

DISCUSSION PAPER No. 403

Are EU agri-food policies Paris-compatible?

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This paper assesses the coherence of European agri-food policies – both domestic and international – with the objectives of the Paris Agreement, particularly the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5°C.

It examines two dimensions: temporal coherence, analysing how alignment between agri-food and climate objectives has evolved over time; and external coherence, assessing whether sector-specific agri-food goals support or undermine global climate mitigation and adaptation efforts.

The temporal analysis shows a widening gap: early ambitions have steadily weakened, leading to increasing misalignment with climate commitments. Externally, current EU agri-food policies are not Paris-compatible and fall short of the requirements to meet global climate imperatives.

The paper concludes with eight actionable recommendations to realign EU agri-food policy with the Paris goals, strengthening policy coherence within the EU and reducing negative spillover effects in partner countries.

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Introduction

Since 2019, the European Union (EU) has pursued an ambitious transition toward sustainable food systems under the EU Green Deal, articulated most clearly in the [Farm to Fork \(F2F\) Strategy](#). This agenda has since faced growing headwinds, particularly from farmers' protests over regulatory burdens and competition from imports produced under lower environmental standards. Critics have also warned that F2F's environmental targets could [reduce EU production and exports and raise global food prices](#). These tensions have been compounded by wider geopolitical pressures, including the war in Ukraine and the European Commission's broader shift toward 'competitiveness and security', as reflected in its [2024–2029 work programme](#).

In response to mounting pressures, the European Commission launched its new [EU Vision on Agriculture and Food](#) in February 2025, drawing in part on the work of the [Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture](#), which shows distinct similarities with the [FAO Global Roadmap](#). While this does not represent a wholesale abandonment of earlier Green Deal ambitions, it signals a clear narrative shift, from comprehensive food system transformation to a stronger emphasis on [producer competitiveness](#), accompanied by a more constrained approach to sustainability.

This background note analyses the coherence of the EU's agri-food policies with its climate objectives through two analytical lenses: temporal coherence, assessing consistency of policy direction over time (Section 1); and external coherence, evaluating the alignment between sectoral agri-food objectives (e.g., forestry, fertilisers, dietary transitions) and the 2015 [Paris Agreement](#)'s mitigation and adaptation imperatives (Section 2). Based on desk research, the findings indicate that while some elements of EU agri-food policy are Paris-compatible, a significant gap persists between the EU's climate leadership narrative and the practical trajectory of its agri-food agenda, driven by weak implementation and shifting political priorities, with implications for both domestic targets and international partnerships. The note concludes with eight recommendations to help close this coherence gap and steer EU agri-food policy toward a more Paris-aligned trajectory.

1. The evolving narrative of EU agri-food policies over time

The EU's push for a sustainable food system was initially anchored in the [EU Green Deal \(2019\)](#), which was translated into the ambitious [F2F Strategy \(2020\)](#). Complemented by the [Biodiversity Strategy for 2030](#), this agenda marked the first serious attempt to treat the sustainability of the entire food system as a core policy priority. The initial strategies were designed to be aligned with the Paris Agreement's central goal of limiting global warming to 1.5°C, but gaps remain (see Box 1).

Box 1: Defining 'Paris compatibility' in the EU context

A policy or sector-specific objective is '1.5°C Paris Agreement compatible' if it aligns with [pathways outlined by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change \(IPCC\)](#). This requires actively contributing to both mitigation, by helping to reduce global GHG emissions by 43% by 2030 and 69% by 2040 (relative to 2019 levels), as well as adaptation, by building resilience to unavoidable climate impacts.

The [Paris Agreement](#) (2015), agreed at COP21 in Paris, has been a key catalyst for the EU's climate agenda, translating into legally binding commitments such as the [EU Climate Law](#), which enshrines the goal of climate neutrality by 2050. The European Green Deal and its legislative instruments, such as the Fit for 55 package and the EU Adaptation Strategy, are the primary vehicles for achieving these goals. The EU also channels Paris-aligned goals through its external action via the [Global Gateway](#) and its international climate finance pledges. However, implementation tensions remain, especially around [policy coherence, fairness](#), and [adaptation finance](#).

This backgrounder applies a simplified, qualitative method to assess Paris compatibility. For a more detailed quantitative rating system, frameworks like the [Climate Action Tracker \(CAT\)](#) and the work by the [International Climate Politics Hub \(ICPH\)](#) provide regularly updated scientific analysis of national climate actions against the Paris Agreement's goals.

