

Carta di Milano

The European Committee of the Regions

Resolution on sustainable food

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EUROPEAN UNION



Committee of the Regions

RESOL-VI/004

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RESOLUTION

on

Sustainable food

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS,

1. welcomes the fact that the Expo 2015 on "Feeding the planet. Energy for Life" coincides with the European Year of Development, and the target implementation date of the eight Millennium Development Goals on eradicating poverty and hunger and ensuring environmental sustainability;
2. highlights the role of the European Union as a major global player in addressing the challenges of food and nutrition security and sustainability, and encourages it to invest in science and innovation as key factors for ensuring that all have access to healthy, nutritious and sustainably produced food; points out that the concept of a shared common agricultural policy designed to secure access to affordable food resources for all EU citizens and an adequate standard of living for farmers dates back as far as the Treaty of Rome; points out that food security, which the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognises as a fundamental human right, is a prerequisite for poverty reduction; draws attention to the 122.6 million people (24.5% of the population) living below the poverty line in the European Union and to the 9.6% of the population living in conditions of severe material deprivation; reiterates that it is important for the European Union to secure access to sufficient healthy, suitable and nutritious food for its citizens, especially the most deprived;
3. highlights that the EU should maintain its high standards in terms of food safety and food security as qualities which help to distinguish EU products globally; in this context, recalls its demand not to lower under any circumstances the level of legal norms in force in the EU Member States on food safety and animal welfare in bilateral trade agreements and its belief that, on the contrary, we must endeavour to further enhance this level;
4. notes that the world is currently facing a diverse and significant set of challenges: continued population growth, middle class growth and growth in spending capacity, triggering changes in dietary demands (variety, primary products and high-quality products) combined with threats to global agricultural production capacity as a result of climate change;
5. welcomes the fact that sustainable development has become the sine qua non of any socio-economic growth policy and calls for more political commitment at all levels of governance involving resources in all sectors;
6. notes that food democracy is a bottom-up process that has to start at local level, with regions and cities, so that policies are adopted that contribute to food security and sustainability, and calls on local and regional authorities to recognise the right to a healthy and sustainable diet in their area;
7. highlights the need to reinforce the links between different sectors related to food such as energy, forestry, marine resources, water, waste, agriculture, climate change, science and research and land use aspects, as all of them play a crucial part in delivering green economy;
8. in this context calls for agriculture and the food supply chain to be more sparing in their use of water and fossil fuels, use less fertiliser and phytosanitary products, be more diversified and

smarter in making the most of synergies between arable farming, livestock farming, organic waste management, residue streams and use various sources of energy;

9. notes that farming is very important for the development of balanced and more cohesive territorial areas, especially rural areas, as it provides employment for almost 30 million people; notes that rural areas account for 90% of the Union's territory and are home to 60% of its citizens but are often less developed economically than urban territories; highlights that in order to foster competitiveness, increase resilience and create new jobs, rural areas should focus on diversified economic and environmental aspects of rural development and not exclusively on agriculture;
10. recalls the objectives for the future set out by the Common Agriculture Policy in the areas of sustainable management of natural resources, food security, agricultural activity across Europe, balanced regional development, the competitiveness of European farming, support for young farmers and the continuous simplification of the CAP; reiterates its critical position on the insufficient measures introducing greater competition for small and medium farms; regrets that the CAP continues to favour larger productions to the detriment of small and medium farms;
11. considers that rural areas are among the most vulnerable areas affected by climate change; therefore calls for the inclusion of climate mitigation and adaptation measures to territorial planning, management and budgetary instruments so that participatory mechanisms and farming practices can be used to facilitate sustainable development;
12. in view of current lifestyle trends present in urban communities, proposes to promote the benefits of living in rural areas. Initiatives forging close links between farmers and food consumers can significantly contribute to the development of peri-urban areas and another kind of rural-urban relations including territorial partnerships in functional areas;
13. underlines, moreover, the importance of a holistic repopulation project for abandoned and depopulated rural areas (remote or mountain regions, etc.) that ensures area-wide recovery and makes the most of local micro-farming, thus protecting biodiversity;
14. calls for short supply chains for agricultural products as they help to develop sustainable production and responsible consumption. They meet a growing demand from consumers for authentic, seasonal, locally and community-produced products. This is also a socially conscious model of consumption that is respectful of the environment, cuts down on packaging and food waste, limits CO₂ emissions and supports sustainable production practices;
15. believes that the creation of a European logo to identify these products is long overdue and looks forward to an operational proposal;
16. notes that local food production – especially agri-food production covered by PDO and PGI quality certification, whose standards of excellence are defined by strict production specifications – is not only an essential objective that creates new jobs locally and new skills but

can also contribute to the economic and social development of our regions, preventing depopulation flows or excessive urban demographic pressure;

