



Blueprint for an EU Action Plan for Plant-Based Foods

Proposed measures to unlock the full potential of the plant-based sector





Anima International	Federación de Consumidores y Usuarios CECU	Profundo
Animal Advocacy & Food Transition	Federacja Konsumentów - FK	Project 1882
Animal Law Italia	Fern	ProVeg Belgium
Aquatic Life Institute	Foodrise	ProVeg International
Arbeiterkammer	Forum Ökologie & Papier	Safe Food Federation
Association of alternative food products producers	GAIA	Spoločnosť ochrany spotrebiteľov (S.O.S.)
AUGALYN	Gemeente Plant Vooruit	Sveriges Konsumenter
AVF - Association Végétarienne de France	Green REV Institute	Swissveg
BEUC	Green Transition Denmark	Test Achats/Test Aankoop
BirdLife Europe and Asia	Grønn Framtid	The European Institute for Animal Law & Policy
Caring Farmers	Hellenic Vegetarian Association - HellasVeg	Policy
Changing Markets Foundation	Humane World for Animals	The Vegetarian Society
Compassion in World Farming	Impact Economy Foundation	TransiTerra
Consumentenbond	KEPKA	True Animal Protein Price Coalition (TAPPC Coalition)
DECO	LAV Lega Anti Vivisezione	True Price
Deutscher Tierschutzbund	Loomus	Umanotera
Dierencoalitie	Madre Brava	Unión Vegetariana Española
Earth Thrive	Mighty Earth	Vegan Society Luxembourg
EKPZO	Nederlandse Vegetarierbond	Vegan Society of Ireland
Environmental Coalition on Standards (ECOS)	NÉGYOSZ (Hungarian Association of Plant-Based Food Producers and Distributors)	Vegetarian Society of Denmark
Essere Animali	ONAV (Observatoire National des Alimentations Végétales)	Verbraucherzentrale Bundesverband (VZBV)
Eurogroup for Animals	Physicians Association for Nutrition DACH	Zveza Potrošnikov Slovenije
European Environmental Bureau	Polish Plant-Based Food Producers Association	
European Vegetarian Union		
Farm Adaptation Network		

In January 2025, [130+ organisations called](#) on the European Commission to propose an Action Plan for Plant-Based Foods by 2026, as recommended by the Strategic Dialogue.

Such a plan should take a comprehensive food system approach, addressing the entire agri-food value chain, from production and processing, to retail, public procurement and consumer availability and affordability.

Despite numerous success stories and clear potential for innovation in plant-based products and production, the sector remains underdeveloped, with immature plant-based value chains. Unlocking its full potential and harvesting all the benefits will require coordinated efforts to boost production and consumption.

An Action Plan should therefore include measures that [drive stable, long-term demand](#) for plant-based foods while ensuring that [farmers can benefit](#) from emerging market opportunities. It should [stimulate regional supply](#) and assist in [building sectoral bridges](#) to mature and strengthen the plant-based value chains. It should also aim to create a [level playing field](#) between agricultural products, while giving priority support to farmers particularly younger producers eager to invest in plant-based and

organic production.

This document lays out key opportunities and pathways for the EU to strengthen the plant-based foods value chain, measures that can assist in building a healthier, more sustainable, fair, competitive, self-sufficient and resilient food system for all.

In some cases, policy changes alone can drive the needed food system transformation. Some measures, however, will require additional funding. This means that an EU Action Plan for Plant-Based Foods should be accompanied by [a comprehensive and robust funding plan](#) to ensure its implementation.

Given the strategic role that plant-based foods play in strengthening the EU's food security, funding the EU Action Plan should be [prioritised as part of the EU Compass and the future MFF](#). We also call on the Commission and Member States to mobilise funding from [within and outside](#) the framework of existing regulatory budgets. Nevertheless, public funding alone will not be sufficient to unlock the full potential of the plant-based sector, so private investment should be encouraged and facilitated, notably through programmes such as InvestEU.



