the implementation of Farm to Fork objectives will result in the export of European agricultural produce,

including its emissions, to third countries.<sup>64</sup> According to the joint declaration of the agricultural lobby, this would definitely lead to higher emissions on the global level.<sup>65</sup>

The Farm to Fork economic impact analyses conducted by the USDA and Wageningen University & Research came to the conclusion that the proposed changes would significantly lower agricultural production, competitiveness, and farmer income in the EU.

Such results did not go unnoticed: since they were released, corporate lobbyists have used them to paint a bleak image of the future if the 'Farm to Fork' strategy were to be fully implemented.<sup>66</sup> In a study funded by the pesticide lobby Croplife, researchers at Wageningen University discovered that combining numerous Farm to Fork goals might reduce food output for some crops by as much as 30%. Copa-Cogeca's communications strategy paper made frequent use of the study.<sup>67</sup>

The Farm to Fork strategy's goals, according to the USDA report, could result in 22 million people experiencing food insecurity. It also came to the conclusion that, if EU adoption were to take place alone, the number of persons experiencing food insecurity by 2030 would rise by an extra 22 million than anticipated without the use of the EC's suggested strategies. The figure would increase to 103 million in the medium case and 185 million in the worldwide adoption scenario.<sup>68</sup>

The agricultural lobby said that the findings of the Kiel University research, which it had sponsored, were "in direct conflict with the open strategic autonomy championed by

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<sup>64</sup> Barreiro-Hurle, J, M Bogonos and M Himics. "Modelling environmental and climatic ambition in the agricultural sector with the CAPRI model : exploring the potential effects of selected farm to fork and biodiversity strategies targets in the framework of the 2030 climate targets and the post 2020 Common Agricultural Policy, Publications Office." 98160 (2021):

<sup>65</sup> October 12, 2021, [http://www.coceral.com/data/1634134471Joint\\_Declaration\\_-\\_FARM\\_TO\\_FORK\\_-\\_IT\\_IS\\_TIME\\_TO\\_LISTEN\\_TO\\_WHAT\\_THE\\_DATA\\_SAYS\\_\\_211012.pdf](http://www.coceral.com/data/1634134471Joint_Declaration_-_FARM_TO_FORK_-_IT_IS_TIME_TO_LISTEN_TO_WHAT_THE_DATA_SAYS__211012.pdf).

<sup>66</sup> Alice Poiron, "Why Attacks against the EU Farm to Fork Strategy Completely Miss the Point," Slow Food International, February 14, 2022, <https://www.slowfood.com/why-attacks-against-the-eu-farm-to-fork-strategy-completely-miss-the-point/>.

<sup>67</sup> Alice Poiron, "Why Attacks against the EU Farm to Fork Strategy Completely Miss the Point," Slow Food International, February 14, 2022, <https://www.slowfood.com/why-attacks-against-the-eu-farm-to-fork-strategy-completely-miss-the-point/>.

<sup>68</sup> Jayson Beckman et al., "Economic and Food Security Impacts of Agricultural Input Reduction Under the European Union Green Deal's Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies," n.d.

the European Commission during the COVID crisis" and that Europe would end up becoming a net importer of food. According to the analysis, the decline in European farm production indicates a general decline in net exports for the EU. The EU's net export position for cattle and cereals would change to a net import one if all "Farm to Fork" regulations are implemented concurrently. The report claims that while "Farm to Fork" policies directly influence the consumption and production of agricultural goods in non-EU nations, they also have an impact on the transformation of ecosystem services and the well-being of those nations' economies. The lobby claims that the Strategy is therefore ineffective in combating climate change. They draw attention to a potential 54.3 million t CO<sub>2</sub> leakage impact. This analysis estimates that the 'Farm to Fork' Strategy will increase GHG emissions in the agriculture sector of non-EU nations by 54.3 million tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>.<sup>69</sup>

The main argument of the agricultural lobby based on these studies was that the 'Farm to Fork' policy would lead to food insecurity, CO<sub>2</sub> leakage to other countries, higher food prices, reduced food output and a less competitive position for the EU within the global economy. These points were often repeated by the different actors within the agricultural lobby due to a collaborative strategy.