However, the implementation of these ambitious strategies has faced significant setbacks. Concerns over [reduced agricultural output and negative trade impacts](#) led to delays or withdrawals of key legislative proposals. This dynamic was

amplified by widespread farmer protests and a broader geopolitical shift, prompting the European Commission, under the leadership of the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, to formulate a new [Vision on Agriculture and Food](#) in 2025. This emerging vision, while taking cautious steps towards more sustainable food supply chains, marks a [distinct shift in emphasis](#), prioritising producer competitiveness, strategic autonomy, and simplification over the comprehensive environmental targets of the F2F strategy. According to [WWF](#), the Vision “failed to address critical issues, such as the necessary increase in environmental payments, as initially agreed in the Strategic Dialogue”.

A key structural limit to implementation of both the original F2F ambitions and the new Vision remains the EU’s budget framework. While the current multiannual financial framework (MFF; 2021–2027) claims to earmark at least 30% of spending for climate action, the European Court of Auditors (ECA) has repeatedly warned that these [figures are likely overstated and lack clear evidence of real climate impact](#). In the agricultural sector specifically, the ECA found that despite [significant 'green' spending under the CAP](#), there has been no visible reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from farming over the last decade. Ahead of the [next budget cycle \(2028–2034\)](#), maintaining strong climate and biodiversity targets in the MFF is critical, but the focus must shift from budgetary tracking to measurable impact to [prevent a further gap between rhetoric and reality](#). However, the overall shift in rhetoric is emblematic of a [more inward-looking EU](#), where immediate economic and security concerns are increasingly rebalancing long-term sustainability commitments

Table 1 provides an overview of key agri-food-related EU policies, assessing how their objectives, external or international dimensions and Paris-compatibility have evolved during this period.

Table 1 - EU Agri-food-related policies and ‘Paris-compatibility’ over time

EU policy or strategy	Primary objective	External dimension	Paris compatibility
Farm to Fork (F2F) Strategy (2020)	To reduce the environmental footprint of EU agriculture, promote healthier diets, and build a sustainable food	The strategy’s external dimension sought to use EU market power to promote global sustainability standards and build ‘Green Alliances’. However, partners criticised this	Initially high (though often indirect), now weakened. The F2F strategy was designed to align with the Paris Agreement through ambitious 2030 targets, such as a 50% reduction in pesticide use, a 20% reduction in fertiliser use, and achieving 25% of agricultural land

	system as a cornerstone of the EU Green Deal.	approach as green protectionism, warning that unilateral EU rules could create trade barriers and harm producers in developing countries.	under organic farming. While these measures were intended to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and enhance carbon sinks, their primary environmental benefit lay in biodiversity conservation. However, subsequent withdrawals or dilutions of key legislative proposals have severely undermined implementation, creating a significant gap between the strategy's original ambition and current reality.
Biodiversity Strategy (2020) & Nature Restoration Law (2024)	To halt biodiversity loss, protect nature, and reverse ecosystem degradation. The Nature Restoration Law makes these goals legally binding by requiring the restoration of at least 30% of degraded habitats by 2030.	The strategy's external dimension promotes global biodiversity cooperation and seeks to prevent EU trade from harming ecosystems abroad (e.g., through the EUDR). However, it has been criticised for imposing strict standards that may hinder market access for producers in partner countries and be perceived as unilateral rule-setting.	High in principle, but challenged in practice. Restoring forests, wetlands, and peatlands strengthens carbon sinks (mitigation) and improves resilience to floods and droughts (adaptation). Yet, its Paris-compatibility is constrained by land-use competition between restoration and food production, and political opposition has diluted the final ambition of the Nature Restoration Law.
Open, Sustainable and Assertive Trade Policy (2021)	To advance the EU's strategic interests by securing market access for EU businesses, aligning trade policy with the Green Deal, promoting WTO reform, and using enforcement tools to ensure fair competition.	The EU's more 'assertive' stance on aligning import standards with its own may help raise global norms, but it risks harming developing countries' market access if not matched with significant support measures, undermining coherence with development objectives.	Framework-level coherence, but lacks concrete targets. The policy enhances sustainability through strengthened Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD) chapters in trade agreements, but remains a principles-based framework with no clear GHG-reduction metrics linked to trade flows and no specific financing targets tied to sustainability outcomes.

