



## Fertilisers Action Plan offers no real solutions to input dependency

**European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC) takes note of the Fertilisers Action Plan presented yesterday by the European Commission. In a context of highly volatile energy and fertiliser prices, the European Commission urgently needs to take steps to reduce European agriculture's dependence on imported synthetic nitrogen fertilisers. The current crisis once again shows the vulnerability of a model dependent on imported gas and synthetic inputs, as already experienced during the fertiliser and pesticide crises following the Russian war in Ukraine.**

However, ECVC underlines that no fertiliser strategy can succeed without addressing the root cause of this dependence: the lack of agricultural market regulation, the constant pressure placed on farmers' incomes and the industrial agricultural model that pushes farms towards increasing dependence on external inputs.

For decades, farmers have been trapped in an economic model forcing them to produce more and more at ever lower prices. This logic drives territorial specialisation, concentration of livestock production and dependence on chemical inputs. The fertiliser crisis is now revealing the limits of this model. Synthetic fertilisers also play a major role in climate change, both through fossil gas-dependent production and through nitrous oxide emissions linked to their use in agriculture. For ECVC, the answer cannot be another headlong rush towards so-called "green" fertilisers or new forms of technological dependency through precision farming, carbon farming or digital nutrient management tools. Concrete alternatives already exist, such as territorial, mixed crop-livestock farming systems that reduce dependency on external inputs based on agroecology. Such models are capable of reducing dependence on synthetic fertilisers while strengthening farmer autonomy, soil fertility, biodiversity and resilience.

The soon-to-be-published evaluation of the Nitrates Directive must not lead to deregulation that further drives industrial and concentrated models of livestock farming in some territories while weakening farming in others. It must protect water, soils and biodiversity from pollution caused by excessive nutrient concentration and intensive farming systems. Simply replacing synthetic fertilisers with ever greater amounts of organic fertilisers will not solve the problem if the same intensive model continues. Transporting nutrient surpluses across Europe instead of reducing livestock concentration and reconnecting crops and livestock territorially will also not solve the structural problem. The priority must be balanced, territorial and agroecological farming systems that reconnect crops and livestock, reduce dependency on external inputs, and strengthen farmer autonomy. Farmers must also keep the right to produce and use self-made fertilisers and farm-based nutrient systems as part of peasant agroecology. Europe does not need new forms of dominance and dependency. The priority must be supporting the autonomy of farms and much more ambitious agroecological transition.

Furthermore, the focus within the Fertilisers Action Plan to address fertiliser use via ETS mechanisms, carbon markets, and the Carbon Removals and Carbon Farming (CRCF) framework risks transforming farmers into providers of carbon and environmental services for polluting sectors. Fertiliser policies must not become another entry point for a broader carbon market and compensation logic in agriculture, but rather address the root causes by moving away from industrial farming models that

depend on important and synthetic inputs, reducing real carbon emission levels, and ensuring the most polluting sectors are held responsible for their environmental impact.

This must be fully integrated into the next CAP reform through stronger support for agroecological farming systems, including the development of legumes in crop rotations, mixed crop-livestock farming systems and pastoralism. The CAP must also support practices that structurally reduce dependence on synthetic nitrogen fertilisers and prioritise small and medium-sized farms, which are already leading agroecological transitions across Europe.

ECVC also underlines that European food sovereignty requires public mechanisms that regulate agricultural markets and guarantee fair prices for farmers. This requires:

- Strengthening the tools of the Common Market Organisation (CMO).
- Strengthening the European Directive against Unfair Trading Practices.
- Putting an end to the relentless expansion of free trade agreements.

ECVC underlines that farmers and rural communities must play a central role in these discussions. The voices of small and medium-sized farmers and people engaged in territorial and agroecological farming systems are essential to developing measures that truly reduce dependency on external inputs and support a just transition for agriculture. Europe's strategic autonomy will be built through territorial, mixed crop-livestock farming systems based on peasant agroecology and market regulation, not through the continued industrialisation of agriculture.

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