



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL
JOINT RESEARCH CENTRE

Summary report

The Future of Food in the EU

Symposium co-organised by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (DG JRC) and the Trio Presidency of Malta, Slovakia and the Netherlands

27 June 2017, Brussels, Permanent Representation of the Netherlands to the EU

Highlights

The rich discussions at the symposium converged on the following points:

- **There is a need for an all-encompassing debate on more comprehensive policy options on the different aspects of food in Europe.**
- **Foresight, and in particular scenario building, provides a valuable input to discussions about future policies.**
- **A holistic approach is needed, considering the different elements, perspectives of the food system and their interlinkages.**
- **The current debate on the future of the EU provides an opportunity to include considerations on the future of food in the EU.**

Context

A growing world population, scarcer natural resources, climate change and unhealthy eating habits are some of the major developments the European and global food systems will be faced with in the future. This translates into significant challenges in terms of public health, environmental sustainability and food and nutrition security.

The European Commission's Joint Research Centre (DG JRC), in close collaboration with DG Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE), carried out a foresight study¹ to assess the resilience of the current legislative and policy framework for food safety and nutrition, thus complementing the ex-post assessment of the on-going REFIT exercise with a forward looking perspective.

¹ Foresight is a process aimed at providing the necessary anticipatory intelligence to shape medium- to long-term policies. It enhances forward-looking thinking by gathering a wide range of stakeholders and knowledge sources and by systematically exploring alternative perspectives on the future to guide today's decision-making. In contrast to predicting the future, Foresight considers the future as something that can be created and formed. In this sense, Foresight supports actors and stakeholders in actively shaping the future.

The results of the foresight study '*Delivering on EU food safety and nutrition in 2050 – Future challenges and policy preparedness*², in particular the four distinct future scenarios, were at the centre of the half-day symposium on '*The future of food in the EU*', co-organised by the DG JRC with the Trio-Presidency of Malta, Slovakia and the Netherlands.

The symposium reflected on the usefulness, necessity and scope of an EU food policy (or EU food strategy), also against the background of the debate on the reform of the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), and the question whether the CAP should pay more attention to a broader set of challenges, other than the ones faced by the primary sector.

The programme of the symposium combined the presentation of the study results and perspectives on food policies from Sweden, Italy and the Netherlands, plus DG Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI), with a panel discussion with various stakeholders (see programme in Annex 1, and presentations in Annex 2).

Presentations

After opening and introductory remarks by Robert de Groot, Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the EU, Alexander Micovin, Deputy Permanent Representative of Slovakia to the EU, and Charlina Vitcheva, Deputy Director-General of DG JRC, the foresight approach and the results of the study, with a focus on the four future scenarios, was presented by Franz Ulberth, Head of Unit in DG JRC. The scenarios were constructed based on different developments of specific drivers that can significantly impact and bring change to the food system. These drivers are global trade, EU economic growth, agro-food chain structure, technology uptake, social cohesion, food values, climate change, depletion of natural resources and world population growth. The resulting scenarios describe four alternative, distinct directions of development:

Global food: globalised food chains and a further concentrated global food industry with a pre-dominance of highly processed convenience food.

Regional food: trade fragmentation, the EU moves towards a circular, self-sufficient economy with citizens actively involved in food production.

Pharma food: the striving EU food industry is the global market leader in functional and pharmaceutical food, catering to the demand of very health aware citizens.

Partnership food: a non-competitive EU teams up with an economically stronger partner while facing brain-drain and loss of technological know-how with predominance of highly processed convenience food.

For each scenario, a number of food safety and nutrition challenges were identified and prioritised based on their importance and likelihood to occur. On this basis, scenario-specific policy options were developed to inform policy-makers on how these challenges may be addressed to ensure resilience of the future EU food safety and nutrition regulatory framework.

² <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/publication/eur-scientific-and-technical-research-reports/delivering-eu-food-safety-and-nutrition-2050-future-challenges-and-policy-preparedness>. Printed copies available on request at jrc-f-dir-office@ec.europa.eu.

Tassos Haniotis, Director DG AGRI C (Strategy, Simplification and Policy Analysis) detailed the CAP-related aspects of food production and consumption in the EU. Climate change is expected to have a considerable impact in the future, while trade might move from multilateral to more fragmentation and bilateral agreements. Mr Haniotis identified tensions and possible trade-offs between economic interests and environmental aspects, and between jobs and growth in times of increasing automation of food production processes. The issue of antimicrobial resistance (AMR), which is becoming more urgent, is one example where several policy areas need to work together to find a solution. In general, the choice of political instruments needs to be discussed in the context of the future CAP and any future food policy, e.g. will regulation, incentives, or subsidies coupled with certain requirements best serve the objectives?

