

CountrySide

European Landowners' Organization

N° 187

MAY-JUNE 2020 - BIMONTHLY - EN



FFA2020 Regional Online Live: Connecting Brussels and Berlin



**Catherine
GESLAIN-
LANÉELLE**



**Gero
HOCKER**



**Julia
KÖHN**



**Felix Prinz zu
LÖWENSTEIN**



**Janez
POTOČNIK**



**Heike
ZELLER**



Monday, June 15, 2020





FFA2020 Live Event focuses on building a more resilient and sustainable food and farming system

Mark TITTERINGTON, responsible for FFA strategy and partnerships

In partnership with:



The Forum for the Future of Agriculture returned on June 15 in a new virtual format which linked more than 700 stakeholders in Berlin, Brussels and beyond to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the European food system. The meeting came just following the publication of the EU Farm to Fork & Biodiversity Strategies, and just before Germany assumes the Presidency of the European Council.

In his opening remarks, FFA Chairman Janez POTOČNIK, said that whilst everything has changed since the onset of the crisis, it is also true that nothing has changed. In this respect, he argued that the crisis had served to highlight the fragility of the world in general, but especially that of our food and agriculture systems. Continuing with this theme, the former EU Environment Commissioner said this could help contribute to a better understanding of the world and enable Europe to build on the momentum now being generated by the recent European policies.

The FFA Chairman clearly believes that the current moment presents an opportunity which must be taken to build a more sustainable food based on the principles of the circular economy. He argued passionately that the system has to stop socialising the cost of its externalities which impact public health as well as the environment, and instead put a

"We cannot leave the next generation with all the debts. Going back to the old ways that we knew were broken before would be irresponsible: it is the worst thing we could do to ourselves and future generations."

Janez POTOČNIK

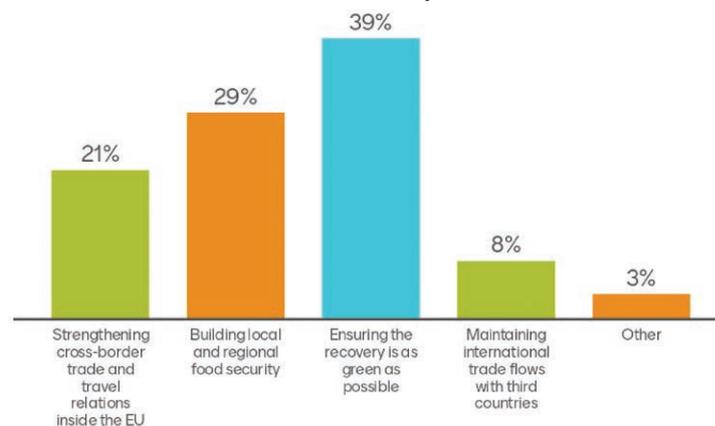
value on the natural and human capital upon which our long-term sustainability depends. Recognising that this does not come freely, and could well translate into higher food prices, he argued that the EU

and the Member States must draw on the wide range of social and economic levers at their disposal to ensure a just transition for all.

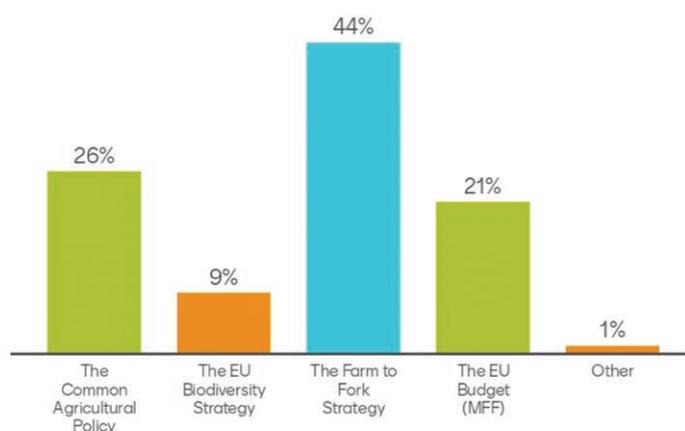
Joining Janez POTOČNIK in the Brussels

studio was Catherine GESLAIN-LANÉE-LLE, Deputy Head of Cabinet for EU Commissioner for Agriculture & Rural Development. She took the opportunity to highlight and praise the "extraordinary" responsiveness of the EU's food system

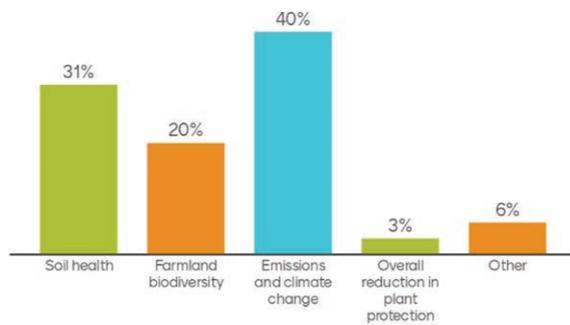
1. What should be the first recovery priority for the EU food system?