<p>EU Deforestation-free regulation (EUDR, 2023)</p>	<p>To reduce the EU's contribution to global deforestation and forest degradation by ensuring that key commodities placed on the EU market are not associated with such activities.</p>	<p>The regulation targets the EU's sizeable deforestation footprint: 16% of global trade-linked deforestation in 2017. While it will reduce much of the EU's own impact, its main external effect is as a global standard-setter, drawing criticism from producer countries for the administrative and cost burdens it imposes on smallholders. Without substantial support, it risks disrupting trade and undermining development goals.</p>	<p>High, but with implementation risks. The regulation supports the Paris Agreement by protecting global carbon sinks, yet its 12-month implementation delay signals temporal incoherence. Its positive environmental and climate impacts depend on whether other countries adopt similar policies; without broader uptake, it risks merely shifting supply chains rather than reducing overall emissions.</p>
<p>CAP Strategic Plans (2023-2027)</p>	<p>To support farmer incomes, ensure food production, and promote environmental and climate action through eco-schemes and conditionality.</p>	<p>While direct trade-distorting effects have declined over time, the recent 'simplification' of environmental conditions under the CAP creates a coherence challenge. The EU risks appearing to lower its own environmental rules, while expecting trade partners to meet high sustainability requirements for their exports.</p>	<p>Undermined in practice (due to harmful subsidies). The CAP's potential contribution to the Paris Agreement goals is severely undermined by the way its funds are allocated. Analysis found that roughly 80% of CAP funding goes to emissions-intensive animal products. The recent 'simplification of environmental conditionality', which favours incentives over rules, risks exacerbating this trend and may lead to a 'lowest common denominator' approach to sustainability.</p>

New EU Vision on Agriculture and Food (2025)	To enhance producer competitiveness, ensure EU food security, provide fair farmer incomes, and reduce administrative burdens through simplification and technological innovation.	The focus on competitiveness and seeking alignment of import standards risks increasing trade friction. The narrative shift away from a comprehensive food system transformation may be perceived externally as the EU stepping back from its global leadership role on sustainability.	Partial and politically cautious. The Vision retains climate language but lacks the binding targets and clear sectoral roadmap needed for Paris alignment. It tilts climate ambition toward competitiveness, avoids specifying how agriculture will meet its share of the EU's 2030 climate target, and pays little attention to the crucial role of diets and food environments.
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Legend: ■ Coherent; ■ Partially Coherent/Challenged; ■ Weakened/Incoherent.

The analysis in Table 1 reveals a clear temporal incoherence in the EU's agri-food agenda. Not a single policy receives a green rating for full Paris compatibility, and even the most ambitious strategies face major implementation barriers and trade-offs. The original ambition of flagship initiatives such as the F2F and Biodiversity Strategies has steadily weakened and is now being reshaped by a new policy direction, exemplified by the 2025 Vision on Agriculture and Food, that shows weaker alignment with the Paris Agreement. Although the Vision retains climate language, it lacks binding targets and the transformational ambition required for coherence, reflecting a political shift that prioritises competitiveness over climate action.

This disconnect stems largely from the gap between high-level strategic intent and concrete, enforceable action. Many ambitious EU goals remain non-binding strategy documents or communications, with limited or delayed translation into legislation or adequately funded implementation plans. The Biodiversity Strategy illustrates this challenge: despite its ambition, [by mid-2025, fewer than half of its recommendations had been fully implemented](#), hindered by political resistance and insufficient financing.

This lack of coherence across EU policies also extends to the EU's external action, where tools designed to advance climate goals abroad face similar implementation and prioritisation challenges. The EU's main instrument for external strategic engagement is the Global Gateway, a €300 billion investment initiative (€150 billion for Africa) focused on infrastructure, digitalisation, and green transitions. Relying strongly on blended finance, it leverages public grants and guarantees to mobilise private investment. While framed as a 360-degree approach intended to [strengthen local enabling environments](#), Global Gateway is

noted to be comparatively low on dedicated agri-food systems projects. This risks promoting an elite-centric [connectivity agenda](#), prioritising flagship projects and EU strategic interests over essential development needs such as adaptation, water governance, and biodiversity, areas vital for resilient agri-food systems.