Three EU Member States presented their perspectives on national food strategies. Sweden (presentation by Mathilda Åberg, DHoU, Ministry for Enterprise and Innovation) set up a national food strategy 2030 which includes resilience as a main element. The agreed vision aspires towards a competitive food chain where the total food production increases, while reducing vulnerability of the food chain and sustainably increasing self-sufficiency.

Felice Assenza, Director-General for International Affairs of the Italian Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, called for an integrated food policy at national, EU and global level to face the challenges ahead in terms of climate change, natural resource scarcity and thus food and nutrition security. The *Milan Charter*,³ an initiative stemming from the Expo 2015, endorses this need. Italy already took action to move towards a more sustainable food chain. Most notably are co-operations with industry on food reformulation and advertisement to children to reduce the obesity burden of children, plus initiatives to reduce food waste.

The Netherlands started considering a more holistic food policy already in 2012. Frans Brom from the Dutch Scientific Council for Government Policy, presented the 2012 report '*Towards a food policy*'. The development over the past years of an increasingly complex 'food net', and the interdependency of production and consumption calls for a more encompassing policy approach, a food strategy, with a focus on the resilience of the 'food net'. Mr Brom emphasised the need for an EU-level food strategy with a clear vision and objectives.

Panel discussion

In the ensuing **panel discussion**, led by Krijn Poppe, Wageningen University, the following stakeholders participated:

- Beate Kettlitz, Director, Food Policy, Science and R&I of Food Drink Europe
- Ladislav Miko, Deputy DG for Food Safety of the European Commission, DG SANTE
- Wojciech Kalamarz, Head of Unit for Health Determinants & Inequality of the European Commission, DG SANTE
- Jock Martin, Head of Integrated Environmental Assessments at the European Environment Agency
- Camille Perrin, Senior Food Policy Officer, European Consumer Organisation BEUC
- Beat Späth, Director for Agricultural Biotech of EuropaBio

³ <http://carta.milano.it/en/>

Krijn Poppe structured the discussion along the four scenarios of the JRC foresight study. While it is not expected that we will see any one of the four scenarios becoming reality, we will probably see the parallel development of several of the trends and impacts described in the scenarios.

The '**Global food**' scenario was perceived as reflecting a business as usual perspective with many of the described trends already being visible, such as obesity and increasing antimicrobial resistance. Affordability of food is thought to play a major role in the context of healthy diets. While initiatives to prevent diet-related chronic diseases have been started in the EU and are being monitored, the question remains if this will be sufficient to effect considerable change as we move towards 2050, or if measures in addition to, for example, reformulation of food, need to be taken. Reformulation is a challenge for the food industry but can also be an opportunity to move to more innovative products. The food industry already engages in research initiatives to foster healthier lifestyles, including healthier diets.

For making a circular economy with significantly reduced resource use happen, as described in the scenario '**Regional food**', more needs to be known about the relationships between production, consumption and related resource use. The implications of an ageing population for food consumption and population density in rural areas could be further explored. In this scenario, maybe lower levels of food safety will need to be accepted, as individual producers and e.g. street food will gain more importance. However, liability rules will need to be in place to cover any future 'Food Uber', and the food industry will strive to avoid food safety scandals to protect their reputation. In terms of nutrition, learning the lessons from the tobacco case, a societal debate would be needed whether banning certain foods should be considered or not. While a further integration of food-related policies is considered necessary, upcoming challenges can be tackled with the current distribution of responsibilities in the Commission (and Member States).

Health plays a significant role in the '**Pharma food**' scenario, with a lot of emphasis placed on disease prevention via personalised diets and foods. While broad consumer acceptance and usefulness of such food is questioned, some people already today pursue this kind of nutrition and the regulator needs to be ready if this trend should increase. In addition, the future context might change should, for example, health care systems come under increasing pressure. Possible risks of new food technologies should be considered and discussed early on in the development process to avoid drawbacks later on.

The loss of technological know-how, as described in the scenario '**Partnership food**', is thought to happen already today for agro-biotechnology. However, some expect that consumers will never become as indifferent to the food they eat as described in the scenario.

