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**FOOD SECURITY PROMOTION IN TIMES OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND COVID-19:
A BATTLE OF NARRATIVES SHAPING A FRAGMENTED EU POLICY ACTION?**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic sparked a health and human crisis that is threatening the food security and nutrition of millions of people around the world. The pandemic has hit the world at a moment when an intense public debate on the future of the European food systems in the face of the increasingly devastating global effects of climate change was already taking place. Against that background, in May 2020 the European Commission published the Farm to Fork strategy. A battle of narratives over the best approach to promote food security in the EU is currently ongoing: the advocates of the liberal paradigm axed on international trade, the proponents of a geopolitical approach to food security, and the proponents of a human rights approach to food security. Who has the better chances to succeed?

Short bio

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FOOD SECURITY IN TIMES OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND COVID-19: A battle of narratives shaping a fragmented EU policy action?

Introduction

According to FAO, food security is achieved if adequate food (quantity, quality, safety, socio-cultural acceptability) is available and accessible for and satisfactorily utilised by all individuals at all times to live a healthy and happy life (FAO, 2012). The EU is committed to achieving UN Sustainable Development Goal 2 of Zero Hunger and has been working with partners around the world to achieve global food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture and aquaculture. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on global food and nutrition security add a further layer of complexity to the EU food security promotion efforts. While the relative strength of EU food systems is preventing an immediate COVID-19-related risk to the food security of most European citizens, deep global economic shocks caused by COVID-19 are producing worrying impacts. Areas of concern include the decreasing income available to European households for food purchase, as well as limited financial liquidity of European producers, small and medium agri-businesses and financial institutions due to inhibited production capacity, limited market access, raising unemployment, and unexpected medical costs. Against this background, the European Commission issued its new Farm to Fork Strategy in May 2020, with the declared objective to make the EU food system *fair, healthy and environmentally friendly* from production to consumption (European Commission, 2020). Since its publication, the Farm to Fork Strategy sparked a heated debate on the real goals driving EU action through the new policy. Some observers have opined that the Farm to Fork overall objective to make Europe the global standard-setter in agri-food sustainability reflects a rather traditional approach to international relations based on the EU attempt to influence third parties' behaviour through the power of attraction of its *norms* (Bjerjem and Harbour, 2020). According to such interpretation, in the absence of hard tools available to coerce international actors into following its desired course of action, the EU employs its *green diplomacy* instruments (Oertel et al., 2020) to co-opt partners into accepting its framework for multilateral cooperation. Central to this notion are the Farm to Fork provisions aimed at curbing CO₂ emissions and the use of chemical pesticides that, by leveraging the power of the Single Market, establish a framework of norms and benchmarks ensuring the competitiveness of the EU agri-food sector on the global markets.

Other analyses have highlighted the Farm to Fork insistence on the concept of EU food systems *resilience* (European Commission, 2020b) to provide a very different interpretation of the new policy's real goals. According to such analyses, Farm to Fork objectives to shorten food supply chains and reduce food imports are consistent with the recent EU turn towards achieving *strategic autonomy* (Council of the EU, 2020) to reduce structural dependence on external actors in key sectors. In this view, the Farm to Fork Strategy is a useful tool to implement the *geopolitical approach* to global affairs envisaged by European Commission President Von der Leyen as a political upgrade allowing Europe to become more assertive and comfortable with the defence of its strategic interests (European Commission, 2019).

Finally, a last group of critics has read the Farm to Fork emphasis on European farms and the empowerment of small-scale local producers as the sign that the EU is moving from a traditional self-representation as a free market champion treating *food as a regular commodity* to a new one as a responsible actor treating *food as a public good* (Duncan et al., 2020). In this sense, the Farm



FOOD SECURITY IN TIMES OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND COVID-19: A battle of narratives shaping a fragmented EU policy action?

to Fork objective to progressively shift away from the current globalised supply chains and make the fair treatment of vulnerable EU food systems actors a priority is interpreted as an important step towards a *food sovereignty* approach which prioritises the rights of all European citizens over the economic growth paradigm (Olech, 2020). This reflection paper argues that current EU food security promotion efforts are shaped by a combination of elements from all the intellectual trends described above. In light of recent political developments and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the EU food systems, the paper aims at discussing the implications for the development of a coherent EU strategy of the different interpretations of the EU as a food security provider. The first section deals with the EU as a free market champion relying on international trade to support food security within and outside its borders. The second section discusses the EU as a geopolitical actor linking food security with the core strategic interest of its Member States. The third session deals with the EU as an actor moving beyond the economic growth paradigm to address unsustainable social lock-ins and entrenched food systems economic inequalities. The conclusion sums up the findings of the paper and attempts to reconcile the different approaches to food security identified into three concrete scenarios describing the emergence of potential coalitions and their implications for the development of a coherent EU food security promotion strategy.