The aforementioned gaps between commitments and action constitute a significant form of policy incoherence. They not only undermine progress toward domestic climate targets but also weaken the EU’s external credibility in global food and climate governance. To unpack the drivers of this incoherence, the next section provides a sectoral analysis of the key trade-offs and synergies at stake.

2. Assessing external policy coherence per sector

To assess the external coherence between the EU’s agri-food agenda and its climate commitments, this section adopts a sectoral approach. Inspired by the FAO’s [‘Global Roadmap on Achieving SDG2 without breaching the 1.5°C threshold’](#), it breaks down the food system into key domains for targeted analysis. This sectoral lens enables a more granular examination of how specific policy objectives align with overarching climate goals, as outlined in Table 2.

Table 2 - Key EU agri-food sectors and their ‘coherence’ with the 1.5°C target

1. Livestock	
Food system goal	To enhance the sector's resilience and strategic autonomy by improving production efficiency, ensuring high animal welfare standards, and guaranteeing economic viability for producers within the EU single market.
Climate goal	To reduce methane (CH ₄) emissions from enteric fermentation and manure, and nitrous oxide (N ₂ O) from manure application, in line with the EU’s economy-wide goal of climate neutrality by 2050.
Synergies	<p>Feed innovation & efficiency: developing and using novel feed additives and more digestible feed improves animal health and productivity, lowering the GHG emission intensity per unit of meat or milk.</p> <p>Circular bioeconomy: using manure in anaerobic digesters creates renewable energy (biogas), reduces methane emissions, and produces nutrient-rich biofertiliser, contributing to energy independence and circularity.</p>
Trade-offs	<p>Competitiveness vs. environmental standards: stricter environmental rules (e.g., on methane) may raise EU production costs relative to competitors, and while efficiency gains reduce emission intensity, absolute emissions remain incompatible with 1.5°C if output stays constant. Production scale vs. absolute emissions: maintaining high production levels to ensure strategic autonomy could still lead to high overall GHG emissions, even if the</p>

	emissions intensity per unit of production (e.g. per kg of meat or litre of milk) is reduced through efficiency gains.
Rating	Low / structurally misaligned
2. Fisheries and aquaculture	
Food system goal	To strengthen the EU's strategic autonomy in seafood by promoting sustainable domestic aquaculture and ensuring the long-term viability of EU fisheries through science-based management.
Climate goal	To reduce emissions from fishing vessel fuel consumption and protect 'blue carbon' ecosystems (like seagrass and mangroves) that sequester vast amounts of CO ₂ and serve as vital marine nurseries.
Synergies	Low-carbon aquaculture: expanding the farming of algae and shellfish (e.g., mussels, oysters) provides high-quality protein with a minimal carbon footprint, as these species sequester carbon and require no additional feed. Energy transition in fisheries: supporting more efficient engines, hybrid systems, and alternative fuels can significantly cut emissions. Since alternative fuels are not yet commercially viable, measures such as fuel taxes and targeted financial support are needed to overcome high upfront costs and accelerate adoption.
Trade-offs	Aquaculture feed dependency: For fed aquaculture (e.g., salmon, sea bass), the reliance on fishmeal or soy-based feed remains a challenge, as these ingredients have their own climate and environmental footprints. Developing sustainable alternative feeds is a priority.
Rating	Partial
3. Crop production (cereals & arable crops)	
Food system goal	To secure a stable and affordable supply of high-quality crops for food and feed, enhancing the EU's self-sufficiency and reducing dependencies on imports for key commodities.
Climate goal	To decrease emissions from agricultural inputs (e.g., fertilisers) and machinery, while promoting practices that increase carbon storage in soils and enhance crop resilience to climate shocks like drought and heatwaves
Synergies	Precision agriculture: adopting digital tools for targeted nutrient and water application boosts resource efficiency and farm profitability while cutting N ₂ O emissions and water use. Advanced plant breeding: developing new crop varieties that are more resistant to drought or require fewer inputs supports both climate adaptation and stable yields, bolstering food security.
Trade-offs	Yield maximisation vs. crop diversification: yield maximisation in major crops (e.g., wheat, maize) can conflict with diversification or externalisation strategies that improve soil health, local biodiversity and resilience. Although beneficial , diversification is often seen as less scalable or economically

