
Investing in Real Agriculture to Tackle Climate Change, Food Insecurity, and Market Instability

(proposed by the WFO Board on the basis of the initial draft
of the Value Chain Working Group)

WFO Position

“Reshaping of food supply chains, from farm to fork, by creating proximity between producers and consumers and deep ties between production and territories”

First the pandemic and then the conflict in Ukraine are causing instability in global markets and uncertainty about the future, for farmers but also for consumers.

As the World Farmers' Organisation (WFO), we stand by their side to continue to ensure that sufficient food is produced to high quality standards and is available at affordable prices, while meeting climate change objectives and ensuring a fair distribution of value across the food chain, particularly in favour of producers. These challenges and objectives have always been at the heart of the WFO's work. The spirit and content of the "The Farmers' Route to Sustainable Food Systems" is more and more relevant and still valid.²

Farmers are at the heart of sustainable food systems!

The way forward involves the variety and diversity of agricultural and food systems, of inclusiveness, of transparency, of research and innovation that accompany and enhances tradition.

WFO strongly opposes food standardization when it leads to a concentration of power which undermines the position of farmers in the value chain.

We must promote a stronger connection between consumers, policy-makers, and the agricultural and rural world.

A connection is essential to make people understand the positive realities of agriculture, and in particular of livestock farming and to move towards greater economic, social and environmental sustainability. In this respect, it should be remembered that replacing agricultural food with artificial substitutes would

¹ See WFO Policy on Value Chain, available in the [Policy Documents](#) section of the WFO Website.

² The full text of The Farmers' Route to Sustainable Food Systems is available on the [WFO Website](#).

threaten global food security and deny the cultural, economic, and ecological importance of agriculture and food.

Food is territory, nature, culture, health, and reflects the diversity of humankind and the world which we inhabit. It grows in the field and lands on consumer's tables as a result of the passion and care that farmers have for the environment and biodiversity, which they aspire to conserve for future generations, in addition to their attention to consumers' expectations.

Without a serious discussion on its positive externalities and contribution to the circular economy, agriculture, and the livestock sector in particular, has been subject to continual attack, often from groups and individuals with a vested interest, for instance those attempting to replace animal proteins with food grown in laboratories, which represents a threat in terms of both environmental impact, food sovereignty and democracy. Food grown in laboratories can also create confusion among consumers without due regulation and labelling.

Today, livestock production employs more than 1 in 8 people worldwide, representing a great opportunity particularly for young people and rural women who generally have no other source of income. Over 80% of livestock farmed globally are raised on pasture-based systems and are frequently integral to the development of local and national circular economies.

Furthermore, recent research has demonstrated the fundamental contribution of terrestrial animal source food to healthy diets for improved nutrition and health outcomes, showing that products of animal origin contain micronutrients, vitamins, and other nutrients difficult to obtain from plant-based foods in the necessary quantity and quality.³

Farmers feed the world, but they can hardly feed themselves. A crazy paradox, which poses a threat to global food security. For this reason, a fair and equitable value chain, based on food produced from land-based agricultural systems, is the essential requirement to ensure access to healthy, safe, and nutritious diets for all. Furthermore, especially for children in developing countries, having access to animal protein can make a difference in reducing diseases, hunger and malnutrition, consuming balanced diets and preventing cognitive deficits, which can impede learning and development and school attainment.

For these reasons, WFO strongly believes that livestock is part of 'the solution', contributing to land protection and soil fertility, reducing wildfire risk and preserving entire regions from imminent desertification, as well as preventing

³ See FAO publication: *Contribution of terrestrial animal source food to healthy diets for improved nutrition and health outcomes – An evidence and policy overview on the state of knowledge and gaps* available on the [FAO Website](#).

the abandonment of rural areas and hydrogeological instability. Not to mention the vital role against poverty, malnutrition and inequality, including its inextricable link to female emancipation in the Global South.

The livestock sector has made enormous strides in terms of sustainability and despite this it still has to defend itself from alarmist visions and misleading messages that negatively affect the supply chain and consumers and nevertheless also political choices at high levels. It is necessary to invest in the sector through adequate tools and resources by focusing on innovation, research, and new technologies with the aim of having less impact on the climate but protecting competitiveness, income and quality.

Livestock is not 'the problem', as claimed by its detractors.

Farmers and breeders, all over the world, are constantly engaged in improving the safety and sustainability of their production, to the benefit of human and animal health and the environment and to answer societal demands, whilst retaining the socio-cultural and economic benefits of animal agriculture.

The current and future challenges confronting farmers necessitate that the scientific community and all actors in the value chain cooperate in order to break down barriers, find innovative practices and deliver results ready for adoption. Collaboration between farmers, researchers and other stakeholders will help amplify solutions and mitigate the difficulties ahead. Increasing productivity and its stability by enhancing the resilience and adaptability of farming systems, sustainably utilising resources in agriculture and increasing soil fertility are the critical issues for an ever-growing population to adequately, successfully and sufficiently nourish itself. But to achieve these goals, it is imperative to continue investing in agriculture focusing on those who have always defended and protected land, soil, biodiversity, and nature: farmers.

It is on these assumptions that the World Farmers' Organisation is embracing an approach to innovation that is bottom-up, science-based and results-oriented, *but rejects any attempt to replace the food resulting from the work of farmers with lab-grown food⁴, and to further concentrate power in the value chains, dismissing the work of farmers and pushing consumers towards a single and homogenous dietary model, which does not value the tradition, diversity, richness, quality, and peculiarities of each region of our planet.*

⁴ *Lab-grown foods are substances produced for human consumption, which had been invented in the laboratory. The source of these products are tissues or cells, which do not require farming competences to create and do not occur in nature at scale.* Definition of WFO Scientific Council.