



European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen
Rue de la Loi 200
1000 Brussels

18th March 2020

Ref: SBE 020/033

Dear Commission President von Der Leyen,
cc. Executive Vice-President Timmermans, Commissioner Wojciechowski, Commissioner Sinkevičius

Subject: Missing actions to avert the collapse of pollinators and biodiversity in the Farm to Fork Strategy

We are writing to you as civil society organisations representing millions of EU citizens calling for action to address the twin biodiversity and climate crises. We are concerned that crucial actions to avert the collapse of biodiversity are not in the Farm to Fork Roadmap, and urge you to address this shortcoming.

In Europe, agriculture is the main cause of species and habitat loss¹, meaning that addressing these declines not only through the Biodiversity Strategy, but also through a coherent approach in the Farm to Fork, is paramount. Large areas of Europe have lost over 75% of insect life in just the last 20 years, while 57% of European farmland birds, and 39% of grassland butterflies have gone since the 1980s-1990s.

A recent global study found that the dramatic loss of biodiversity is reducing yields across the globe, including in Europe. We must therefore get beyond the false dichotomy that measures to restore nature will harm food production, and realise that the viability of food production—and much beyond—in Europe is dependent on functioning ecosystems.

It is now or never to act. The solutions are there, all that is needed is the political will to enact them, which has been lacking in previous decades. The aspirations of your Political Guidelines to curtail biodiversity loss within the next 5 years are therefore crucial, but aspirations alone will not be enough. The Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies are the chance for Europe to translate these aspirations into effective action. However, the Roadmap to the Farm to Fork is almost silent on the details when it comes to addressing biodiversity loss.

For pollinators and biodiversity on land at large, the measures in the Farm to Fork that will make the biggest difference are:

- **A SMART target of at least 10% of space for nature [2] at farm level. Last week, over 3,600 scientists from [3] across Europe endorsed this as a minimum requirement in order for nature to recover on agricultural land [4].**
- **A SMART and bold target for pesticide reduction.**

Further, the Farm to Fork Strategy must drive a CAP reform with rules, targets, incentives and improved pollinator and biodiversity monitoring, that lead to a transformation of farming practice across Europe, as urged by scientists globally[5].

Only by including these measures will the promises of the Farm to Fork—and hence the European Green Deal—on biodiversity be reachable.

We count on you to address this critical issue in the Farm to Fork, and would be happy to meet with you or your staff to discuss how this agenda can be advanced.

Yours sincerely,

Ariel Brunner, Senior Head of Policy, BirdLife Europe

Matt Shardlow, Chief Executive, BugLife

Chris van Swaay, Chair, Butterfly Conservation Europe

Csaba Mezei, General Secretary, CEEweb for Biodiversity

Olga Kikou, Head of EU office, Compassion in World Farming

Jeremy Wates, Secretary General, European Environmental Bureau

Steve Trent, Founder / Executive Director, Environmental Justice Foundation

Gabriel Schwaderer, Executive Director, EuroNatur Foundation

Nicolas Laarman, Director, POLLINIS

Floriana Cimmarusti, Secretary General, SAFE Food Advocacy Europe A.S.B.L.

Judith Hitchman, President, International Committee of URGENCI, the international network of Local and Solidarity -based Partnerships for Agroecology

[1] EEA, 2015 <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/state-of-nature-in-the-eu>

[2] Natural vegetation or landscape features like hedgerows, flower strips, field margins, wetlands (such as ponds), fallow (uncultivated) land.

[3] Pe'er et al., 2020 https://www.idiv.de/en/news/news_single_view/1664.html

[4] With significant co-benefits for climate (rebuilding carbon stocks in the landscape) and water (landscape elements and fallow reduce run-off and act as buffers).

[5] IPBES, 2019 <https://www.ipbes.net/global-assessment-report-biodiversity-ecosystem-services>