	viable in the EU's highly mechanised system due to labour and market challenges.
Rating	Partial
4. Pesticide use	
Food system goal	To protect crops from pests and diseases, to ensure stable yields and high-quality food, and minimise risks to human health and the environment.
Climate goal	To enhance the resilience of agro-ecosystems by protecting biodiversity - including pollinators vital for many fruit, vegetable and oilseed crops - that is threatened by pesticide use. Healthy ecosystems are better able to adapt to climate change.
Synergies	Integrated pest management: Prioritising non-chemical methods like biocontrol, beneficial insects, and robust crop rotations reduces reliance on energy-intensive chemical pesticides and strengthens the farm's ecosystem balance (This is a strategy where the EU has already demonstrated tangible progress). Biopesticides & new genomic techniques: Fostering innovation in low-risk biopesticides and developing pest-resistant crop varieties can provide effective protection with a much smaller environmental footprint.
Trade-offs	Availability of alternatives: a rapid phase-out of certain chemical plant protection products without proven, affordable alternatives could expose farmers to significant crop losses and economic hardship. Such losses could perversely increase the overall climate footprint per unit of food produced, as the resources used in cultivation result in a lower yield.
Rating	Partial
5. Fertiliser & nutrient management	
Food system goal	To ensure crops receive optimal nutrition for high yields and quality , while minimising environmental leakage and pollution (e.g., dead zones), increasing Nitrogen Use Efficiency (NUE), and improving nutrient circularity to reduce dependency on imported fertiliser raw materials.
Climate goal	To drastically reduce nitrous oxide (N ₂ O) emissions from nitrogen fertilisers applied on the field, and to cut the carbon footprint from the industry's energy-intensive production, notably by supporting the shift from natural gas to green hydrogen .
Synergies	Nutrient Recycling (RENURE): processing manure into high-quality bio-fertilisers turns a surplus into a transportable nutrient source for crop regions, reducing reliance on gas-intensive synthetic fertilisers and supporting a circular nutrient market . Precision application: Soil sensors and variable-rate technology optimise nutrient use, cutting waste, limiting water pollution, and reducing N ₂ O emissions.
Trade-offs	Input costs vs. climate protection: while efficient nutrient management saves money in the long run, the upfront investment in precision technology

	can be a barrier. This trade-off is particularly acute in regions already subject to strict EU environmental regulations (e.g., the Nitrates Directive), which impose legal upper limits on nutrient application to combat pollution. For farmers in these areas, reducing fertiliser use without alternatives is a constraint that directly impacts yields and economic viability.
Rating	Weakened / major gaps
6. Forest and wetlands	
Food system goal	To reduce the pressure of food production on natural ecosystems by preventing agricultural expansion into forests and wetlands, and to better integrate woody vegetation (agroforestry) into farming systems to enhance biodiversity and farm resilience.
Climate goal	To achieve climate neutrality in the land use sector by 2035 by significantly increasing CO ₂ removals through afforestation, preventing deforestation, and restoring carbon-rich ecosystems like peatlands and wetlands. The EU is committed to preventing deforestation and forest degradation and supporting afforestation and agroforestry.
Synergies	Agroforestry integrates food production with on-farm carbon sequestration, while healthy ecosystems provide essential services such as water regulation and pollination; preventing deforestation therefore protects both global carbon sinks and the ecological foundations of agriculture.
Trade-offs	Reforestation farmland creates direct competition between climate goals and food production, posing a challenge to food security. The slower economic returns from forestry and ecosystem restoration projects create financial hurdles for landowners compared to annual cropping.
Rating	Potential high, implementation weak
7. Soil management	
Food system goal	To halt and reverse soil degradation to preserve the long-term productive capacity and fertility of European farmland, ensuring the foundation of food production for future generations.
Climate goal	To achieve climate-neutral land use by 2035, by significantly increasing carbon sequestration in agricultural soils to turn them into a net carbon sink, contingent on the successful restoration and rewetting of degraded peatlands currently under cultivation.
Synergies	Carbon farming: practices such as cover cropping, conservation tillage and agroforestry can increase soil organic carbon, directly sequestering CO ₂ . Although the total sequestration potential of croplands remains debated due to saturation limits , these practices deliver immediate adaptation benefits by improving soil structure, water retention and fertility. This strengthens yield resilience and reduces erosion. Improved soil health: healthy soils with high organic matter are better able to withstand droughts and floods, providing a

