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The SAPEA report on a sustainable, just and healthy food system for the EU

Professor Peter Jackson

Presentation to the NNR2022 Committee webinar on 'Diet and Sustainability'

- Part of the European Commission's **Scientific Advice Mechanism**, funded by a Horizon 2020 programme.
- Brings together **scientific expertise** in engineering, humanities, medicine, natural and social sciences **from over 100 academies** and learned societies across Europe.
- Together with the **EC's Group of Chief Scientific Advisors (GCSA)**, **SAPEA provides independent scientific advice** to European Commissioners to support their decision-making.
- SAPEA also works to stimulate debate in Europe about the role of **evidence in policy-making**.



- The SAPEA working group sought to answer the following question:
What are workable paths to deliver an inclusive, 'just' and timely transition to an EU sustainable food system, considering 'co-benefits' for health, the environment, and socio-economic aspects, including the socio-economic situation of the farming sector, and addressing territorial imbalances, the rural-urban divide, food waste as well as responsible consumer behaviour (from a social sciences perspective)?

The review process

- Working group of **independent academic experts** appointed by SAPEA as part of the EU's Scientific Advice Mechanism
- Undertook a **Rapid Evidence Review** and wrote an independent report
- Draft report discussed at **Expert Workshop** and subject to external **peer review**
- The GCSA produced a **Scientific Opinion** that informed the European Commission's 'Farm to Fork' strategy
- Members of the SAPEA working group also wrote a Comment in *Nature Food* (2021).

Working group members

- Professor Peter Jackson, University of Sheffield (Chair, UK)
- Dr Jeroen Candel, Wageningen University (The Netherlands)
- Professor Anna Davies, Trinity College Dublin (Ireland)
- Dr Hugo de Vries, INRAE (France)
- Professor Cristiane Derani, University of Santa Catarina (Brazil)
- Professor Verica Dragović-Uzelac, University of Zagreb (Croatia)
- Professor Alf Håkon Hoel, University of Tromsø (Norway)
- Professor Lotte Holm, University of Copenhagen (Denmark)
- Professor Piergiuseppe Morone, University of Rome (Italy)
- Professor Marianne Penker, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna (Austria)
- Dr Marta Guadalupe Rivera-Ferre, University of Catalonia (Spain)
- Dr Ruta Śpiewak, Institute of Rural and Agricultural Development (Poland)
- Professor Katrien Termeer, Wageningen University (The Netherlands)
- Professor John Thøgersen, Aarhus University (Denmark)
- Professor Erik Mathijs (invited contributor), KU Leuven (Belgium).