Overall, increasing the consumption and production of plant-based foods is part of the solution to many challenges the EU agri-food sector faces, including health, biodiversity, climate and food security - in line with the EU's One Health approach. At the same time, innovating and investing in plant-based foods could position the EU as a global leader in competitive, resilient, and sustainable agri-food systems and provide opportunities for European farmers, businesses and SMEs.



Plant-based foods covered by this plan would range from fresh fruits, vegetables, whole-grains, legumes, nuts, mushrooms, tofu to tempeh, as well as plant-based alternatives to animal-sourced products that are nutrient-rich and compatible with WHO guidelines on salt, sugar and fat content.



1. Creating an attractive business case for farmers

Growing consumer demand for plant-based foods holds a lot of economic potential for EU farmers, both within and outside EU markets. Diversification of production is a key tool to achieve resilient farms, ecosystems and business models, offering farmers new possibilities and stability in times of climate, environmental and geopolitical uncertainty. Developing plant-based food production could be particularly appealing to young farmers and help them seize emerging opportunities. This could contribute to tackling the

generational renewal issue that the EU farming community, and the EU as a whole, is facing.

Despite their strategic importance, the production of plant-based foods and related value chains remains, to a large extent, underdeveloped across the EU and challenged by a massive dependency on imported protein crops. Increased support for European production, with a focus on organic and agroecological agricultural practices, is urgently needed. Production currently

faces high barriers to entry, market uncertainty, and a lack of tailored advice and technical support.

In this context, the EU Action Plan for Plant-Based Foods should help farmers embrace new market opportunities related to plant-based food crops for direct human consumption by supporting them in overcoming the economic, practical and structural barriers to shifting or diversifying production, including through investment help and tailored assistance.

To support EU farmers, the EU and Member States should:

- Offer **targeted support mechanisms** for farmers within the Common Agricultural Policy by including plant-based food crops and products in national CAP strategic plans:
 - Set up **sectoral programmes** to strengthen plant-based supply chains, unlock the market potential and boost farmer resilience, including proactive support for the development of Producer Organisations.
 - **Reward environmental results**, for example around climate, water resilience and soil health. This could benefit farmers who produce certain protein crops that deliver environmental benefits and/or use sustainable agricultural practices like green cover or crop rotation, or maintain biodiversity-rich grasslands. Rewards can run through existing eco-schemes and environmental/climate management commitments under rural development programmes. Support should prioritise result-based approaches, not crop-based, ensuring that rewards are granted based on measurable outcomes.
- **Facilitate farmers' access to finance** through a dedicated EU Just Transition funding mechanism for agriculture, complemented by de-risked private financing and expanded investments from the European Investment Bank (EIB) in crop diversification, plant-based production and the adoption of organic and agroecological agricultural practices.
- **Ensure that farm advisory services offer solid and tailored advice** and support to farmers engaging in plant production or diversifying their production to include plant-based food crops, with a focus on organic and agroecological agricultural practices.
- **Encourage and support curriculum updates** for agricultural schools with an emphasis on legumes and a diverse range of plant-based food crops.
- **Create possibilities and programmes for farmers** to be able to get involved in and benefit from parts of the value chain other than primary production, such as **processing, distribution and direct sales**, including for non-food products derived from plant waste streams and by-products.
- Support **farmer-led cooperatives** around primary production, the processing of plant-based ingredients or other parts of the value chain. Partnerships between universities, agricultural research and development centres, local and regional authorities, and farming unions should be encouraged to promote and provide technical guidance for cultivators on undertaking transitions to plant-based production systems.
- Foster and support the creation of **long-term supply partnerships** between food companies and farmers for plant-based food products, securing stable demand for farmers and therefore de-risking diversification. Create guidance for local authorities on developing **online directories** of local farmers as well as micro- and SME food processors producing plant-based foods to facilitate direct sales to local consumers, the hospitality sector and schools.



2. Boost demand and make plant-based foods accessible and affordable for all

For farmers to diversify their production and grow more fruits, vegetables and legumes, they must have confidence in their market viability and in securing fair prices. Therefore, an EU Action Plan for Plant-Based Foods should boost the demand for healthier, more sustainable, regionally produced and preferably organic foods, thereby **creating stable and rewarding market conditions for producers** and ensuring long-term food security for the EU as a whole.

