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TOWARDS A COMMON FOOD POLICY FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION
A three-year participatory process of Deliberation, Research and Citizen Engagement

Why does the EU need a 'Common Food Policy'?

European citizens may choose the food they put into their shopping baskets, but they have not chosen the food systems that serve up that food. There is currently no EU 'food policy'. Instead, the food we eat and the food systems we enjoy are shaped by a variety of distinct policy frameworks: agriculture, food safety and public health, trade, environmental protection, climate and energy, economic and social cohesion, rural development and international development, employment and education.

These policies are developed largely in isolation from each other. They are formed by policymakers working within their specific policy areas, in dialogue with industry groups, civil society organizations and scientific bodies whose own interests are often bounded by the same political and disciplinary siloes.

Policies at various governance levels are also disconnected from each other. Few attempts have been made to systematically link local-level initiatives affecting food systems (e.g. arising from city-level authorities or local civil society groups) to policies adopted at the national or EU level. Food systems are therefore subject to imperatives that potentially conflict and counter-act each other, while major opportunities are missed to build on local initiatives in order to accelerate collective learning.

Multiple crises and dispersed accountability

The need for new policy responses is made all the more pressing by the multiple crises now afflicting food systems in the EU and around the world, from burgeoning obesity to environmental degradation to pressures on farmer livelihoods. These crises are deeply interconnected and mutually reinforcing: the global decline in insect pollinators - driven in large part by agriculture - now threatens the very basis of agriculture and its future crop yields: some 35% of global cultivated crops depend on pollination. Meanwhile, the livelihoods of many food producers are being pushed to breaking point by climate change and environmental degradation.

Our current political systems and policy frameworks are ill-equipped to address these crises. The policy tools affecting food systems do not respond to a set of agreed priorities. Instead, our food systems are the by-product of political compromises struck in various fora on the basis of various competing interests. The lack of a coherent food policy, cutting across sectors and joining up different levels of governance, means that accountability is hugely dispersed. When poor outcomes duly arise no-one can be held to account. With neither a pilot nor a flight plan, it is possible to ignore how badly food systems have veered off-course.

This is both a problem and a major opportunity. Food is an entry point for joined-up policymaking across multiple sectors and governance levels; sustainable food systems can provide a benchmark for actions in all of those areas. It is also a promising entry point for repairing democratic deficits and reconnecting European citizens with the policy measures put in place by their elected representatives.



A new process to develop a Common Food Policy

IPES-Food is now launching a three-pronged process of deliberation, research and citizen engagement to develop a vision for 'Common Food Policy' in the EU. **Over 2016-2018, IPES-Food will convene a group of scientific, civil society and institutional actors to engage in a series of roundtable meetings or 'policy labs'**. The process, led by IPES-Food co-chair Olivier De Schutter, will culminate in a series of policy briefs leading into a final report (see below: 'Provisional Roadmap').

The ultimate goal is to co-develop a Common Food Policy vision, with specific recommendations on policy tools and governance reform, to be considered as a viable alternative to current EU policy frameworks. This 'Plan B' is intended to contribute to shaping reforms of major EU policy frameworks for the post-2020 period.

What about current CAP reform processes?

A mid-term review is now being undertaken into certain aspects of the 2013 CAP reforms, and particularly the introduction of 'Ecological Focus Areas' as part of efforts to *green* the CAP. A mid-term review of the EU's 2014-2020 budget (the 'Multi-Annual Financial Framework' or MFF) is also taking place in 2016. IPES-Food will contribute to the debate with immediate effect. However, these mid-term reflections are limited in scope. Examining the efficacy of the CAP is only one part of what is needed in order to lay the foundations for sustainable food systems in Europe. It is also essential to identify alternative visions for how food systems might be governed in the medium- and longer-term.

Who should be around the table?

This vision will be co-developed by scientists, civil society groups and policymakers working in a collaborative manner. It will look to bridge various disciplines, policy areas and constituencies – the strength and legitimacy of a 'food policy' will lie in its ability to respond simultaneously to the demands of those advocating for healthy diets, environmental protection, sustainable development and viable livelihoods for farmers. It will also depend on the involvement of actors currently changing food systems at the local and national levels; the 'Common Food Policy' of the future will have to combine EU-level frameworks capable of driving transition in food systems with the flexibility necessary to allow the diverse food systems and food systems initiatives around Europe to thrive.

Contributions and partnerships with a variety of actors are therefore to be welcomed, including NGOs, farming groups, grassroots associations, and policy-makers at various levels. The contributions can also come in various forms, including: participation at the round-table meetings; inputs into the planned policy briefs or preparation of additional policy briefs; the organization of citizen engagement activities at member state or local level (see below: Three Prongs of the Process).

The following organizations have agreed to partner with IPES-Food in this process: *the Sustainable Food Systems Group (SFSG) of the European Parliament, Arc2020, UNESCO Chair in World Food Systems (Montpellier SupAgro), Slow Food, European Environmental Bureau (EEB), European Public Health Alliance (EPHA).*

What about the rest of the world?