The "Farm to Fork" strategy's proponents countered that these studies were lacking because they only looked at the effects the strategy may have on food production, neglecting changes in consumer behavior that would follow from the strategy's other goals. It was Argued by MEP Tilly Metz (the Greens) that: "We cannot take seriously a study commissioned by the agrochemical lobby, and the same applies to a study realized by a government known for its obsession with agricultural productivity." This last part was related to the study conducted by the USDA. It was argued by members of Parliament in favor of the 'Farm to Fork' strategy that the US government had its own interest in opposing the strategy. She further stated that in order to maintain our long-term food sovereignty, we must swiftly alter our current food system to one that is more equitable and sustainable. Agroecological farming can feed Europe a nutritious food while combating climate change, eliminating pesticides, and maintaining biodiversity,

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<sup>69</sup> Christian Henning and Peter Witzke, "PDF," September 9, 2021.



according to a contrasting image portrayed by the French Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDRI), for instance.<sup>70</sup> Another argument put up by proponents of the 'Farm to Fork' strategy is that all studies have the flaw of neglecting to include the repercussions of inaction. This point was made by Jeroen Candel, a professor at Wageningen University.<sup>71</sup> A new study from the JRC also argues that a paradigm change is necessary for the food system to become sustainable, moving away from a productivist perspective and toward its ultimate goal, which is to provide long-term food security for all EU citizens without the existing hazards to the environment and population. On the long run, industrialized, polluting agriculture will only worsen social and economic disparities and the environment. Other arguments against the studies argue that because food production expenses are so cheap, which is the main issue, farmers currently only earn a very tiny portion of the money. This issue can be resolved if farmers get a larger share of the price.<sup>72</sup>

## Conclusion

The following were key tactics used by the agricultural lobby to sway the Parliament's vote: increased coordination between various agricultural interest groups; collaboration with conservative/right-wing MEPs; attempts to delay the vote; opposition to binding legislation; and presentations and meetings with EU officials. Utilizing impact studies was the most crucial strategy. Based on these studies, the primary claim made by the agricultural lobby was that the "Farm to Fork" policy would increase food insecurity, CO2 leakage to other nations, increase in food prices, a decline in food production, and a decrease the EU's competitiveness in the global economy. Due to a cooperative strategy, these points were frequently reiterated by the various actors within the

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<sup>70</sup> Alice Poiron, "Why Attacks against the EU Farm to Fork Strategy Completely Miss the Point," *Slow Food International*, February 14, 2022, <https://www.slowfood.com/why-attacks-against-the-eu-farm-to-fork-strategy-completely-miss-the-point/>.

<sup>71</sup> Eddy Wax, "MEPs Vote on EU's Green Food Plan Amid Lobbying Blitz," *POLITICO* (POLITICO, October 22, 2021), <https://www.politico.eu/article/meps-vote-eus-green-food-plan-farm-to-fork/>.

<sup>72</sup> <sup>72</sup> Alice Poiron, "Why Attacks against the EU Farm to Fork Strategy Completely Miss the Point," *Slow Food International*, February 14, 2022, <https://www.slowfood.com/why-attacks-against-the-eu-farm-to-fork-strategy-completely-miss-the-point/>.

agricultural lobby. The Parliaments' vote on its own initiative report was successful with a limited amount of influence from the agricultural lobby.<sup>73</sup>

## Conclusion

Today, a diverse range of special interests lobby the EU, making the Belgian capital one of the world's largest lobbying centres. The European Union's democratic framework is aided by lobbying, which has now merged seamlessly into the panorama of Brussels. There are large interest groups that frequently have a considerable impact on both sides of the EU's agricultural policy debate. The process of changing agricultural policy includes the agricultural lobby in a significant way. Its dominant position inside the EU has significantly halted efforts to liberalize the CAP. The agricultural lobby holds a more privileged position among special interest groups as a result of its crucial role in society and the national and international economies. The agriculture lobby has an advantage when trying to influence lawmakers and other decision-makers because of how important agriculture is to consumers, businesses, farmers, and other industry workers as well as to politicians. The agricultural lobby holds significant influence within Brussels and attempted to influence the own-initiative vote of the European Parliament on the 'Farm to Fork' strategy in order to establish less binding future legislation which in their opinion would benefit the agricultural sector. The "Farm to Fork" Strategy, which aims to create a equitable, nutritious, and ecologically sustainable food system, is at the core of the European Green Deal. The agricultural lobby's main strategies to influence the Parliament's vote included increased coordination between different agricultural interest groups, cooperation with conservative and right-wing MEPs, attempts to postpone the vote, opposition to legally binding legislation, and presentations and meetings with EU officials. The most important tactic was to use impact studies. Based on these analyses, the agricultural lobby's main argument was that the "Farm to Fork" strategy would worsen food insecurity, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to other countries, food price increases, a fall in food production, and the EU's competitiveness in the global economy. These issues were constantly reemphasized by the various

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<sup>73</sup> "European Parliament Signs off on EU's Flagship Farm to Fork Plans," The Parliament Magazine, October 20, 2021, <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/news/article/european-parliament-signs-off-on-eus-flagship-farm-to-fork-plans>.

players in the agricultural lobby as a result of a joint strategy. The agriculture lobby turned out to be unsuccessful in influencing the Parliament's vote on its own initiative report. A more creative and ground-breaking "Farm to Fork" plan was supported by the Parliament. The decision may have signaled a political paradigm shift in favor of more ecologically responsible farming.

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