# EU action for sustainability

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The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety adopted the own-initiative report by Seb DANCE (S&D, UK) on EU action for sustainability.

Members recalled that climate change is not an isolated environmental issue but presents one of the greatest challenges of our time. They also indicated that the European Union and its Member States are all signatories to the Paris Agreement are committed to keeping global warming clearly below 2 ° C.

Taking note of the Commission's communication on EU action for sustainability, Members recalled that the aim of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda for 2030 is to increase the **well-being for all** and that the three pillars of sustainable development, namely social, environmental and economic development are essential for achieving the SDGs. In this regard, they called on the Commission to check the compatibility of all new policies and legislation with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

To achieve this, a series of measures are proposed in a range of areas.

**European political vision**: Members considered that any future vision of Europe must integrate the SDGs as a fundamental principle and that Member States must adopt **sustainable economic models** for this purpose. The role of the Union in achieving sustainable development should therefore be at the heart of the discussions launched by the Commission's White Paper on the future of Europe (COM (2017)2025). According to Members, the achievement of SDGs is fundamental to the **legacy left by Europe to future generations**.

**Governance**: the Commission is called upon to ensure that the multi-stakeholder platform announced in its Communication will become a model of best practice for the planning, implementation, monitoring and revision of the programme by 2030.

**Agriculture and food**: Members are aware that the **current industrial agriculture model** in the Union will **make it impossible to meet SDGs on sustainable agriculture** at EU level, reduce pollution and improving soil quality and maintain biodiversity.

In line with the 2030 Agenda, it will no longer be possible to consider food, livelihoods and the management of natural resources separately from each other. Special attention will therefore need to be paid to investments in agriculture (plants, livestock, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture) as tools to **combat poverty and hunger in the world**.

**In the agri-environmental field**, Members further called for:

- the end of 2020 incentives for the use of rapeseed, palm oil or **soybean biofuels**;
- putting in place measures to make **food supply resilient** to climate shocks and reducing the impact of the agricultural sector on land, water and climate;
- **reform of the Common Agricultural Policy** (CAP) to shift from the current area-based payments towards a results-based system that supports farmers in the transition to a sustainable farming system;
- measures to promote **agro-ecological transition**, minimising the use of hazardous pesticides.

**As regards meat consumption**, Members pointed out that consumption of red meat and saturated fatty acids in the EU continues to exceed safe nutritional values and that reduced consumption of animal

products generates less greenhouse gas and nitrogen emissions. A reduction in the production and consumption of meat in the Union would thus contribute to reaching the SDGs.

**Innovation**: Members stated that the **EU should be the global forerunner of the transition to a low-carbon economy** and a sustainable production-consumption system. For this reason, they invited the Commission to orient its science, technology and innovation policies towards the SDGs and to present a Communication on Science, Technology and Innovation for Sustainable Development (STI4SD).

They stressed the need to encourage technology transfer in energy efficiency and clean energy, knowing that **1.2 billion people in the world do not have access to electricity**, and more than 2.7 billion people do not have access to clean cooking facilities (especially in sub-Saharan Africa).

**Circular economy and waste reduction**: Members called on the Commission to ensure that the circular economy delivers a significant drop in the use of virgin materials, a reduction in materials waste, longer lasting products, and the use of manufacturing by-products and excess materials previously considered waste streams.

**Biodiversity**: Members recalled that about 60% of animal species and 77% of protected habitats are in less than optimal condition. The Commission and the Member States are therefore invited to intensify their efforts to fully implement the nature directives.

**Decontamination**: Members urged the Commission to address the issue of environmental decontamination as a matter of priority by proposing harmonised standards against the use and degradation of soil and by presenting the action plan against deforestation as soon as possible.

**Budgetary resources to meet the challenge of decarbonisation of the economy**: Members recommended a full integration of climate action across the EU budget to ensure that measures to reduce gas emissions are included in all investment decisions in Europe.

They stressed that efforts to limit global warming are not an obstacle to economic growth and employment, but that decarbonisation of the economy should be seen as a **key source of employment for new and sustainable economic growth and employment**.

In particular, they called for the post-2020 multi-annual financial framework to shift the EU budget towards the implementation of 2030 agenda for sustainable development, guaranteeing adequate funding for the practical implementation of the SDGs. They also called for enhanced **mainstreaming of sustainable development in all funding mechanisms and budget lines**.

**Education and training**: Members stressed the crucial role of education and training on setting society on the path to sustainable development. They therefore encouraged Member States to step up their efforts to implement education for sustainable development at **all levels and in all forms of education and training** . Similarly, they called for sustainability and **ecological citizenship** education to be mainstreamed across disciplines, in particular entrepreneurship education.

**Culture**: Members stressed the need to make culture an **integral part of the Commission's work on sustainability**. To this end, they called on the Commission to recognise that culture is one of the main drivers influencing behaviour change and the creation of environmentally-friendly attitudes, consumption patterns and sustainability-driven values.