The need for integrated approaches is gaining traction around the world. In 2015, Olivier De Schutter joined forces with three experts on US food systems – Michael Pollan, Mark Bittman and Ricardo Salvador – to urge Washington to deliver a ‘national food strategy’ⁱ. Scientists and civil society groups are now coming together around this goal in the *Plate of the Union*ⁱⁱ campaign. Here and elsewhere, the momentum for developing joined-up food policies is growing. While this initial project is focused on the EU, it is hoped that the reflections and written outputs generated by this process will be of relevance to other countries and regions of the world as they wrestle with similar questions. IPES-Food also plans to engage in supporting these processes directly, and is interested to hear from potential partner organizations in different regions of the world.

The three prongs of the process: deliberation, research and citizen engagement

<p>Deliberation Process</p>	<p>The first tenet of this project is a deliberation process consisting of a series of Food Policy Labs focused around the various nexuses relating to food (e.g. agriculture-obesity-urban infrastructure; e.g. trade-development-poverty). These Policy Labs will take the form of 3-hour round-table discussions hosted at the European Parliament (Brussels), with 20-25 participants. These roundtables will start by diagnosing the <i>problems</i> in food systems arising at each nexus. The variety of policy areas, knowledge types and perspectives around the table will allow consideration of the various different needs and requirements that food systems in their current forms are failing to meet. The final phase of each lab will consider which sets of policy tools, at which levels (EU, member state, regional, local/municipal), would be needed to meet these multiple requirements and achieve maximum synergies,. The Labs will finish with a Register of Commitments, whereby each participant commits to the action(s) they will take to build on the discussion.</p>
<p>Research Process</p>	<p>A second tenet of this process is to develop a set of policy briefs, relating to the various nexuses under discussion in each Food Policy Lab, and leading into a final report to be delivered to EU policymakers with concrete proposals for the policy structures and tools that would be needed to support the development of sustainable food systems in Europe. Rather than providing an exhaustive review of the various bodies of evidence in support of food systems reform, the policy briefs will illustrate the various interactions between policy areas and between different levels of government, identifying potential high-impact leverage points at each nexus, e.g. the types of action/alliances/structures/policy measures that might have the greatest multiplier effects in terms of improving multiple food systems outcomes. Where relevant, mini case studies of promising developments at local/member state level will be highlighted; key evidence gaps will also be identified.</p>
<p>Citizen Engagement Process</p>	<p>The third tenet of the project is a citizen engagement process, based on advocacy and communications aimed at engaging citizens to take up the call for cross-cutting food policies to be developed at the EU and national levels. This tenet of the project involves a different type of collaboration between the Core Partners, each of whom will pursue their own advocacy and communications in line with their particular missions and means. However, this project will aspire to harmonize those efforts and create added value through several channels: i) developing common narratives and building alliances through the Food Policy Labs; ii) providing the scientific evidence (the Policy Briefs) to underpin advocacy around CAP reform and food policy; iii) specific joint actions such as online petitions, linking to local-level NGOs and supporting their work in the various member states.</p>

Provisional Roadmap of Policy Labs and Policy Briefs

Policy Labs will focus on the following set of nexuses / thematic areas, and will proceed on the basis of a draft policy brief that the Policy Lab discussion could build upon, improve and amend. The following provisional schedule is envisaged:

Kick-off meeting: 7 th April	IPES-Food will meet with civil society, scientific and institutional partners to map out the steps towards developing a Common Food Policy for the EU.
Policy Lab 1: 27 th June 2016	The agriculture-food-health nexus in the EU: How agricultural policies, the physical infrastructure in urban settings and employment policies affect obesity rates and the incidence of diet-related non-communicable diseases.
Policy Lab 2: February 2017	Alternative food systems in the EU: Which regulatory and policy frameworks can best support local-level initiatives towards sustainable food systems, in the form of short food chains or other alternative systems.
Policy Lab 3: April 2017	The trade-development-environment nexus: Taking into account the impacts of agrifood policies on developing countries, how the requirement of policy coherence for development and the compliance with sustainable development goals (SDGs) could have an impact on CAP and MFF mid-term reviews; the impacts of trade policies on agronomic choices and the associated environmental consequences of such choices, as well as on rural development.
Policy Lab 4 16-17 October 2017 (Coinciding with World Food Day and International Day for the Eradication of Poverty)	Access to Healthy Diets for Low-Income Families in the EU: How poverty affects access to food in Europe; how are consumption habits changing; what are the different faces of urban/rural poverty; what type of policies could improve access to healthy diets.
Policy Lab 5: February 2018	Governance reform and accountability in the EU: The contribution of food democracy (improving accountability and legitimacy in the design of food policies at various governance levels) to the establishing of sustainable food systems, and how to move towards food democracy; what is the added value of EU Common Food Policy vs current national food policies frameworks? Are the EU Treaties fit for delivering these complementarities?
October 2018:	FINAL REPORT

Updates on this process will be communicated via the IPES-Food newsletter and the IPES-Food website: www.ipes-food.org. Please contact nick.jacobs@ipes-food.org with any questions, ideas or proposals for partnerships that you may have – we look forward to hearing from you.

ⁱ See: <https://medium.com/food-is-the-new-internet/a-national-food-policy-for-the-21st-century-7d323ee7c65f#.qjvdwsuz3>

ⁱⁱ See: <http://www.ucsusa.org/food-agriculture/fixing-our-broken-food-system-plate-of-the-union-initiative#.Vulm27SaBp8>