

ECVC position on soy and other protein crop production in Europe

(English original)

Soybean has become one of the most important agricultural commodities in Europe and the world. Demand is fuelled mainly by the industrial livestock industry, which uses soy as a high-protein ingredient for compound feed.

Past attempts to regulate the industry had no success. Given that soy is such a financially valuable crop, actors across the entire supply chain have scrambled to maintain access to profits. From seed producers to retailers, powerful players in the industry have vested interests in its continued expansion.

The European Union (EU) imports huge quantities of soy, mainly for its meat, egg and dairy industries. **Any efforts towards protein self-sufficiency in Europe should be based around small-scale peasant producers and family farms.** This does not mean upscaling them in order to be incorporated into exploitative value-chains controlled by commodity traders but to ensure their diversity and autonomy and active participation on the market.

The European Coordination Via Campesina supports:

- ✓ efforts towards greater self-sufficiency in sustainable plant-protein in the EU
- ✓ stopping GM soybean imports
- ✓ removing the burden of EU agricultural protein demand on tropical rainforests, other valuable ecosystems, and the local peasant communities they support
- ✓ more widespread and diverse agroecological cultivation of legume varieties in the EU to improve soil quality and phase out chemical fertiliser use

However, ECVC believes that this cannot be achieved in a truly inclusive and sustainable manner under the corporate industrial model that currently dominates EU agriculture. Moreover, ECVC observes that so-called multi-stakeholder initiatives, like the Donau Soja Initiative provide a platform for continued corporate domination and are undermining the fair rights to land and market for peasant farmers, especially from Eastern Europe.

In order to overcome the concerns highlighted in this document, ECVC demands:

- ✓ the discrediting of the myth that soybean is crucial for food security. It is already exposed how it is simply an input for the unsustainable industrial livestock industry.
- ✓ placing peasants and small-scale agro-ecological producers at the centre of the new CAP and protein strategy, and strengthening their position vis-à-vis large agribusiness and supermarkets
- ✓ focusing protein strategies around diverse intercropping of local peasant varieties for short-supply chains
- ✓ greater regulation under the new CAP to ensure that markets serve local benefits of peasants and rural communities, rather than putting producers at the mercy of free market policies and hit them with dumping of protein feed.
- ✓ Ending direct-payments based on size of holding to avoid incentivising industrial-scale production and land concentration for soy production in large monoculture.
- ✓ applying the FAO's Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure on Land, Fisheries and Forests within EU Member States.
- ✓ the creation of an EU land directive in order to increase transparency of land transactions and discourage protein-market speculation.
- ✓ introducing official measures to tackle the over-consumption of meat in the EU.

We demand that the concerns presented receive the scrutiny that has so far been non-existent in EU policies. We believe that our proposals and peasant perspective provide constructive recommendations on pursuing a truly sustainable protein self-sufficiency feeding into the accomplishment of food sovereignty in Europe.

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