	natural buffer against climate extremes and enhancing the stability of food production.
Trade-offs	Land-use opportunity cost: Practices such as rewetting carbon-rich peatlands offer significant climate benefits but compete directly with agricultural land use. This requires careful spatial planning to balance climate goals with food security, as it involves taking land out of food production. Transition costs: farmers face initial investment costs and potential yield dips when transitioning to new soil management systems, necessitating strong financial support and advisory services.
Rating	Moderate to strong alignment, if scaled
8. Food loss, waste & circular economy	
Food system goal	To enhance resource efficiency across the food value chain, improve food availability, create new economic opportunities from side-streams, and address the significant challenge of food loss and waste.
Climate goal	To reduce the GHG emissions embedded in the entire lifecycle of food that is lost or wasted, from agricultural production to final disposal.
Synergies	Waste as a resource: EU policy actively supports a ‘waste as resource’ approach, which includes systematically redirecting surplus food to people, converting it to animal feed, or using it for bio-energy production (anaerobic digestion). These EU-backed circular economy practices directly avoid methane emissions from landfills and displace the need for other resources. Efficient supply chains: investments in cold chains and improved logistics reduce food loss and prevent the GHG emissions embedded in producing food that is ultimately wasted.
Trade-offs	Regulatory & logistical hurdles: efficient food-waste valorisation is costly and complex, and regulatory constraints (e.g., strict rules on using former foodstuffs as feed or cross-border waste-transport restrictions) can impede circularity if not made practical and harmonised.
Rating	High alignment, limited trade-offs
9. Healthy and sustainable diets	
Food system goal	To promote diets that are healthy for people and sustainable for the planet, ensuring all citizens have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious, and affordable food, as originally envisioned in the F2F Strategy.
Climate goal	To significantly reduce the overall GHG emissions and land-use footprint of the EU food system by encouraging a shift in consumption patterns away from high-impact products (such as red meat) towards more plant-rich diets.
Synergies	Lower-emission diets: shifting to more plant-rich diets reduces methane and nitrous oxide emissions from livestock. Freeing up land: reduced demand for animal products frees grazing and feed-crop land for

	restoration or carbon sequestration, easing critical land-use trade-offs.
Trade-offs	Political sensitivity: dietary change is contentious and often seen as limiting consumer choice, which is why it was largely excluded from the 2025 Vision on Agriculture and Food. Economic impacts: major shifts in consumption would significantly affect the EU livestock sector, requiring a carefully managed just transition for farmers and rural communities.
Rating	High mitigation potential, low political feasibility
10. Agricultural trade & supply chains	
Food system goal	To ensure a resilient and diversified supply of food and agricultural inputs, reducing strategic dependencies while promoting open and fair trade based on high standards
Climate goal	To ensure that EU consumption does not drive negative climate impacts abroad (e.g., deforestation) and to promote global climate action through its trade relationships and policies.
Synergies	Promoting sustainable sourcing: using trade agreements and due diligence legislation to ensure imports are produced sustainably (e.g., are deforestation-free) helps protect global carbon sinks and promotes a race-to-the-top on environmental standards. Partnerships on green tech: collaborating with partner countries, including in Africa, on developing green technologies (e.g., for green hydrogen or sustainable raw material processing) can create resilient, low-carbon supply chains for mutual benefit.
Trade-offs	Geopolitical Friction: applying the EU's high climate and environmental standards to imports (e.g., through mechanisms like the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism - CBAM) can be viewed as 'green protectionism' by trade partners, potentially leading to disputes and retaliatory measures. Cost & competitiveness: requiring adherence to EU standards can increase costs for producers in non-EU countries and for EU importers, which may affect consumer prices and the competitiveness of certain sectors. Supply-chain vulnerability: reducing reliance on climate-vulnerable imports (e.g., cocoa, soy, coffee) is necessary for resilience, but may complicate trade relations and require major adjustments in EU sourcing strategies.
Rating	Partial coherence depends heavily on support for partners

Source: [OECD, 2023](#); [EP, 2023](#); [Sanye Mengual et al. 2024](#); [Rabbi, 2025](#); [EC, 2025a](#).
Legend - Overall coherence with 1.5°C: ■ High; ■ Partial; ■ Low/Incoherent.

