



Initial reactions by key stakeholders to the Farm-to-Fork & EU Biodiversity Strategies



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**Co-hosted by MEPs:
Petros Kokkalis, Simone Schmiedtbauer, Isabel Carvalhais**

Speakers:

- **Alberto Arroyo Schnell**, Senior Policy Manager, IUCN Europe Regional Office
- **Petros Kokkalis**, MEP
- **Luc Bas**, Director European Regional Office, IUCN
- **Carmen Preising**, Deputy Head of Cabinet, Cabinet of European Commissioner on Environment, Oceans and Fisheries
- **Piotr Borkowski**, Executive Director, EUSTAFOR
- **Pekka Pesonen**, Secretary General, Copa-Cogeca
- **Daniel Voces de Onaindi**, Managing Director, Europêche
- **Javier Ojeda**, Interim Secretary General, FEAP
- **Isabel Carvalhais**, MEP
- **Simone Schmiedtbauer**, MEP

Welcome message

MEP Petros Kokkalis

Within his intervention, **MEP Petros Kokkalis** highlighted the importance of the multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approach of both Farm-to-Fork and EU Biodiversity Strategies and of achieving coherence between them. Moreover, **Mr. Kokkalis** declared that the biodiversity aspect needed addressing and that all stakeholders must work together to achieve a better food system.

Opening remarks

Luc Bas, Director European Regional Office, IUCN

Mr. Luc Bas started his intervention by stressing that this event was a key opportunity to have a first discussion with the stakeholders and implementers of both strategies. **Mr. Bas** also congratulated Ms. Carmen Preising and all levels of the European Commission that have brought these strategies to daylight, declaring that this was a first attempt to break the silos. **Mr. Bas** underlined that both strategies were mutually reinforcing each other and that it was crucial to build resilience, particularly in the post-Covid19 era. However, these strategies will only work if the stakeholders directly engage with nature owning the targets, according to **Mr. Bas**. Furthermore, Mr. Bas highlighted that the strategies must be embraced by all, especially by national governments which must show up to the level of ambition of these strategies. Looking at opportunities, **Mr. Bas** emphasized that financing was a key component and thus public finance needed to be unlocked. **Mr. Bas** added that the target of eliminating harmful subsidies was well-reflected. At the same time, **Mr. Bas** explained that, whereas a strong regulatory framework was needed, voluntary commitments were important as well. Concluding his intervention, **Mr. Bas** informed the audience that IUCN could offer a large set of tools to help implementing those strategies and to support the EU to come forward at the global level.

Keynote address

Carmen Preising, Deputy Head of Cabinet, Cabinet of European Commissioner on Environment, Oceans and Fisheries

Ms. Carmen Preising explained that although Commissioner Virginus Sinkevicius was not able to attend the conference, he expressed hope for further collaboration with the EP Intergroup in the future. At the same time, **Ms. Preising** welcomed the set of speakers and emphasized their key role in the implementation of both strategies. In line with this statement, **Ms. Preising** delivered her first key message stressing the importance of inclusiveness. Knowing the field best, and having a great interest in keeping it healthy and productive, the fishers, foresters and farmers should be driving the process according to **Ms. Preising**. Her second key message can be summarized as follows; “the two strategies are not the end of the story but rather the beginning of the dialogue with all stakeholders, NGOs and communities”. Moreover, **Ms. Preising** confirmed that nature-based

solutions were an efficient way to restore the balance between human activities and nature. Addressing successively each sector, **Ms. Preising** started with oceans, fisheries and aquaculture, stating that a crucial instrument of the Biodiversity Strategy will be Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). **Ms. Preising** specified that discussions should not just revolve around the MPAs' percentage levels, but their management should as well become more efficient, while the Member States will have key responsibility to manage and enforce those. Moreover, **Ms. Preising** explained that the responsibility of protection of maritime ecosystems was not only on fishermen, but also on land with reducing pollution, and on all blue economy sectors. On aquaculture, **Ms. Preising** addressed the next Maritime Fisheries Fund currently under negotiations and on the objectives to reduce the use of antibiotics as well as to increase organic aquaculture production, alongside developing algae farming. Secondly, **Ms. Preising** touched upon the role of agriculture, mentioning that organic farming was quickly growing in Europe. Finally, **Ms. Preising** focused on the role of forests as they are key to climate change and water cycle regulation, as well as provide food, materials and medicine. Therefore, **Ms. Preising** confirmed that all forests and their functions must be preserved by improving management and increasing their sustainable use.