The EU as an international trade champion for global food security

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a health and human crisis that is threatening the food security and nutrition of millions of people around the world. About 690 million of people, or the 8.9% of the world population, were already undernourished before the virus hit (FAO, 2020) and the number is projected to increase substantially due to the effects of the measures taken to contain and reduce the contagion. As Member States continue to roll out sizable relief and stimulus packages agreed at the EU level (European Commission, 2020c), in the longer term, the combined effects of the mitigation measures taken to address COVID-19 and the emerging global recession could, without targeted and coordinated action, produce severe consequences on EU citizens' food security.

So far, the overall EU's response to food security issues caused by the global pandemic has been in line with its dominant paradigm which considers free market principles and practices as the most effective tools to support swift international solutions to global problems. Caught between a rock and a hard stone with its €151.2 billion export and €119.3 billion import agri-food trade turnover in 2019 (European Commission, 2020d), the EU seemed naturally inclined to call on its Member States to "keep trade flows open and avoid unnecessary disruption of global value and supply chains, not least to ensure the effective operation of the Single Market" (Council of the EU, 2020b). Such an approach is consistent with the recommendation issued by FAO to lift trade barriers during the pandemic, as "all measures against free trade will be counterproductive for food security" (The Guardian, 2020). The EU's underlying assumption is that with the removal of all barriers, a greater supply of food, freely traded, will result in more availability and lower food prices in all countries, as dictated by the forces of supply and demand, resulting in greater access to a wider variety of food, improving food security. Through this classically liberal argument, the EU conceptualises free trade as a *food transmission belt*, moving supply from surplus regions –



FOOD SECURITY IN TIMES OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND COVID-19: A battle of narratives shaping a fragmented EU policy action?

which are naturally well endowed to produce more food than they require in terms of both quantity and quality - to deficit regions - which lack the necessary land, climate, soil or other factors to produce enough food (Clapp, 2015). By connecting the promotion of free trade with the promotion of global food security, the EU has been long making a case for its Single Market as a normative force for welfare and peace (Scott, 2015). An attentive analysis of the pro-free trade discourse during the COVID-19 pandemic reveals that it is not by accident that third countries implementing food trade restrictions have been accused by EU officials of waging *trade wars* (European Commission, 2020e), with the latter understood as the symbolic antithesis of the free flow of goods underlying economic interdependence and peace.

The Farm to Fork Strategy, published in May 2020 and largely shaped before the first wave of COVID-19 contagion reached Europe in January 2020, shows strong evidence of continuity with the approach described above. Farm to Fork has been billed as the “heart of the European Green Deal” and is considered as an integral part of the EU’s economic growth strategy. In fact, the objective to “boost the economy” is listed at the very top of its policy priorities, before improving people's health and quality of life, protecting nature, and ensuring that the green transition leaves no one behind (European Commission, 2020 p.2). Farm to Fork frames food security through the lens of economic sustainability (e.g. affordable prices for customers and fair incomes for food producers), health (e.g. fight against undernutrition, malnutrition and non-communicable diseases), and environmental protection (e.g. natural resource stewardship and fight against biodiversity loss). As international trade is for the EU not only key to guarantee global food security but also to create new jobs, increase competitiveness and open new business opportunities for the EU agri-food sector, Farm to Fork puts forward a mix of diplomatic actions and regulatory targets aimed at transforming international food systems in the desired way. On the one hand, Farm to Fork foresees the establishment of “Green Alliances on sustainable food systems with all its partners in bilateral, regional and multilateral fora” to “encourage and enable the development of comprehensive, integrated responses benefiting people, nature and economic growth” (European Commission, 2020b). With the Green Alliances, the EU seeks to shape the framework for its international relations through the propagation of core foundational norms such as the commitment to *multilateralism*, *sustainable development* and the *precautionary principle* (Van Schaik and Schunz, 2011). On the other hand, the EU aims at leveraging the weight of its trade block on international markets by shaping international markets through those core norms. The main regulatory targets of Farm to Fork are illustrated in the Figure 1 below. In particular, the concept of sustainable development – declined by Farm to Fork through the notion of *sustainable food systems* from production to consumption (European Commission, 2020, p.2) - plays a very significant role in the EU agri-food strategy. Since its inclusion in the Maastricht Treaty (Treaty on European Union, 1992, Article 2), the principle of sustainable development has become a key norm of EU agri-food policy making, both internally - through the Common Agricultural Policy reforms - and externally – as shown by Farm to Fork. Such a long acquaintance of Single Market agri-food actors with the principle of sustainable development has provided EU actors with a significant first mover advantage concerning the development of the key technologies of a green agri-food economy, such as bio-based packaging solutions, non-chemical pesticides, innovative