17. emphasises that disadvantaged areas – especially mountain regions, whose products are valued for their quality – have to contend with additional costs that make food production more difficult and onerous;
18. calls for non-GMO food to form a significant part of a sustainable diet; recalls that many regional and local authorities have opposed genetically modified (GM) crops in their territories, declaring themselves to be "GM-free areas", and formed networks;
19. recommends that the various stakeholders in sustainable production and responsible consumption, such as universities, schools and hospitals, should be informed of the possibilities of including sustainability criteria in their invitations to tender (for example, locally produced and organic products) so that they can make use of them in actual practice;
20. calls, therefore, for the facilitation and promotion of permanent cooperation and coordination channels linking the different legislative levels of the European Union, Member States and European regions with a view to the speedy adoption of revised rules on product traceability and labelling that provide precise indications to enable consumers to decide on their informed use, including through the recognition of GM-free supply chains;
21. recommends improving the aid scheme for the distribution of fruit and vegetables and milk in schools; given the degree of processing of products eligible for aid under this scheme and given the importance of the principle of establishing a healthy diet at an early age, suggests that financial support under the aid scheme should be limited to products which contain only small quantities of sweetening agents or salt and no harmful additives and flavour enhancers;
22. reiterates its request to the European Commission to promote reduction of food waste¹ and to re-table a proposal for a food waste reduction objective of at least 30% by 2025, based on its withdrawn proposal from 2014 amending the Waste Framework Directive to promote a circular economy and, to this end, to consider extending the positive governance model of the Covenant of Mayors; in this context, supports the European Parliament's call for 2016 to be dedicated to the European Year against Food Waste;
23. notes that more than a third of tourist spending is devoted to food; underlines that food tourism has the potential to deliver job sustainability across the year and can lead to the creation of job opportunities; underlines that this can play a key role in local and regional growth and cohesion as well as the preservation of cultural heritage;
24. calls for an awareness raising campaign for citizens on the value of genetic resources and the importance of conservation, research and sustainable use where these are concerned as well as training programmes which are tailored to market demands for engineers and farmers, along

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CdR 140/2011 fin, <http://portal.cor.europa.eu/europe2020/MonitoringFlagships/Pages/A-Resource-Efficient-Europe.aspx>

with coordination, monitoring and assessment measures to safeguard biodiversity in the agricultural sector;

25. highlights the role that local and regional authorities play in adapting educational and professional skills of young people to the job market in rural areas; is committed to supporting and communicating regional and local best practices of innovative processes in food production, distribution and consumption methods; calls for increased awareness and societal acceptance by providing dietary education and encouraging good habits for health and wellbeing, using food and other resources more efficiently;
26. reiterates its support for effective monitoring of compliance with and the simplification of the rules of food and feed law and other rules on animal health and welfare, plant health, plant reproductive material and plant protection products that serve to build a stable market which is based on public confidence in these products; reiterates that EU delegated acts must be avoided in this area so as to enable regulatory costs to be fully explored and evaluated by the various tiers of government, in line with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality;
27. recalls the contribution of the Common Fisheries Policy to EU sustainable food production; calls for better promotion of the objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy internationally. To this end, the Union should strive to improve the performance of regional and international organisations in conservation and management of international fish stocks by promoting decision-making based on science and improved compliance, increased transparency and stakeholder participation, especially fishermen, and by combating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing activities;
28. emphasises the need to work closely with the fishing industry via public-private partnerships as well as to connect businesses and research to ensure that the fishing industry is not only sustainable, but also competitive and innovative;
29. stresses that domestic aquaculture production must be treated as a strategic sector (on a par with other primary sector production areas) when it comes to responding to future challenges in the areas of food resources, job creation, natural resources and regional development, bearing in mind that 70% of seafood consumed in the European Union is imported;
30. takes the view that the EU should lead the way in the development of ecological and sustainable fish farming methods, pioneering the "blue revolution" by applying technology and innovation to fish production, feeding, hatching and harvesting within the EU.

Brussels, 8 July 2015

The President
of the European Committee of the Regions

Markku Markkula
