



Association for European Life Science Universities  
(ICA)

# COMMUNIQUÉ to the EU Commission and other Stakeholders

## European Life Sciences Universities regarding the Strategic Dialogue on the Future of Agriculture in Europe

The agriculture and food systems (agrifood systems) play an essential role in European societies. Currently, European agrifood systems face many significant challenges. Their contributions to and vulnerabilities regarding climate change, biodiversity loss, water, air and soil pollution and degradation, and human and animal health threats call for a considerable shift in agrifood systems. Increasing international political and economic tensions also affect the European agrifood systems and result in new social demands on the agrifood sector, including regional self-sufficiency. A growing rural-urban divide increases tensions, polarization and societal conflicts. Hence, there is a pressing need to transition European agrifood systems towards more sustainable, resilient, competitive, healthy, just and legitimate agrifood production and consumption systems. In short, future agrifood systems must be economically, socially and ecologically balanced.

Against this background, the President of the European Commission launched a [Strategic Dialogue on the Future of European Agriculture](#), focusing on four interrelated issues: the prospects of farmers and rural areas, the preservation of planetary boundaries, the opportunities for technology and innovation and the future of the European food system. The 29 diverse stakeholders produced its [final report](#), “A shared prospect for farming and food in Europe”, in September 2024, with ten guiding policy principles and 14 recommendations. These common findings will inform the new European Commission’s five-year plan.

The strength of the report’s guiding principles and recommendations is to be found in the unanimous agreement among diverse stakeholders, the political call for urgency to act, the emphasis on (bottom-up) cooperation within the sector, a focus on working through and with markets, and a plea for coherency in taking future measures.

**We, the Rectors, Deans and Senior Management of the Association for European Life Science Universities (ICA)<sup>1</sup>** at our [Forum](#), held in Zagreb, Croatia, on 24 and 25 October 2024, discussed and assessed the Strategic Dialogue’s final report on the Future of EU Agriculture, and identified the contribution the European Life Science Universities can make in transitioning towards sustainable agrifood systems in Europe. In doing so, we recognize that:

- university education, research and innovation are vital pillars for the transition to sustainable agriculture and food systems in Europe that operate within planetary boundaries, are socially just, and economically viable;

- future sustainable agrifood systems are local-context dependent and scale interdependent, so that neither 'uniform one-size-fits-all' nor 'only-local specific' policies, measures and models will work;
- a new culture of bottom-up, cooperative, consensual and market-based policies and measures is essential but needs to be embedded within the planetary boundaries as politically operationalized in the Green Deal and its targets for GHG mitigation, biodiversity enhancement and water and soil protection, for which EU leadership remains crucial.

**I, Maria Knutson Wedel, President of ICA, on behalf of our Members pledge to** the European Commission, the local, national and European political leaders, the agrifood system stakeholders, societal NGOs and the general public that:

- We support with our education, research and innovation the Strategic Dialogue recommendations to move towards sustainable agrifood system reform, most notably the reform of the CAP, the need for new diets, an EU transition governance that works closely with the agrifood sector, and the reduction of the GHG and environmental footprint in and of agriculture;
- We resolve to take a leading role in developing and accelerating innovations that drive breakthroughs and enhance competitiveness in sustainable agrifood practices. We will cooperate with agrifood system stakeholders to strengthen the access to and use of innovation for a future competitive and sustainable European agrifood sector through our start-ups, living labs, spin-outs, transdisciplinary research, and student challenges;
- We will contribute to needed system shifts through groundbreaking new knowledge and innovation, by supporting, nurturing and executing excellent basic curiosity driven research.
- We will educate and train - through undergraduate, graduate and continuous education - current and future agrifood system actors and stakeholders so that they are enabled to contribute in a cooperative way to the sustainable future of European agrifood systems;
- We commit to an enhanced role as knowledge brokers, facilitating science-informed joint decisions between all agrifood system stakeholders. Through inclusive dialogues, sharing evidence-based solutions, communicating best practices and future scenarios, and working in advanced living labs, we bridge the gap between new scientific insight and practical application to guide the agrifood sector's sustainability transition.

**Maria Knutson Wedel**

President of ICA

Rector of the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Sweden

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<sup>1</sup> *The Association for European Life Science Universities (ICA) has a membership of more than 50 European universities and faculties from more than 29 European countries, whose primary interests are in the areas of agriculture, forestry, climate change, food production and consumption, the bio-based sector, natural resources, biodiversity, the protection of the environment, and rural development. ICA and its members aim to jointly play an essential role in transitioning to a European and global sustainable bioeconomy and society.*

## ICA Member Institutions

AL Agricultural University of Tirana  
AT University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna  
BE Gembloux Agro-Bio Tech, University of Liege  
BE Ghent University  
BE KU Leuven  
BE UCLouvain  
BE University College PXL  
CH Bern University of Applied Sciences  
CZ Czech University of Life Sciences Prague  
CZ Mendel University in Brno  
DE Geisenheim University  
DE University of Hohenheim  
DK Aarhus University  
EE Estonian University of Life Sciences  
FI University of Eastern Finland  
FI University of Helsinki  
FR AgroParisTech  
FR Bordeaux Sciences Agro  
FR FranceAgro3  
FR French Agricultural, Veterinary and Forestry Institute (AGREENIUM)  
FR Institut Polytechnique UniLaSalle  
FR Institut Agro  
FR University of Reims Champagne Adrenne  
HR Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Faculty of Agriculture  
HR University of Zagreb, Faculty of Agriculture  
HU Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences  
IE University College Dublin  
IS Agricultural University of Iceland  
IT Free University of Bozen - Bolzano  
IT University of Modena and Reggio Emilia  
KZ Kazakh National Agrarian Research University  
LT Vytautas Magnus University Agriculture Academy  
LV Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies  
NL Avans University of Applied Sciences  
NL Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences  
NL Wageningen University and Research Centre  
NO Norwegian University of Life Sciences  
PL University of Agriculture in Krakow  
PL Warsaw University of Life Sciences - SGGW  
PL Wroclaw University of Environmental and Life Sciences  
PT University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro  
RO Iasi University of Life Sciences  
RO University of Life Sciences "King Michael I" from Timișoara  
RO University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Cluj-Napoca  
RO University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine - Bucharest  
SE Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences  
SI University of Ljubljana  
SK Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra  
UA Dmytro Motornyi Tavria State Agrotechnological University  
UA National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine  
UK University of Reading