Panel discussion moderated by Alberto Arroyo Schnell, Senior Policy Manager, IUCN Europe Regional Office

Piotr Borkowski, Executive Director, EUSTAFOR

Mr. Piotr Borkowski began his intervention by introducing EUSTAFOR (the European State Forest Association) which consists in 36 Members from 25 countries and totalizes respectively 49 and 42 million hectares of land and forest areas managed. Firstly, **Mr. Borkowski** stressed that biodiversity protection was very important for EUSTAFOR, the mission of which is to implement European and national forest plans and to practice sustainable forest management. Indeed, **Mr. Borkowski** specified that 50% of Natura 2000 sites were designated in forest areas. At the same time, **Mr. Borkowski** listed 5 policy recommendations raised by EUSTAFOR on the EU Biodiversity Strategy. A first recommendation was to establish conservation targets in line with what is currently on the ground and supported by solid assessments. Secondly, **Mr. Borkowski** stressed that the restoration commitment required properly defined objectives and clearer definitions of the concepts mentioned. **Mr. Borkowski** added that the new targets needed to be realistic, feasible and fairly distributed among various ecosystem types and land uses. The last recommendation of EUSTAFOR was on strengthening the Sustainable Forest Management as a feasible way forward. Concluding his intervention, **Mr. Borkowski** underlined that the role of forests' management went further than biodiversity protection and could also contribute to economic performances through bioeconomy, promotion of carbon storage and energy substitution.

Pekka Pesonen, Secretary General, Copa-Cogeca

During his intervention, **Mr. Pekka Pesonen** highlighted that the Farm-to-Fork Strategy and the Biodiversity Strategy were highly ambitious. However, **Mr. Pesonen** explained that the implementation's success will depend on the actors on the ground. While **Mr. Pesonen** ensured support to the increased ambitions for climate and biodiversity, he expressed worries about the EU reaching its objectives. **Mr. Pesonen** underlined

that the goals set will have economic and social impacts on rural areas, and it was likely that the EU will outsource its environmental footprint by importing more products. Therefore, **Mr. Pesonen** emphasized that the EU must adopt a holistic approach and consider all three pillars of sustainable development to meet success. Synthesizing his presentation, **Mr. Pesonen** suggested that farmers should be equipped with a toolbox developed hand in hand with science, contributing also to protect high European standards.

Daniel Voces de Onaindi, Managing Director, Europêche

Mr. Daniel Voces de Onaindi addressed the sector of fisheries, explaining that 5 million tonnes of fish are caught every year while respecting hundreds of European rules for a sustainable activity, and it was yielding good results in terms of fish stocks. For **Mr. Voces de Onaindi**, both biodiversity and food security were better served by a sustainable management based on science and impact assessments. However, he denounced a discriminatory treatment as fishers were not considered with the same appreciation than farmers. The panellist detailed that all industries were not treated equally in the strategy. When it comes to Marine Protected Areas, **Mr. Voces de Onaindi** claimed that most of them were paper parks. In addition, **Mr. Voces de Onaindi** outlined that the European Commission was inconsistent by wanting to phase out bottom trawling while promoting offshore wind turbines. Finally, **Mr. Voces de Onaindi** proposed a Sea to Plate Strategy, promoting sustainable EU fishing, that will reduce dependence on imports and ensure food security, while improving the position of fishers in the value chain and marine space.

Javier Ojeda, Interim Secretary General, FEAP

Mr. Javier Ojeda explained that aquaculture was socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable. Indeed, **Mr. Ojeda** detailed that aquaculture could boost local economy, while caring for nature and granting affordable and nutritious food. Moreover, **Mr. Ojeda** highlighted that the aquaculture farmers expected the strategies to have an impact on promoting fair incomes for primary producers. According to **Mr. Ojeda**, aquaculture has three basic needs; firstly, a robust, reliable and clear legal framework for the use of space and licenses. Secondly, there is a need for quality waters; and thirdly a level playing field with imports is required paired with better consumer information. Finalizing his intervention, **Mr. Ojeda** denounced public authorities cherry-picking tendency that prefer working for environmental targets while neglecting setting the ground to sustain the competitiveness of the sector and its growth targets through robust legal guarantees.