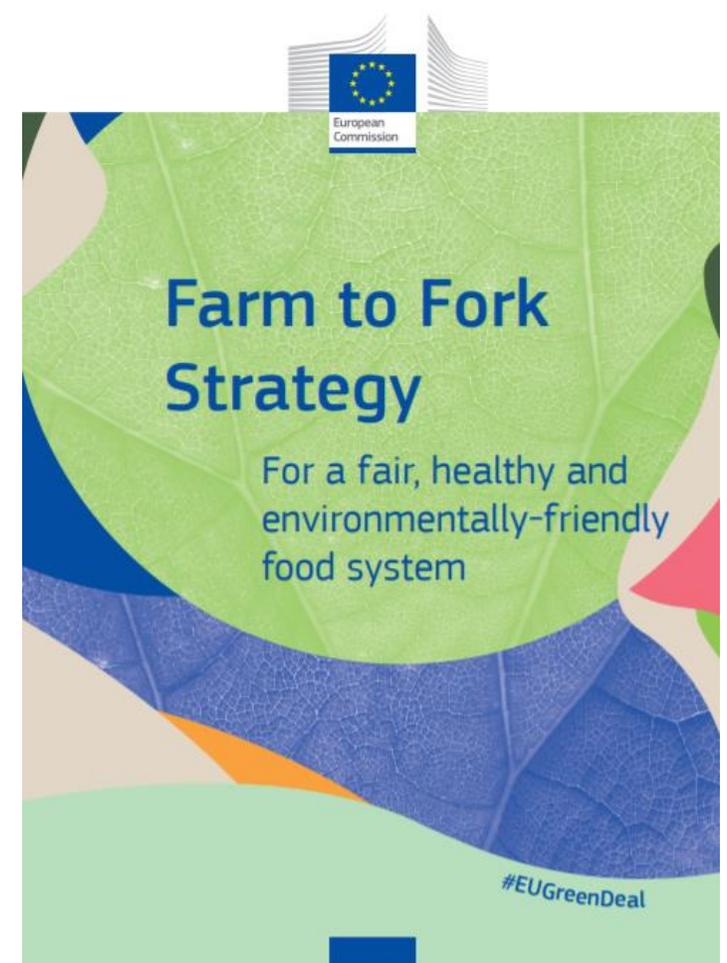
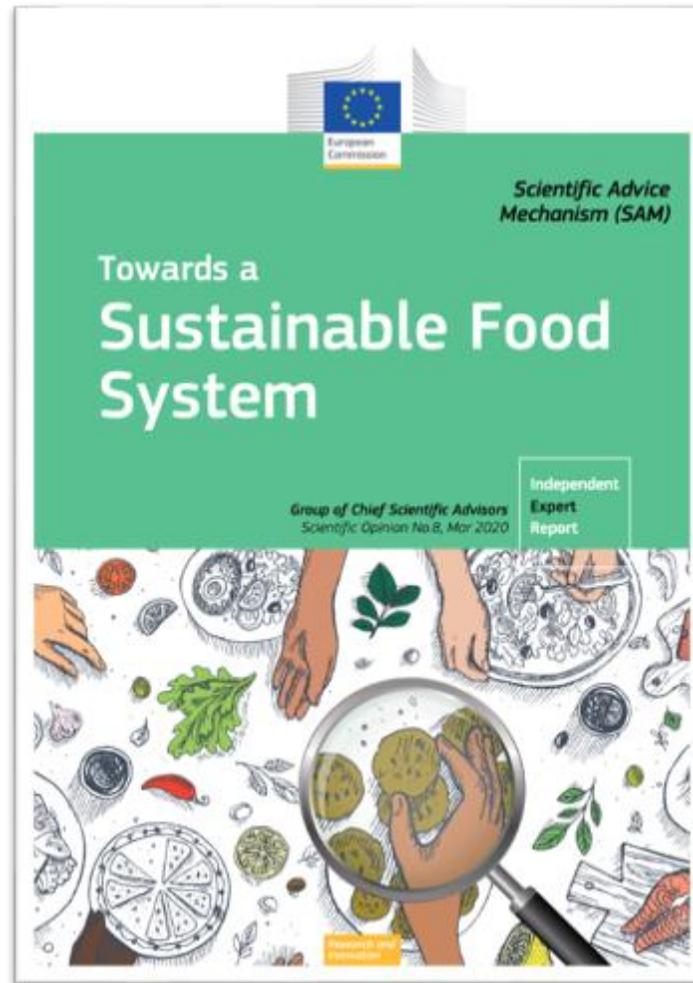
Structure of the SAPEA Report

1. Executive summary
2. Introduction: a global challenge
3. Critical challenges facing the food system
4. Theoretical perspectives and alternatives framings of food
5. Understanding sustainable food systems
6. Current and recent policy initiatives
7. Non-governmental agents of change
8. Good practice and lessons learned
9. Summary and conclusions
10. References.

Key findings

- Radical transformation is needed for more sustainable food systems
- Different framings of food imply different types of interventions
- Taxation, financial incentives, and legal change more effective than voluntary certification and awareness raising
- To meet growing global demand for food, it is not enough simply to increase productivity ('sustainable intensification')
- We also need to change from a linear (mass consumption) system to a more circular economy with reduced waste — which will mean changing our norms, habits and routines.
- Evidence suggests that this kind of behaviour change needs to happen collectively (social practices, not just individual 'consumer choice')
- Need joined-up governance at local, national and international levels.

From food as a commodity to food as more of a common good?



Farm to Fork: for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system

1st Integrated EU Food Policy, with several goals:

- neutral or positive environmental impact (climate change mitigation, biodiversity loss)
- everyone should have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious, sustainable food
- affordability of food while generating fairer economic returns, competitiveness of the EU supply sector and fair trade

Food still mostly framed as commodity, however:

- ambitious targets for pesticide, fertiliser and antibiotic reduction
- support for organic farming (25% market share by 2030)
- new animal welfare regulation, front-of-pack nutrition labelling etc.

Key messages for NNR2020:

- Be bold (urgent need for radical change, ‘business as usual’ not an option)
- Address the twin themes of environmental sustainability and healthy eating
- Provide clear guidance to consumers but don’t rely on individual choice
- Scientific consensus on the need for reduced meat and dairy consumption (EAT-Lancet report)
- SAPEA report published prior to COVID-19 pandemic – highlighted the vulnerability of the food system to short-term disruption (temporary shortages, impact on food and hospitality businesses, increased food insecurity, long-term economic impact)
- Opportunity to build back better/fairer?

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