The plan should outline how the EU and Member States' policies and funding

can assist in making healthy, sustainable, more plant-based foods the easy and most affordable choice for consumers, as well as support the industry in penetrating markets. Although health guidelines across EU Member States recommend increased use of vegetables and pulses as the main element in meals, the uptake of these recommendations is still sparse. To support this transition towards healthier, more sustainable diets, the following measures should be implemented:

As a vehicle for retailers and food businesses to commit to making healthy and sustainable foods more available and affordable, the voluntary industry [EU Code of Conduct on Responsible Food Business and Marketing Practices](#) has failed in its objectives to effectively improve food environments. Most commitments merely comply with legal requirements, and around a third of the signatories do not submit commitments. The European Commission should evaluate whether further action is needed if the results do not meet the expected ambition and come forward with ambitious and binding rules.

The European Commission should:

- [Update public procurement](#) rules to align with recommendations for healthy and sustainable diets and promote the consumption of plant-based and organic foods in public settings through the introduction of minimum mandatory sustainability requirements.
- [Review](#) the [EU School Scheme](#) by widening its scope to include fortified, unsweetened plant-based milk alternatives, to increase inclusivity by recognising the needs of all children while helping them form healthier eating habits.
- Outline how Member States can [make healthy food more accessible and affordable](#) to consumers by lowering VAT on fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole-grains, pulses and nuts, plant-based alternatives, etc. This would also create clear long-term demand signals to farmers to produce these products.
- Encourage Member States to update their [Food-Based Dietary Guidelines](#) to integrate both health and sustainability aspects, promote a shift to eating more plant-based foods, and stimulate consumer uptake. These guidelines should serve as a basis for public procurers of sustainable and healthy meals.
- [Improve consumer information](#) through a harmonised and independently developed EU-wide colour-coded mandatory and comparable food labelling providing information about the nutritional value of food products to allow consumers to choose healthier products while incentivising food companies to improve their products. We support upcoming legislation that will prevent and penalise false green claims.

The European Commission and Member States should:

- Ensure that agri-food [promotion policies](#) support healthy eating guidelines, sustainability objectives and shorter value chains, and that public campaigns promote healthy plant-based foods, e.g. legumes, to increase consumer awareness and understanding of these foods.
- Prioritise, fund and implement [training courses and education](#) for kitchen professionals, focusing on plant-based nutrition and cooking, with the aim to improve knowledge and skills in providing healthy, balanced and diversified plant-based offerings.
- Engage with schools, healthcare providers, and community organisations to [integrate plant-based nutrition education](#) into curricula and public health initiatives, fostering an understanding of the benefits of plant-based diets from an early age.
- Develop policies and actions that [foster and support market penetration of plant-based products and foods](#), e.g. by supporting initiatives to increase the uptake of plant-based foods by consumers, creation of networks, campaigns and export initiatives.
- Develop policies and incentives to promote greater availability and affordability of plant-based foods in [private commercial catering facilities](#), such as office canteens and food courts.
- Develop policies and incentives that [encourage large food manufacturers and sellers to reformulate their food assortments to align with recommendations for healthy and sustainable diets](#). A first focus could be categories of particularly unhealthy foods, such as ready-made meals, which should contain more fruits, vegetables, legumes and pulses.

3. Investing in the long-term success of all value chain actors

Europe has the potential to turn into a world leader in plant-based foods. To achieve this, beyond creating enabling production and demand policies, the EU should invest in R&D, build sectoral bridges, facilitate private ventures, and invest in the plant-based value chain.

These investments offer a major opportunity to boost the competitiveness of the agri-food sector and enhance the EU's self-sufficiency, while reducing externality costs of the current food system, particularly those affecting public health, the environment, and animal welfare.