In their **final statements**, participants called for including the future of food in the (societal) discussions about the future of the EU. They also emphasised that 'more Europe' is needed in the area of nutrition and health. Arūnas Vinčiūnas, Head of cabinet of Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis, invited Member States to put forward a reflection paper on future food policy to complement the range of reflection papers produced by the Commission in the context of the discussions about the future of the EU. He identified education as one of the main avenues to foster change in relation to reduction of food waste, overcoming the fear of technological progress and the move towards healthier diets. Furthermore, the role of regulation for these issues needs to be discussed.

Neil Kerr, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the EU, **closed the meeting** expressing hopes that the symposium will contribute to the European debate on the future of food. Notably that it will stimulate the necessary forward thinking to facilitate a policy development and implementation that reflects Europe's leading role in food safety and nutrition security.

This summary report was produced by the JRC:

Actors	Names	Dates
Prepared by	Anne-Kathrin Bock	05/07/2016
Checked by	Franz Ulberth	06/07/2016
Authorised by	Charlina Vitcheva	07/07/2016

Annex 1 Agenda



Symposium on
The Future of Food in the EU

organised by
the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission
together with
the Trio Presidency of Malta, Slovakia and the Netherlands

on
27 June 2017 from 9.00-13.00h

@ the Permanent Representation of the Netherlands to the EU, Kortenberglaan 4-10, Brussels

This symposium will present the JRC Foresight Study "**Delivering on EU Food Safety and Nutrition in 2050 – Future challenges and policy preparedness**", commissioned by DG SANTE, share views and food policies of Member States and will provide a platform for a multi-disciplinary discussion on the Future of Food in the EU with stakeholders representing a wide range of perspectives related to the entire food chain. The goal of the symposium is to contribute to the European debate on the future of food, stimulate forward thinking and subsequently provide input to policy development and implementation that reflects Europe's leading role in food safety and nutrition security.

Program

- 9.00 - **Registration** and coffee/tea
- 9.30 - Opening by **Robert de Groot**, NL PR to the EU and **Alexander Micovin**, SK DPR to the EU
- 9.35 - Welcome by **Charlina Vitcheva**, Deputy DG of the Joint Research Centre
- 9.40 - Presentation of the JRC Foresight Study "**Delivering on EU Food Safety and Nutrition in 2050 – Future challenges and policy preparedness**"*, by **Franz Ulberth**, Joint Research Centre
- 10.10 - Perspective of DG AGRI on the Future of Food in the EU, by **Tassos Haniotis**, Director of Strategy, Simplification and Policy Analysis of DG AGRI
- 10.25 - Presentation of perspectives on Food Policies of **Member States**
 - **Mathilda Åberg**, Dty. Head of Unit for Agriculture & Environment of the Ministry for Enterprise and Innovation of **Sweden**
 - **Felice Assenza**, DG for International Affairs of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry of **Italy**
 - **Frans Brom**, Director of **The Netherlands** Scientific Council for Government Policy
- 11.10 - Coffee break
- 11.40 - Panel discussion on The Future of Food:
 - **Olivier De Schutter**, Co-Chair of IPES-Food and former UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food
 - **Ladislav Miko**, Deputy DG for Food Safety of the European Commission
 - **Beate Kettlitz**, Director Food Policy, Science and R&I of Food Drink Europe
 - **Wojciech Kalamarz**, Head of Unit for Health Determinants & Inequality of the European Commission
 - **Jock Martin**, Head of Integrated Environmental Assessments at the EU Environment Agency of the EC
 - **Camille Perrin**, Senior Food Policy Officer, European Consumer Organisation BEUC
 - **Beat Späth**, Director for Agricultural Biotech of EuropaBio
- 13.10 - Closing remarks by the **European Commission**
- 13.15 - Closing by **Neil Kerr**, Dty. Permanent Representative of the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the EU

Annex 2 Presentations

Franz Ulberth, DG JRC



170627 Food
Symposium - DG JRC

Tassos Haniotis, DG AGRI



170627 Food
Symposium - DG AGR

Mathilda Åberg, Ministry for Enterprise and Innovation of Sweden



170627 Food
Symposium - SE contr

Felice Assenza, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry of Italy



170627 Food
Symposium - IT contr

Frans Brom, The Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy



170627 Food
Symposium - NL contr