FOOD SECURITY IN TIMES OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND COVID-19: A battle of narratives shaping a fragmented EU policy action?

water and soil management techniques for organic farming and food products based on non-meat alternative proteins (FIT4FOOD2030, 2019).

17

Designing a set of deeply transformative policies



Figure 1 : European Green Deal Policies. Source: Intesa San Paolo (2020)

The EU as a geopolitical actor for Member States' food security

While Farm to Fork shows strong signs of continuity with the dominant paradigm depicting the EU as a free market champion in the international agri-food systems, the new strategy also introduces elements sitting in apparent contradiction with it. The document puts particular emphasis on the concept of *food systems resilience*, which recurs 12 times throughout the text. Farm to Fork does not explicitly define food systems resilience, but the term can be interpreted as the ability not only to withstand and cope with challenges (including COVID-19), but also to transform in a sustainable, fair, and democratic manner. Key underlying features of resilience are the reduction of EU external dependence and the reinforcement of EU food systems towards more security of supply and the development of key technologies. Farm to Fork introduces the specific objective to “create shorter supply chains that will support reducing dependence on long-haul transportation” (European Commission, 2020 p.3) , which signals a clear intention to focus on local sourcing of food supply and reducing imports of foodstuff. The latter point is quite remarkable. During a public event to present the Farm to Fork Strategy, the EU Commissioner for Agriculture Janusz Wojciechowski explicitly confirmed (EurActive, 2020) that it is a specific EU objective to reduce imports of – among others - protein crops (soybeans, peanuts, chickpeas, etc.)



FOOD SECURITY IN TIMES OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND COVID-19: A battle of narratives shaping a fragmented EU policy action?

which are currently mainly supplied by the United States (European Commission, 2020c). As the world's largest agricultural importer, Wojciechowski explained, the EU sources over 93 million tonnes of products from other countries annually and transports 3 million tonnes of food within its borders. By investing in regional infrastructure, the Farm to Fork aims to make European food production more efficient and reliable while simultaneously reducing its carbon footprint. Such an approach, if supported by concrete actions backing up intention statements, would indeed represent a deviation from the liberal paradigm which has in free trade as the prominent solution to address the issue of food security at the EU and at the international level. "Agriculture should be agriculture, not industry," said Wojciechowski. "With the help of EU funds, we will motivate farmers to adopt sustainable production methods" (EurActiv, 2020).

Farm to Fork provisions foreseeing a shift towards short supply chain, invest in local production, and progressively depart from the WTO-sanctioned agri-food trade system based on intensive farming and the use of chemical pesticides has indeed already produced strong reactions from the international community. The U.S. Secretary of Agriculture under the Trump Administration Sonny Perdue, for instance, quickly pointed out that the Farm to Fork Strategy "could lead to protectionism", which in turn "could do real damage to the global trade environment" (EurActiv, 2020). Associating Europe with protectionism at a time when the EU is negotiating ambitious trade deals with Australia, Japan, and even the U.S. themselves (European Commission, 2020f) may raise more than an eyebrow. However, Perdue's words serve the important purpose to indicate the EU as the subject responsible for turning towards unilateralism and illiberal trade policies at a historical moment when the United States are under increased public scrutiny for those same reasons (Lehmann, 2016). Perdue's statements also serve to promote the association between the EU as a whole and the inward-looking, illiberal force that are mounting in some of its Member States and seek to disentangle Europe from its commitment to democratic values and strategic transatlantic partnership. Ruling parties in countries such as Poland and Hungary are in fact openly questioning the international governance architecture based on free trade and liberal values, including through policies supporting an aggressive promotion of domestic food production labelled as "discriminatory against foreign suppliers" by international observers (EurActiv, 2014).

