

## Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food

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(Please use this reference in your reply)

12 June 2025

Excellency,

I have the honour to address you in my capacity as Special Rapporteur on the right to food, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 58/10.

I am an independent human rights expert appointed and mandated by the United Nations Human Rights Council to report and advise on human rights issues from a thematic perspective. I am part of the special procedures system of the United Nations, which has 60 thematic and country mandates on a broad range of human rights issues. I am sending this letter under the communications procedure of the Special Procedures of the United Nations Human Rights Council to seek clarification on the information I have received. Special Procedures mechanisms can intervene directly with Governments and other stakeholders (including companies) on allegations of abuses of human rights that come within their mandates by means of letters, which include urgent appeals, allegation letters, and other communications. The intervention may relate to a human rights violation that has already occurred, is ongoing, or which has a high risk of occurring. The process involves sending a letter to the concerned actors identifying the facts of the allegation, applicable international human rights norms and standards, the concerns and questions of the mandate-holder(s), and a request for follow-up action. Communications may deal with individual cases, general patterns and trends of human rights violations, cases affecting a particular group or community, or the content of draft or existing legislation, policy or practice considered not to be fully compatible with international human rights standards.

In this connection, I would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information I have received concerning **the European Union's (EU) Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Simplification Package, introduced by the European Commission on 14 May 2025**. While I am aware that no formal call for input has yet been issued, and the proposal is currently under consideration by the European Parliament and Council, I believe this is a timely opportunity to offer my reflections, given the far-reaching implications of CAP reform for the right to food, both within the EU and globally.

This contribution is put forward in a spirit of constructive engagement, and with the understanding that the CAP Simplification Package is part of a broader roadmap to streamline the EU's agricultural legal framework. My thoughts and recommendations regarding potential human rights impacts of the CAP simplification measures, aim supporting the EU in aligning its agricultural policy reforms with international human rights obligations.

Permanent Delegation of the European Union

According to the information received:

On 14 May 2025, the European Commission introduced a comprehensive package of measures aimed at simplifying CAP and enhancing the competitiveness of the agricultural sector. The package builds on earlier 2024 reforms and stems from the Vision for Agriculture and Food announced in February 2025.

This initiative targets key issues such as administrative burdens, controls, crisis response, and investment needs. The proposed changes could save up to €1.58 billion annually for farmers and €210 million for national administrations. It supports a broader effort aligned with the EU's Competitiveness Compass and prioritizes the resilience, digitalisation, and sustainability of EU agriculture, with special attention to small, young, and organic farmers.

A significant element of the reform is on-farm simplification, with a focus on better adjusting requirements to diverse farming systems. This includes adjustments to the CAP conditionality framework to align with organic practices, enabling payments per livestock and beehives under agri-environment-climate commitments and eco-schemes, and introducing greater flexibility in the application of Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAEC) standards 1, 2, and 4, while still ensuring their environmental objectives are met.

Environmental requirements and controls are also being streamlined. Certified organic farms will automatically meet specific EU environmental criteria, and incentives will be offered to support practices like protecting peatlands.

The package strengthens crisis response mechanisms, providing more accessible payments in the event of disasters or disease, and granting Member States greater flexibility in adapting CAP Strategic Plans, including the possibility of swift disbursement of crisis payments. Compensation for direct losses such as damage to crops, livestock, or agricultural products, will primarily fall under national risk and crisis management strategies, supported through their CAP Strategic Plans. Meanwhile, broader market disturbances, including those indirectly triggered by climate or health events, will continue to be addressed via the EU-level agricultural reserve.

While acknowledging the complexity and importance of the CAP in shaping agricultural practices, rural livelihoods, and food systems across Europe, I wish to emphasize that simplification efforts must align with fundamental rights and social protection standards - including the right to food and the other relevant human rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas.

I wish to emphasize that small scale farming plays a pivotal role on preserving European agrobiodiversity, quality food at affordable prices and hydrogeological preservation and welfare of inner and mountain areas of the region, which often do not benefit of other opportunities. Therefore, this system of production often linked to agroecological practices should be preserved conscious of the potential risks of sacrificing it in favour of market dynamics. Simplification should also involve looking

at specific needs of smaller scale producers and peasants, who are unfortunately marginalized.

While the proposal includes multiple measures for organic farming such as aligning CAP conditionality with organic practices, allowing livestock and beehive payments under eco-schemes, and greater flexibility in Good agricultural and environmental conditions (GAEC) standards, it lacks explicit recognition and support for agroecological farming systems, which integrate ecological science with traditional knowledge and local innovation. I would therefore recommend a fair share of CAP resources to be redirected toward agroecological transition, farmer-to-farmer knowledge exchange, and community-supported agriculture (CSA). Agroecology has been widely recognized by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) as key to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targets. Hence, I believe agroecology should be streamlined in the Agri-Environment-Climate Commitments which are referred to in the simplification package.

