

**QUESTIONS TO EU COMMISSIONER-Designate:**

**Wopke Hoekstra**

**Portfolio:** Commissioner for Climate, Net Zero and Clean Growth



**Leading role of the EU in international climate policies**

**Context:** At global level, food systems cause 1/3 of all greenhouse gas emissions, but climate policies and climate finance is focusing for nearly 99% on fossil fuels and energy. GHG-emissions from food systems soon will be the largest GHG-emitter since fossil fuel emissions are increasingly phased out and replaced by sustainable energy. The total global herd size in livestock units is projected to rise by 37 up to 46 percent between 2012 and 2050, which does not align with the Paris Climate Agreement goal of net zero emissions by 2050.

During the last UN Climate Conference 160 countries signed the Food & Climate Declaration to reduce GHG-emissions from food systems, but still GHG-emissions from food systems are expected to grow as a result of the growth of meat- and dairy overconsumption in many countries, far above safe levels for dietary guidelines and planetary boundaries. Policies to reduce meat-overconsumption are relative cheap policy options that will reduce increasing society costs for GHG-emission reduction and public health. Such policies are recommended by the World Bank, FAO, IPCC and WHO. The livestock sector is a key driver of land-use change and biodiversity loss, causing 13 billion hectares of deforestation annually due to land conversion for agricultural uses as pastures or cropland, with detrimental effects on water, soil, biodiversity, and climate change. The last IPCC report recognized these issues and proposed GHG-emission taxes on meat and dairy in high income countries. This is also recommended by many scientists, NGO’s and ministers in non-OECD countries.

**Question we want to ask:**

Last year during the UN Climate conference COP28 in Dubai, we were happy to see you played an important role to have all nations accept to ‘transitioning away from fossil fuels’. Can you now lead the world towards a

**Answer we want to hear:**

Yes, the EU will continue to be a leader in international climate policies. Now more and more countries have or start effective policies to reduce GHG-emissions from fossil fuels, it is time to also address the increasing GHG-emissions from the livestock sector. Countries with a relative high share of production or consumption of high-climate impact foods like meat, have a larger responsibility to act. It’s fully OK to produce meat and to enjoy eating meat, but meat overconsumption is something that needs to be addressed. Low income countries with low levels of animal protein consumption can increase consumption per capita of meat and dairy for health reasons, but high income countries and other countries with overconsumption levels have to make room for increased consumption of meat and dairy in low income countries. Standards, pricing and

<p>COP30 commitment in Brazil next year to: ‘transitioning away from animal protein overconsumption’?</p>	<p>information policies to are also recommended in the report of the Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Farming. I quote: “The European Commission and Member States should adopt demand-side policies, which address agri-food systems as a whole, to create enabling food environments where balanced, less resource intensive, healthy diets are available, accessible, affordable, and attractive. In that context, the Strategic Dialogue observes a trend in the EU towards a reduction of consumption of certain animal-based products and an increased interest in plant-based proteins. To improve the sustainable balance between animal and plant-based protein intake at the European population level, it is crucial to support this trend by rebalancing towards plant-based options and helping consumers to embrace the transition”.</p>
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<p><b>Strategic Dialogue on the Future of Agriculture</b></p>	
<p><b>Context:</b> The new report of the Strategic Dialogue on the Future of Agriculture published 4<sup>th</sup> September 2024, marks the end of seven months of debate between 29 stakeholders (including farmers, food industry and green and consumer NGO’s) to reach a consensus on the future of EU agriculture. The outcome is a collective call for change, stating clearly that “business-as-usual is not an option”. It also sets out concrete recommendations including “substantially increasing funding” for nature and climate-friendly farming, and “supporting trends towards rebalancing diets towards more plant based proteins”. The report recommends: 'The European Commission and Member States should provide fiscal tools that seek to foster coherent price signals, in form of tax reduction, for consumers, such as VAT reductions on more sustainable products'. The report recommends assessments to place an Agri-Food Emission Trading Scheme (Ag-ETS) in the centre of climate policy for the sector.</p>	
<p><b>Question we want to ask:</b>          In your mission letter, you are asked to draw on recent reports like the report from the Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture. They discussed an Agri-Food Emission Trading Scheme (Agri-ETS) to be in the centre of agri-food climate policy with recommendations for further assessment, to answer specific questions and concerns.          Do you agree with the stakeholder group agreements to have a "a coherent mix of policies, combining incentives and regulatory measures"? (incentives like price policies or Agri-ETS). On the Agri-ETS debate, stakeholders agreed "there is a clear need to reduce GHG emissions in the sector and that a strong policy in place is needed. It calls on the European</p>	<p><b>Answer we want to hear:</b>          Yes, I will develop the Agri-ETS policy proposals with a report to be published in June 2025 based on technical workshops and new studies carried out. Here we will take concerns into account mentioned by stakeholders in the Strategic Dialogue. We will present different policy options how ambitious climate goals for the sector can be realised, including fiscal and subsidy recommendations form EU member states. We will also study other options like climate standards and</p>

Commission to further work with stakeholders and experts to assess the feasibility and relevance of such a system, mentioning specific fundamental concerns and aspects" to be taken in account.

The Dialogue stakeholders agreed that 'the revenues generated by a potential Agri-ETS should solely be earmarked to support less affluent households, investments in the transition of agri-food sector actors, and the nature-based restoration of carbon sinks". Do you agree with this, or do you also see room for 10-20% revenues being used for future climate finance for the Loss and Damage Fund like African Climate Ministers<sup>1</sup> (representing 30% of Africans) urge to do?

Can you inform the EU Parliament with bi-annual updates on new developments and reports about Agri-ETS and alternative climate legislation options to reduce Agri-Food GHG emissions by 2030 and 2040 and scenario's for a legislative train schedule for EU decision making process between now and 2029 on Agri-ETS? Can you inform the EU Parliament on the Agri-ETS emission ceilings for 2029, 2030, 2035 and 2040 that would be needed to reduce agri-food GHG emissions 3% per year (conform the FAO recommendations) or 4,4% per year (conform EU Commission prososal<sup>2</sup> for 2028-2030) or to realise a reduction of 60, 70, or 90% by 2040.

voluntary policies for carbon farming payments.

On using revenues of Agri-ETS, I agree with the parties in the Strategic Dialogue, but it might be needed to also use some revenue for the UN Loss and Damage Fund and encourage food companies and retail companies to also pay voluntary contributions to this fund. I will inform the EU Parliament with bi-annual updates on new developments and reports about Agri-ETS and alternative climate legislation options to reduce Agri-Food GHG emissions by 2030 and 2040 and scenario's for a legislative train schedule for EU decision making process between now and 2030 on Agri-ETS? I will inform the EU Parliament on the Agri-ETS emission ceilings for 2029, 2030, 2035 and 2040 that would be needed to reduce agri-food GHG emissions, at least 3% per year sounds what is needed to realise the goals in 2030-2040.

<sup>1</sup> <https://africaclimate-actioninitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/COP29-Declaration-Agri-Food-and-Climate-Pricing-for-the-Loss-Damage-Fund-final-1.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda\\_21\\_3542](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_21_3542) and <https://icapcarbonaction.com/en/news/eu-adopts-landmark-ets-reforms-and-new-policies-meet-2030-target#:~:text=To%20accomplish%20this,%20the%20reform%20raises%20the%20linear%20reduction%20factor>