

The war in Ukraine and European agriculture: we need to produce food, not feed!
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- **The fragility of the European agricultural system is now clear**
- **The EU must manage the arable land we have differently**
- **The EU must drastically reduce the number of animals to gain food security for people – food not feed**
- **The EU needs to focus on robust, site-adapted crop varieties that are freely available to all farmers – releasing dependence on fertilisers and chemical pesticides**
- **There must be no new subsidies or allocation of land for energy crops in the EU**
- **The EU must ensure that the right to food for all must not be a market commodity**

The war in the Ukraine is destroying millions of people's lives. Civilians in the Ukraine forced into exile as their homes and lives are attacked. But there is another other face of this conflict which is that disrupting the food security of millions of people. Famines, political instability and new waves of migration are some of the potential consequences that need to be seriously considered as outcomes of the war if global leaders do not take countermeasures.

The war in the Ukraine shows the **fragility of the European agricultural system**. The EU is heavily dependent on imports of fossil energy from various regions of the world. Other imports include mineral fertilisers from Russia and Belarus, as well as grain and oilseeds from the Black Sea region and not least the import of feed for the excessive amount of farm animals.

The European agricultural model is characterised by the fact that numerous commodities (grain, soy, mineral fertilisers, mineral oil) are imported from all over the world and used either directly as animal feed, or for the intensive production of animal feed or as energy crops.

With 50 billion euros per year the EU is the world's largest agricultural exporter in terms of net worth.¹ However this enormous agricultural export surplus of the EU is based mainly on the export of meat products, dairy products and alcoholic beverages.

Only if the EU starts to change course now and switches to producing more plant-based food for people, and not feed for animals, can it play its essential role in helping to compensate for the expected loss of grain exports from the Black Sea region. The EU has the tools, the scientific and practical know-how and the technology to do this.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Extra-EU_trade_in_agricultural_goods#Agricultural_products:_3_main_groups

"In 2020, the value of total trade (imports plus exports) of foodstuffs between the EU and the rest of the world was €145 billion (see Figure 8). Since exports (€97 billion) were higher than imports (€47 billion) there was a trade surplus of €50 billion. Between 2002 and 2020, EU trade in foodstuffs more than doubled, equivalent to an average annual growth of 4.6 %. In this period, exports (5.4 %) grew faster than imports (3.3 %)."

The EU must manage the arable land we have differently

In order to become crisis-proof and independent, we need not only an energy turnaround, but also a real agricultural turnaround: fewer farm animals, less energy crops and a truly sustainable approach to agriculture.

A large proportion of agricultural land in the EU does not produce food for humans, but feed for animals. In addition, there are massive imports from other regions of the world, all of which are intended to raise more animals. Using land for producing animal feed means not using the land for local food production. **The EU must drastically reduce the number of animals in the EU agriculture system in order to gain food security for people in urgent need.**

A sustainable supply of food, which works with the environment and allows the EU to meet its climate obligations, will only succeed with less meat and dairy products. The arable land dedicated to growing plant-based food has to be significantly larger areas than today – according to an internal foodwatch study, currently only approximately 10% of the EU's agricultural land is used for growing vegetables and fruit.

Today's agriculture is based on a few plant varieties that are bred to grow as fast as possible and deliver the highest yields possible. To do this they are highly dependent on artificial fertilisers and chemical pesticides. **The EU needs to focus (in both research and application) on robust, site-adapted varieties that are freely available to all farmers.** EU farmers need be supported to select the crops that are best able to withstand changing climate and weather conditions, and that still produce high yields with minimal use of fossil fuel-based agrochemicals.

Energy crops for biofuel and for biogas also take away the land needed for our food to grow. Increasing the surface of energy crops as an answer to the energy crisis is not a sustainable solution. There must be **no new subsidies or allocation of land for energy crops in the EU.**

The right to food for all must not be a market commodity. There is excessive stock market speculation on grains and other food commodities. National export bans for domestic grains, like those taken already by Hungary, are also proven to force global food crises as seen in 2008.² The EU must ensure that the "position limits", i.e. the upper limits of the amount of commodities a speculator is allowed to trade, are strictly regulated in order to achieve price stability. The EU must explain whether this has been sufficiently regulated within the framework of MiFID II and how it is effectively monitored.

We call on the EU to take all necessary steps to prevent food insecurity shocks in Ukraine, in Europe and worldwide. Some of the most vulnerable countries are of course those that are already suffering from the lack of food security.

We call on the EU to put in place these measures which will make our fragile agriculture system more resilient and independent from fossil fuels, fertilisers and pesticides.

² See: Martin and Anderson (2011): Export Restrictions and Price Insulation during Commodity Price Booms. World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 5645, Washington DC