It is equally important to support those who are unable to afford formal certification costs and promote participatory guarantee systems (PGS). PGS are territorial based quality assurance systems for agricultural products, which are increasingly seen as an alternative to third-party certifications for organic and agroecological systems. A more concrete step in this direction would be to recognize the principle that sanitary standards should be proportional to the scale of production, and local peasant farming should not be overburdened by controls for risks that are related to large- scale production and distribution. These often hamper access to markets for smaller producers.

The CAP simplification process could also be the right time and opportunity to ensure that CAP policies legally recognise farmer-managed seed systems and reiterate precautionary approaches towards new breeding techniques (NBTs) and genetically modified organisms (GMOs) that undermine seed sovereignty. My thematic report on seed systems (A/HRC/49/43), titled *'Seeds, the right to life and farmers' rights'*, could serve as a valuable point of reference for further information on this important issue.

The emphasis that the proposal puts on the issue of European self-sufficiency in its paragraph 61 is indeed commendable. Paragraph 61 highlights the need to refocus the agricultural reserve on addressing market disturbances. In this context, measures such as price stabilisation including public stockpiling and supply management should be considered to enhance resilience and protect farmers from market volatility.

While the proposal refers in its paragraph 11 to points 1.5, 1.7, 1.9, and 1.10 of annex II to Regulation (EU) 2018/848, which aim to reduce the risk of water pollution by limiting the use of veterinary medicinal products and restricting the use of fertilizers and pesticides, I also recommend vigilant monitoring of their continued use, with particular attention to their impacts on soil depletion, water and air pollution, biodiversity loss, and overall public health.

Access to land, agroecological practices and local, territorial markets are highly important for ensuring the right to food for current and future generations, and should be looked at carefully by CAP.

Related to this, I also believe more attention should be directed towards land rights, including access to land for younger generations. While designing land adaptation policies, I recommend considering all forms of land-use change induced by climate change. This includes also consideration of the impact of European agriculture and livestock beyond EU borders.

I would like to encourage European Institutions to actively promote small-scale farmer participation on national level' dialogues and plans. Access to land, agroecological practices and local, territorial markets are highly important for ensuring the right to food for current and future generations, and should be looked at carefully by the CAP. This would ensure that any reform or simplification of the CAP does not result in the marginalization of small-scale food producers or the weakening of agroecological practices.

On a more general note, I wish to use this opportunity to further encourage the European Commission and the European Parliament to prioritize support for agroecology, secure access to land, seed sovereignty, and territorial markets as integral components of a food system grounded in human rights. I would also like to stress the importance of protecting territorial markets from unfair competition and promoting public procurement policies at national level. A general recommendation would be to monitor the growing concentration of corporate power across the agricultural value chain from input provision to product distribution and to adopt additional measures that address the widening gap between production costs and retail prices, ensuring fairer returns for farmers.

The recommendations and suggestions above are stemming from international human rights norms, particularly referring to social economic rights and the rights of peasants and people living in rural areas.

Article 11(1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) recognizes “the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing, and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions.” Article 2 stresses the importance of international cooperation for achieving the progressive realisation of the right to food. As stated in general comment 12, “States parties should recognize the essential role of international cooperation and comply with their commitment to take joint and separate action to achieve the full realization of the right to adequate food.”

I also wish to refer to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP), which provides in article 15 (para. 4 and 5) that Peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right to determine their own food and agriculture systems, recognized by many States and regions as the right to food sovereignty. This includes the right to participate in decision-making processes on food and agriculture policy and the right to healthy and adequate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods that respect their cultures. States shall formulate, in partnership with peasants and other people working in rural areas, public policies at the local, national, regional, and international levels to advance and protect the right to adequate food, food security, food sovereignty, and sustainable and equitable food systems. Article 16 of UNDROP

states in para. 1 that peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families and to facilitated access to the means of production necessary to achieve them, including production tools, technical assistance, credit, insurance and other financial services. Para. 3 implies that States shall take appropriate measures to strengthen and support local, national and regional markets in ways that facilitate and ensure that peasants and other people working in rural areas have full and equitable access and participation in these markets to sell their products at prices that allow them and their families to attain an adequate standard of living.

As it is my responsibility, under the mandate provided to me by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to my attention, I would be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and/or comment(s) you may have on the above.
2. In pursuing CAP simplification, how do EU institutions intend to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach that may inadvertently sideline small-scale and agroecological farmers, many of whom lack access to the same support mechanisms as industrial producers?
3. What are the measures intended within the CAP framework to rebalance power, protect local markets from unfair competition, and uphold the economic viability of peasant and family farming?
4. Please provide information on how the Commission intends to monitor and address the growing concentration of corporate power along the agricultural value chain from input provision to product distribution in order to reduce the widening gap between production costs and retail prices and ensure equitable returns for farmers.

This communication, as a comment on pending or recently adopted legislation, regulations or policies, and any response received from your Excellency's Government will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) after 48 hours. They will also subsequently be made available in the usual report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Michael Fakhri  
Special Rapporteur on the right to food