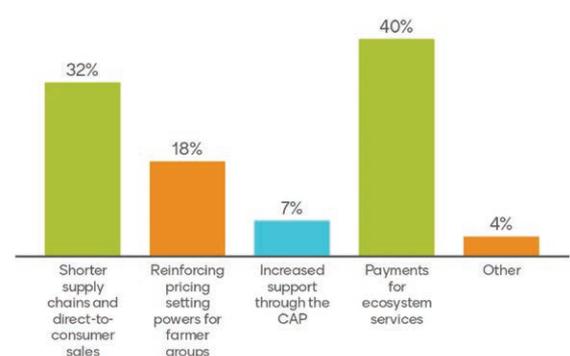
2. Which of the following EU policies initiatives should the German Presidency focus on?



3. While all below categories are important and related, which area of improving the agricultural environment should be focused on first?



4. What would most help the business model of European farming?



and the people working in it during the crisis. She argued that this had kept food on “everyone’s plate” and highlighted what an important asset the agri-food sector is for Europe. Just like Janez POTOČNIK, Catherine GESLAIN-LANÉELLE called on all stakeholders to seize the moment to transform the food system in line with circular economy principles in ways which enable agriculture to contribute to the decarbonisation of Europe’s economy. According to her, the Farm to Fork Strategy represents “a brand-new approach which looks not just at food security and food safety [but] is about building more efficient and sustainable food systems”.

In the Berlin studio, moderator Heike ZELLER was joined by a number of guests from German politics, the food industry and the NGO BÖLW. For his part, Dr. Gero HOCKER MdB, the Agriculture Spokesperson for the Liberal Group in the Bundestag (FDP), also highlighted the vital role played by all those in the agri-food industry during the crisis. He also made clear that high standards are necessary but must be consistently applied across

Europe and warned that, in driving toward a more resilient food and agriculture sector, the regulatory and bureaucratic burden should not fall entirely on the farmer. Likewise, it was noted that there is a large gap between those willing to pay for sustainable food and those who actually do.

This was also reinforced by Dr. Julia KÖHN, Chief Executive and Founder of PIELERS. She has long argued for greater price

transparency to help consumers understand the true cost of the food they pay for and where the money goes. For Julia KÖHN, she sees a growing movement that harnesses the power of technology and innovation to develop a supply chain which reveals and internalises all of the financial, human and natural costs of the agri-food economy. For her, this has to also be an important part of the transition.

For Felix Prinz zu LÖWENSTEIN, Chairman of BÖLW (Bund Ökologische Lebensmittelwirtschaft), the need to drive this transition and the publication of the EU Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies have come at exactly the right time. He strongly argued that what is at stake is nothing less than our collective ability to produce food in the future. In particular, Felix Prinz zu LÖWENSTEIN argued that there are three key points to keep in mind. First, that farmers must be rewarded for the public goods they provide; second, that we need to change our dietary and consumption patterns if we want a more sustainable system; and, third, that we must not use policies and public funds to conceal the necessary changes that need to be made. In addition, he also argued that in supporting growers to reach ever higher standards, we must also ensure that there is a level and competitive playing field with other non-EU countries, and EU trade policy and agreements must ensure this.

Building on this point, Catherine GESLAIN-LANÉELLE argued that “... it is not just about regulating and making good deals with our partners, but also finding a way to ensure that our high level of standards and production methods in Europe is better recognized”. She said that this is why the Farm to Fork strategy is proposing to develop a sustainable food labelling

scheme, “to help consumers [recognize] the efforts made in the food chain to produce sustainable food”.

In drawing the event to a close, FFA Chairman Janez POTOČNIK returned to his earlier theme of ensuring that natural and human capital, as well as finance, is properly accounted for throughout the food system, and doing so would be a critical success factor in making the necessary transitions. This seemed to resonate with many of the participants who joined the meeting with strong support in the online polling for improving soil health, farmland biodiversity, and ecosystem services, as well as the role growers can play in tackling climate change. He concluded by saying that COVID-19 shows how natural and climatic events can disrupt our lives and that these will increase. His clear message was that there is a window of opportunity to prepare and that it must be seized.

“In Europe, nobody died from hunger or empty supermarkets. This gives us the perfect opportunity to fix our food systems, as the fundamentals of food security are ensured”.

Dr. Julia KÖHN

FFA2020 will continue to explore the impact of COVID-19 on the food system and build on the ideas and thinking shared by our panel guests and participants in the Regional Online Live event over the coming months.

For more information and to watch the replay: www.forumforagriculture.com