Rather than an unrealistic shift towards protectionism, the Farm to Fork focus on food systems resilience and shorter supply chains may well indicate that the potential disruptions caused by current geopolitical turbulences and other unforeseeable events such as global pandemics are part of a broader reflection on the risks and fragilities associated with the structural interconnectedness of EU food systems and international markets (Emiliani, 2020). Acknowledging the need to increase EU food systems autonomy in spite of potential tensions with international partners and competitors would also mean that the EU has accepted the challenge to defend the interests of its Member States by speaking the *language of power*, as proclaimed by the von der Leyen Commission (Borrell, 2020). This implies a relative deviation from an approach to international governance based on consensual decisions to a more "ambitious, strategic and assertive" way to act in the international arena (European Commission, 2019). While the EU commitment to multilateralism has been reiterated several times, European Commission President von der Leyen has also clearly stated that the EU will now use the "geopolitics of mutual interest" to navigate its



FOOD SECURITY IN TIMES OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND COVID-19: A battle of narratives shaping a fragmented EU policy action?

international relations (EurActiv, 2020). In this sense, the Farm to Fork provisions on food systems resilience, reduced imports of strategic foodstuff and increased local sourcing can be read as part of a broader EU strategy aiming at strategic autonomy in critical sectors as a “key objective” (European Council, 2020). Making food production and food supply chains strategic assets of the EU implies a recalibration of the EU food security promotion strategy, as well as of the role of international trade in achieving it. A recognition of the strategic importance of food systems autonomy would also mean a further validation of the notion of *food exceptionalism* embedded into the European Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) (Daugbjerg and Feindt, 2020), which seeks to support the primary production sector through subsidies and other programmes of financial assistance. Should Farm to Fork provisions supporting local production through sustainable crops, animal welfare and labels be translated into CAP targeted financial actions, the U.S. and other global trade actors may seek for a WTO ruling on whether EU new policies represent a sanctionable distortion of international trade (EurActiv, 2020). The EU may shift towards a conceptualisation of food security as self-sufficiency and increase its support to Member States’ sovereign right to pursue relevant policies aimed at increasing the amount of food produced domestically to prevent supply disruptions and price volatility, as well as provide social assistance for development of rural areas. Anecdotic evidence of the growing traction of such an approach can be found in the multiple European calls for “legitimate protection” of EU strategic food assets (Economist, 2020) and “rethink our trade deals to take a closer look at sustainability in value chains” heard during the first wave of COVID-19 pandemic in Spring 2020 (Kaag, 2020).

The EU for food sovereignty and the access to food as a human right

Farm to Fork offers one more possible reading of the real EU intentions on its future food security promotion strategy. The policy contains an emphasis on environmentally sustainable agri-food practices and on the empowerment of consumers and small-scale producers which is relatively new in the EU discourse. In particular, the proposed targets on chemical pesticides, fertilisers, organic farming, and antimicrobial resistance have been welcomed for a strong focus on the health of EU citizens and the environment that could help strengthen territorial networks, and address social and economic inequalities (Cultivate, 2020). A concrete example is provided by the Farm to Fork commitment to “develop an EU tax system that can ensure that the price of different foods reflects their real costs in terms of use of finite natural resources, pollution, Green House Gas (GHG) emissions and other environmental externalities” (European Commission, 2020 p.14). The focus on local sourcing of food could entail more support and fairer incomes for European small-scale food producers, who currently struggle to compete with the low prices of products imported from outside the EU.

The need to review social and environmental priorities in face of COVID-19 and climate change and to provide an effective framework for meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of Zero Hunger and environmental protection - to which the EU has subscribed - could also prompt a progressive move away from the conceptualisation of *food as a commodity* to that of *food as a common good* (Clapp, 2015). The concept of food as a common good shaping European identities and contributing to the intangible patrimony of European identity is explicitly acknowledged in the report “Towards a sustainable food system” by the Group of Chief Scientific



FOOD SECURITY IN TIMES OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND COVID-19: A battle of narratives shaping a fragmented EU policy action?

