



A SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEM FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION

SA  EA

Science Advice for Policy by European Academies



How can Europe transition to a sustainable food system in a fair and timely way?

Food lies at the heart of our lives. It is vital for our survival, and links us to our natural and social environment in a unique way. But our food system is unsustainable. How can we ensure future food security without treating people unfairly or leaving them behind?

Food systems have complex social, economic and ecological components. **Radical transformation** is needed to make them sustainable.

The global demand for food will increase in the future. To meet this demand, it is not enough simply to increase productivity in a sustainable way. We also need to **change from linear mass consumption to a more circular economy** – which will mean changing our norms, habits and routines.

The evidence shows that this kind of **behaviour change needs to happen collectively**, not just individually. So we need joined-up governance at local, national and international levels.

Food systems also contribute significantly to **greenhouse gas emissions**. This can be addressed by reducing waste or directing it back into the supply chain.

A mix of different measures will be most effective. The evidence shows that taxation is one of the most effective ways to modify behaviour. Accreditation and labelling schemes can also have an impact. Meanwhile, reform of European agriculture and fisheries policies offer great opportunities to develop resilience and sustainability.

But **there is not enough evidence to know for sure what works in practice**, so the steps we take should be carefully evaluated, and trade-offs anticipated.

About the report

SAPEA provides independent, interdisciplinary, and evidence-based scientific advice to the European Commission as part of the Scientific Advice Mechanism.

The Evidence Review Report on a sustainable food system comprehensively examines the best evidence from the natural and biomedical sciences, as well as social, political and behavioural sciences. It is informed by a detailed systematic review of the evidence.

The report is written by a group of world-leading experts nominated by academies across Europe. It informs the Scientific Opinion of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors.

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About SAPEA

SAPEA brings together outstanding expertise in engineering, humanities, medicine, natural and social sciences from over 100 academies, young academies and learned societies across Europe.

We are part of the European Commission's Scientific Advice Mechanism. Together with the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors, we provide independent advice to European Commissioners to support their decision-making.



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