

CELCAA Proposal for Principles for the Framework Legislation on Sustainable Food Systems

CELCAA is the European Liaison Committee for Agricultural and Agri-Food Trade and, as such, represents at European level the most essential food sectors and their trading operations with commodities such as meat and livestock, dairy, cereals, grain, and oilseed trade, eggs, egg whites, and egg yolks, wine and aromatized wine products, hops, tea, and herbal infusions, tobacco, and the craft butcher sector. We represent more than 25.000 agri-food producers and traders in Europe.

Agri-food trade is an essential pillar of the European food and farming system. EU agri-food traders increasingly perceive a disconnect from the sectors contribution to a sustainable and resilient food system in current EU policies under the Green Deal initiative and the Farm2Fork Strategy. As agri-food trade will play an increasingly important role in mitigating effects of climate change-caused crop migration and changing production conditions, it will be essential to consider the following principles for creating a truly resilient Framework Legislation on Sustainable Food Systems:

1. Sustainable food systems are interconnected, interdependent and operate in a complex international environment beyond the EU Single Market

EU agri-food traders are operating in a highly globalized environment with a complexity of supply chain partners and origins. In that regard, agri-food trade contributes to the most efficient use of European and global resources. The network of agri-food trading is therefore one of constant optimization. The global Covid pandemic as well as the conflict in Ukraine have provided evidence for the strong global interconnectedness and interdependence of the food chain and the vulnerability of food supply and production when it is disrupted. Therefore, an upcoming framework legislation on sustainable food systems considers the global complexity and must build on multilateral cooperation, trade facilitation, sustainability equivalence and harmonization of global food system standards.

2. Sustainable food systems acknowledge food and nutrition security as essential elements to its resilience.

A debate about sustainable food systems must also include the debate about food and nutrition security and operate in coordination with the European Food Security and Crisis Mechanism. If food systems cannot secure equal access to food and nutrition for all, they are not operating in a sustainable manner. The vital role and contribution of agri-food trade in this context is moving commodities from surplus areas to deficit areas and from periods of excess to periods of deficits over the course of the season. As the Framework Legislation on Sustainable Food Systems is targeting this middle part of the food chain, this will be substantial to be integrated into the guiding principles.

3. Sustainable food production and trading systems are inclusive.

FAO underlines the importance not only of food security but also of nutrition security and the essential need to ensure access to a diversity of food products, to which agri-food trade contributes essentially. Sustainable food systems and its policies therefore should include all agri-food products and commodities and focusing on enhancing access to a diverse range of food products for all in a global context e.g. by redistribution of excess supplies. Traders in this context ensure that farmers will be able to sell their goods beyond the local markets and have access to a wider array of customers.

4. Sustainable food systems are incentivizing innovation in the field of agri-food trade.

Agri-food trade may easily be overlooked when it comes to innovative approaches to increase sustainable operations in the middle part of the chain. Therefore, this legislative framework can only be successful if it truly incentivizes innovation for all parts of the food chain.



5. Sustainable food systems are accelerating the advantage of circularity.

Agri-food value chains aim for the highest level of efficiency. Advancements in the field of circular agriculture will be needed to further leverage circularity and its benefits for all food systems actors. Agri-food trade is a substantial link to enhance circularity and as such related policies must also focus on an enabling environment for agri-food traders.

6. Sustainable food systems take into account the need for “sustainable intensification”

With the need to increase food production in the upcoming years, sustainable food systems need not only limitations to unsustainable practices, but proactive policy tools to enable increased food production in a sustainable manner, both in Europe and beyond.