Advisors of the European Commission who helped shaping the Farm to Fork Strategy (Scientific Advice Mechanism, 2020). Should the EU move toward officially recognising food as a common good in the future, a bottom-up conceptualisation of food security as a human right of all (EU) citizens could also emerge. Social activists have pointed out that a human right approach to food security is consistent with the concept of food sovereignty which, without denying the importance of some levels of international trade to overcome production unbalances, calls for the right of nations and peoples to determine the contours of their own food systems, including the form of market relations, ecological dimensions, and cultural aspects (Clapp, 2015). Many farmers' organisations in the EU argue the Farm to Fork focus on short supply chains and organic farming should prompt a departure from liberalised trade practices in food and agriculture. Such practices are deemed responsible for allowing large transnational agri-food companies to source food items from anywhere around the globe in ways that give them enormous advantages over EU smaller, local farms, crowd out competition and increase corporate concentration (Duncan et al., 2020). According to small farmers organisations, the global expansion of agricultural value chains under a liberalized agricultural trade regime also has enormous implications for farmer autonomy. Small-scale farmers serving these global value chains often lose control over their own decision-making about what crops they grow, with what inputs, into what channels they sell their crops, and at what price (European Coordination Via Campesina, 2020). Indeed, the EU Commissioner for Agriculture Wojciechowski acknowledged that, in the current EU agri-food system, land ownership is becoming concentrated, as more than a half of the lands in the EU is in the hands of 3% of the owners, with the 80% of CAP direct payments being received by 20% of farmers (EurActiv, 2020). When questioned about whether the Farm to Fork strategy should prompt a re-discussion of the existing free trade agreements to address social inequalities within the Union, Wojciechowski acknowledged that "trade agreements in the EU are mostly profitable for agriculture, but there are some sectors which are negatively affected". He concluded by stating that one of the main objectives of the strategy is to reduce the distance between primary producers and consumers, so to make the EU agri-food sector "less dependent on trade" (European Coordination Via Campesina, 2020).

Conclusion

The impact of COVID-19 on the food systems and the impellent effects of climate change demand urgent action by the European Union to guarantee the food security of European citizens and communities. Due to the magnitude of the problems and the pace at which they are producing critical effects, a unified European strategy to achieve environmentally sustainable food systems while ensuring global food and nutrition security and protecting the economy is yet to emerge. The Farm to Fork Strategy represents a comprehensive attempt to foster the required transition towards sustainable food systems in Europe. However, Farm to Fork features a wide range of principles, targets and provision producing a rather fragmented policy framework shaped by actors with sometimes conflicting interests, as showed in Table 1 below.



FOOD SECURITY IN TIMES OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND COVID-19: A battle of narratives shaping a fragmented EU policy action?

<i>European approaches to food security</i>	<i>Main proponents at the European level</i>	<i>Policy implications for trade and environment</i>	<i>Main concerns due to Covid-19</i>	<i>Measures to tackle Covid-19</i>
Liberal Paradigm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Institutional: European Commission and majority of Member States - Intellectual: Neo-liberal economists - Social: Private interest groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Market efficiency enhances collective food security - International trade as a global food surplus transmission belt - Environmental protection instrumental to sustain food systems productivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decreased production capacity harming growth - Economic impact of lockdown harming society - Export restrictions harming global trade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Temporal reduction of trade levels - Focus on economic recovery aimed at restoring trade levels - Expansion of e-commerce/digital trade and food delivery systems to minimize logistical hurdles and reduce food waste
Geopolitical Paradigm (hard version)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Institutional: Authoritarian political circles within some Member States - Intellectual: Geopolitical scholars and military strategists - Social: Right-wing populist movements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legitimate state interventions as food supply is a national security priority - Food exceptionalism in global trade, e.g. excluded from WTO rules - Narrow focus on protection of national environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited food stocks harming national security - Long-supply chains producing external dependence - Foreign actors potentially exploiting structural weaknesses of national systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advocacy for permanent reduction of imports - Focus on expanding domestic food production to achieve self-sufficiency - Promotion of short supply chains to benefit the national economy and value national food production
Human Rights Paradigm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Institutional: - - Intellectual: Critical food systems thinkers - Social: Small farmers' organisations, left-wing populist movements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Food security as a human right - Food sovereignty grounded on community welfare - Environmental protection as a common good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collapse of food workers' and households' incomes widening the social gap - Neoliberal regime turning overtly authoritarian - Empowerment of unaccountable multinational corporations and financial actors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advocacy for permanent reduction of trade and shift to 'doughnut economy' compensated by debt relief for developing countries - Focus on local markets to increase community resilience through increased urban-rural linkages - Promotion of short supply chains to empower small producers and reduce the negative effects of climate change

Table 1: Approaches and proposed solutions to Covid-19 threats to food security. Source: Own elaboration based on Orbie & De Ville (2020). While many differences exist within each approach, for the sake of clarity each camp is described as a homogenous group with a consistent set of characteristics.