Investing to be a world leader in Innovation, Research and Development

Focused investments in plant-based R&D are necessary to create new opportunities and concrete solutions for EU farmers and the agri-food value chain. A strong focus on plant-based research and innovation will not only fill relevant knowledge gaps but also contribute to the creation of jobs. Therefore, the EU should invest in:

- Innovation and knowledge sharing around low-input and profitable plant-based food crop farming, building on farmers' experience and agroecological principles where possible, e.g. crop rotations, parallel cropping, no till and organic and regenerative farming.
- Further R&D to improve the climate resiliency of plant crops, e.g. pulses, legumes, fruit and vegetables, including the use and propagation of traditional seed varieties adapted to extreme weather conditions (example: the Horizon-funded [BELIS](#) project).
- Research, Innovation and Development towards upcoming non-traditional plant-based food crops, including mushrooms, seaweed, algae, etc.
- Innovation around the valorisation and the use of plant waste streams. For example, into high-value food ingredients or non-food biobased products.
- R&D into promising food production and processing technologies that could help to diversify our EU food production, generate economic prosperity and offer more high-quality food choices to consumers.
- Further research on the effectiveness of behavioural interventions and nudging strategies around cultural, psychological, and economic barriers to dietary shifts, implemented in real-world settings such as supermarkets, restaurants and canteens.
- More research on health, nutrition, and cost/benefit analysis of dietary choices, both direct costs for consumers and externalised costs for society.

Investing in a stronger Plant-Based Value Chain and Ecosystem

Next to creating a business case for farmers and boosting demand, the EU should take action to strengthen the entire plant-based value chain and its ecosystem. To this end, the EU should:

- Analyse market barriers for each step in the value chain of commonly grown and new plant-based crops, while encouraging cross-sectoral collaboration via partnerships between relevant operators, e.g. clusters, consortia and roundtables.
- Stimulate public-private investment in early-stage plant-based food technologies, which are developed by competitive start-ups, paving the way to a sustainable food system and a competitive Europe on a global scale. Any public support for R&D should ensure a return in investment for society, e.g. by ensuring market entrance and through clauses on affordability and licensing requirements.
- Create an EU innovation cluster for plant-based foods, bringing together public, industry, research, and civil society stakeholders to accelerate innovation and facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing across Member States.
- Co-finance processing and manufacturing facilities and programmes to develop healthy - and increase the variety of - plant-based foods, and assisting food producers in upscaling and delivering the right quality (taste, texture, health and sustainability profile) and quantity to the market.
- Implement financial market mechanisms that mobilise investor capital specifically for research, development, and market entry of innovative plant-based foods, as well as for scaling up the availability of existing products.

Mobilising funding to deliver on the Action Plan

An Action Plan for Plant-Based Foods sets out the path for the plant-based sector to develop and for consumers to get easier access to affordable plant-based food products. Mobilising sufficient funding will be essential to realise the objectives of this plan, as many of the proposed measures, whether at the EU or Member State level, will require targeted financial support.

Several measures fall under the scope and purpose of existing and hopefully future funding schemes, for example via Horizon Cluster 6 (FP10), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the Just Transition Fund, the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP), InvestEU, the Bioeconomy Strategy, and reArm Europe or other security and defence-related budgets.

Given the strategic importance of plant-based foods in promoting sustainable food systems and the EU's strategic autonomy, the Action Plan should also be prioritised within the EU Compass and the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF).

Public funding must be complemented by private investment, with retailers, food service providers, and financial institutions playing a key role in investing in and promoting the transition to a more plant-based food system.

In addition, the European Commission should create a dedicated financing mechanism, like an EU Plant-Based Fund, to support both EU-wide and national/regional initiatives.

CONCLUSION

To unlock the full potential of plant-based foods, the EU must take bold and coordinated action. This document outlines concrete policy measures and initiatives that a dedicated Action Plan would contain. It highlights the many opportunities for different stakeholders across the plant-based food value chain while insisting on the need to act on both the supply and demand sides. By committing to this ambitious plan, the EU has a unique opportunity to position itself as a global leader in competitive, resilient and sustainable agri-food systems.