The assessment shows that although significant synergies exist across sectors, they are consistently constrained by fundamental trade-offs that prevent the EU's agri-food system from becoming fully Paris-compatible. Coherence opportunities are strongest in efficiency improvements (e.g., precision agriculture, innovative livestock feed), circular-economy approaches (such as nutrient recycling), and

investments in healthy ecosystems (e.g., soils and forests) that both sequester carbon and enhance resilience. Yet, these gains are offset by persistent tensions: balancing farmer competitiveness with higher environmental standards; managing land-use competition between food production and ecosystem restoration; and addressing the short-term economic risks farmers face when shifting to more sustainable practices.

Conclusion: eight recommendations up for the test

The EU's agri-food policy is marked by a growing disconnect from its climate commitments, as shown by both its evolution over time and its sectoral objectives. Temporally, the ambition of the 2020 Farm-to-Fork and Biodiversity Strategies has been steadily weakened by a political shift toward competitiveness, exemplified by the 2025 Vision on Agriculture and Food. Externally, persistent trade-offs – around competitiveness, land use, and implementation costs – prevent key agri-food sectors from being fully Paris-compatible. The result is a widening gap between strategic intent and concrete, enforceable action, undermining the EU's domestic climate targets and eroding its credibility as a global partner.

The EU's updated [Nationally Determined Contribution \(NDC\) for 2035](#) presents an opportunity to realign the EU's agri-food agenda with its climate goals: under the current Effort Sharing Regulation, EU member states have legally binding 2030 targets to reduce GHG emissions from agriculture. A share of [40% of the EU's total CAP financial allocation](#) (from 2023 until 2027) should contribute to achieving climate objectives.

However, recent signals, such as [discussions on merging green, defence, and space budgets](#), raise concerns that climate action could be further deprioritised. This risk is compounded by growing resistance from the climate-sceptic centre-right in the European Parliament and several EU member states, which continues to [oppose the EU's more ambitious emissions-reduction targets](#). To remain a credible global partner, the EU must demonstrate that its food system can deliver on competitiveness and economic security, while advancing climate resilience and climate mitigation, both within Europe and abroad.

The following eight recommendations are proposed to bridge this coherence gap, with actions targeting both the EU's domestic policies and its international engagement:

1. Develop a binding sectoral roadmap detailing how EU agriculture will meet its share of the 2040 emissions reduction target, per sector, and adapt systematically to a changing climate, based on the [FAO Global Roadmap](#).
2. Mandate systematic 'coherence checks' to assess and mitigate the external climate and development impacts of all new EU agri-food policies.
3. Ensure ambitious strategies are translated into binding legislation with clear implementation timelines and accountability mechanisms.
4. Establish a dedicated [Just Transition Mechanism](#) for the agri-food sector within the next MFF for the period 2028–2034 to support farmers through the green transition and to strengthen climate resilience. This mechanism, together with all EU development finance for agriculture, should be co-designed and governed in partnership with country-level stakeholders to align with national adaptation priorities and ensure measurable impact on the ground.
5. Elevate the twin goals of adaptation and mitigation in external agri-food policy by prioritising dedicated research and financial support for climate-resilient, low-emission food systems. This should include a significant increase in funding for the development and scaling of agri-mitigation tools (such as green hydrogen-based fertilisers and methane-reducing feed additives), which currently remain critically underfunded.
6. Co-design [Global Gateway](#) investments in agriculture in direct partnership with national and local stakeholders to guarantee they are fully aligned with the adaptation priorities identified by partner countries in their National Adaptation Plans and NDCs.
7. Ring-fence a significant portion of the EU's external action budget within the next MFF for [nature protection and restoration programmes](#) (not just mainstreaming) because of the significant co-benefits for food systems, climate adaptation and resilience, particularly in fragile contexts.
8. Use international forums, such as the G7 and G20, to advocate for a global framework that supports a range of context-specific sustainable farming systems and just transitions, especially in the most climate-vulnerable nations.

These recommendations could help improve policy coherence. They are designed to improve temporal coherence by locking in long-term climate ambition and counteracting the recent trend of policy dilution. Furthermore, ensuring the EU maintains a positive and significant contribution to the Paris

Agreement abroad, even as domestic ambitions face political headwinds, is key to ensuring external coherence. The [experience at COP30](#) underscored this urgency: while food systems featured prominently in the Action Agenda – through initiatives such as the Fertilisers Declaration – this visibility failed to translate into meaningful negotiated outcomes, leaving food systems largely absent from the final texts. By implementing these measures, the EU can complement its domestic agenda and ensure it remains a credible and effective global partner in the fight for a 1.5°C-compatible future.

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