Reaction of MEPs:

MEP Isabel Carvalhais

First and foremost, **MEP Isabel Carvalhais** welcomed the comprehensive approach of both strategies and emphasized the need to see all farmers on board. However, **Ms. Carvalhais** highlighted their numerous questionings and notably, three main sources of worries referring to practical solutions. The first issue was the translation of agricultural products into price as a lot of farmers consider that food is too cheap. However, **Ms.**

Carvalhais pointed out that rising food prices could have terrible consequences for a large proportion of citizens. The second source of worry was the transition to more sustainable systems of meat production as Europeans tend to separate their food habits and their environmental thoughts according to the MEP, quoting the results of a recent survey by the European Consumer Organization. The last cause for concern mentioned by **Ms. Carvalhais** was about small farms and their limited ability to apply very strict and costly measures. Finally, **Ms. Carvalhais** assured that she supported the Green Deal and both strategies as they are an ethical and moral responsibility towards future generations, but that she also worried about finding practical answers to concerns on the implementation on the ground. **Ms. Carvalhais** argued that the responsibility of enforcement must be shared with higher levels, who must not only support farmers financially but also create the environmental techniques and promote the tools to work in a more sustainable manner.

MEP Simone Schmiedtbauer

In line with the previous intervention, **MEP Simone Schmiedtbauer** also underlined the multiple concerns of stakeholders since the Farm-to-Fork and the EU Biodiversity Strategies were presented. At the same time, **Ms. Schmiedtbauer** stressed the importance of food security, particularly demonstrated with the COVID-19 pandemic. However, **Ms. Schmiedtbauer** pointed out to the fact that the strategies cut the possibility to use pesticides or to import crops without offering alternatives. Indeed, **Ms. Schmiedtbauer** emphasized that change takes time and that the basis for a sustainable Europe must be regional and seasonal produces, which emit less emissions. According to the MEP, EU citizens must take responsibility when it comes to their food consumption. In addition, **MEP Simone Schmiedtbauer** explained that she expected much more from both strategies as farmers, fishers and foresters are fundamental to the society and deserve better livelihoods.

MEP Petros Kokkalis

MEP Petros Kokkalis recognized that climate change and biodiversity loss must be addressed in a holistic way, based on justice and speed. Furthermore, **Mr. Kokkalis** insisted that public acceptance of the needs and solutions was a key element, as we are witnessing an important paradigm shift and political change. Looking at the points raised by stakeholders, **Mr. Kokkalis** emphasized that the pandemic made everyone realize the value of these professionals that we depend on for our basic survival. Finally, **Mr. Kokkalis** insisted that the EU had an ethical obligation to come forward as a global leader on climate and biodiversity loss crises, as a large actor which could lead the way democratically and scientifically.

Q&As moderated by moderated by Alberto Arroyo Schnell, Senior Policy Manager, IUCN Europe Regional Office

The Q&As session was initiated by the intervention of **Ms. Christine Estreguil**, who addressed her question on the setting of priorities and trade-offs in case of conflicting sectors, to all speakers. **Ms. Carmen Preising**

responded that the whole process of the Green Deal was about conflicting interests and the challenge of finding balances, highlighting that the advantage of the two strategies was to break down the silos and to unite different interests. **Ms. Preisig** also reminded the audience that the implementation of the binding targets will be accompanied by impact assessments. **Mr. Piotr Borkowski** intervened to unfold the forestry's position on the policy instruments, which need to be robust and comprehensive to solve conflicting demands. Commenting on the discussion, **Mr. Luc Bas** emphasized that the planetary emergency called for high ambitions; on food security, **Mr. Bas** also claimed that the EU needed to intervene on food overproduction caused by low prices, overconsumption, and waste, while being vigilant about unfair competition from imports. **Mr. Pekka Pesonen** took the floor to react on overproduction and to report the inconsistent demands to the agricultural sector that came from the EU during the last decades. In addition, **Mr. Pesonen** insisted that we must differentiate production in terms of volumes and in terms of value as there are clear different markets. Concluding the Q&As session, **Mr. Pesonen** highlighted that sustainable changes do not happen on their own and necessitated management

Closing remarks

MEP Simone Schmiedtbauer

Within her closing remarks, **MEP Simone Schmiedtbauer** insisted that the discussion must continue, as it has served to underline the importance of multi-stakeholder dialogue and the need to address the global perspective. The **MEP** also outlined that the Green Deal's objectives will only be achieved if the primary sectors are on board. However, **Ms. Schmiedtbauer** acknowledged that many questions remained open. Summing up the discussions, **Ms. Schmiedtbauer** underlined that primary producers must be enabled to keep up with the extremely high expectations, moreover provided with the necessary tools and special incentives, adding that the EU must be ambitious, but at the same time also realistic.