

Research insights for transitioning towards
1.5-degrees food systems

Transformative Solution: Sustainable Agriculture

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Reshaping food policy for sustainable and equitable lifestyles

Sustainable Agriculture

To date, industrial agriculture is associated with large-scale, intensive production of crops and livestock involving monocultures, industrial chemicals, and genetically modified crops (Horrihan et al. 2022). It is the primary mode of food production in Europe. Evidence points to serious consequences for persistent food insecurity and environmental problems in case of a “business as usual scenario” in industrial agriculture. For example, industrial chemicals lead to an overuse of nitrogen and phosphorous loading which is causing a crisis level of soil depletion (Hickel, 2018). On present trajectories, soils will globally only support 60 more years of harvest (Hickel, 2018).

EU’s Farm to Fork Strategy (F2F) is going in the right direction

As part of the European Green Deal, the EU’s F2F strategy addresses some of these challenges. The strategy emphasises the need for a change in course in EU’s food and agricultural systems towards more a sustainable future. This is reflected in the Strategy’s ambitious aims: 50% reduction in the use of pesticides, 20% reduction in the use of fertilizer, and 25% of EU farmland should be under organic production, all by 2030.

Organic agriculture needs additional investments

However, there is still a substantial gap between demand and supply of organic products in the EU. Recent figures about the fast-growing sale of organic products indicate increasing awareness and readiness for moving towards a more sustainable future among EU population. Between 2021 and 2019, sales of organic food have increased by almost 80% (European Parliament, [2021](#)). However, the supply of organic products has not experienced a similar increase in the EU. Organic farmland has only increased by 33.7% during the same period. This gap between supply and demand reveals important space for action in sustainable agriculture and the need to expand support schemes for organic farming in the EU.

Further resources

Find out more with the JRC’s analysis of a sustainable food system for the EU [here](#).

Find out more with the IEEP’s analysis of the EU’s Farm to Fork vision for sustainable agriculture [here](#).

Bibliography

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