For instance, the influence of the liberal paradigm is noticeable in the proposed establishment of Green Alliances that will allow the EU to benefit from its comparative advantage in green technology know-how and from the export of EU regulations onto the world stage. Since the EU is strongly committed to international trade, the assumption is that EU growth will increase food security internally by expanding the availability and affordability of healthy food and the disposable income of food producers, while externally it will boost exports and allow deficit



FOOD SECURITY IN TIMES OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND COVID-19: A battle of narratives shaping a fragmented EU policy action?

regions (including those heavily affected by the COVID-19 effects) to source sufficient food for their citizens.

On the other hand, Farm to Fork provisions aimed at increasing EU food systems resilience through shorter supply chains and reduced imports indicate the relevant forces within the EU who are pushing towards a new paradigm based on EU agri-food autonomy. Such an approach would entail a much more prudent EU assessment of the benefits of free trade and a shift in the conceptualisation of EU food security as increased food sufficiency of Member States. As some international actors would consider that the Farm to Fork provisions hinder international trade, the EU could be required to step up its action in defence of Member States interests. A more assertive EU could make a geopolitical use of the resources and expertise available (including green technologies and CAP subsidies) to meet its food systems resilience goals. At the same time, the EU will need to contain those illiberal forces within its Member States who seek to exploit the opportunity provided by the rising popularity of the concept of agri-food systems autonomy to promote protectionist policies and other autarchic measures in open contradiction with the fundamental values inscribed in the EU treaties.

Finally, civil society's growing pressure to acknowledge the current social, economic and environmental challenges affecting EU food systems and its most vulnerable actors is noticeable in the Farm to Fork provisions aimed at protecting small scale farmers, consumers, animals and the planet. In particular, the commitment to guarantee a just transition and provide fair incomes for small-scale primary producers may indicate a step towards the incorporation of the concept of food sovereignty into food security. This may prompt a shift towards a new right-based paradigm beyond the incumbent one focused on (green) economic growth.

Part of the explanation for such a fragmented policy framework lies with the nature of EU decision-making itself, which is shaped by a variety of different stakeholders with overlapping and conflicting interests. The way the EU reacts to the current food security challenges is shaped by the way different actors achieve to put forward multiple, often competing narratives. The Farm to Fork Strategy, for instance, is the result of a long negotiation process driven by European Commission DG SANTE, DG MARE and DG AGRI, which integrated several feedback loops provided by technical experts in different scientific fields, Member States officials, influent stakeholders from the industry sector, farmer and consumer organisations, research institutions and many others.

At the time of writing, Europe is through the second wave of the COVID-19 outbreak and the Farm to Fork strategy is yet to be operationalised through specific Action Plans. Only when these will be published it will be possible to know the concrete strategies adopted to achieve Farm to Fork objectives, and to what extent the new policy's ambitions will be watered down into more-of-the-same business-as-usual, as it is often the case for innovative frameworks seeing the light in times of crisis (Crouch, 2011). At this stage it is impossible to determine with precision which of the competing frames of EU food security promotion described in this paper will prevail and will shape the concrete EU agri-food policymaking after the approval of the EU budget in early 2021 and for the next crucial years. It is in fact probable that the complex web of relations, interests,



FOOD SECURITY IN TIMES OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND COVID-19: A battle of narratives shaping a fragmented EU policy action?

influences and competences shaping the European Union will produce an hybrid approach containing some elements from all the approaches described in this paper.

Potential zones of possible agreement (ZOPAs) between the different camps are likely to emerge and may prove crucial to determine the outcome of the ongoing multi-stakeholder negotiation over the future of European food systems:

- Both the advocates of the liberal paradigm axed on international trade and the proponents of a geopolitical approach to food security broadly agree on the key role of Farm to Fork as the new driver of EU economic growth. This implies an emphasis on the importance of the EU agri-food sector industrial competitiveness and a certain amount of prudence in addressing civil society calls to tackle the social, economic and ecological injustices inherent to the incumbent agri-food systems (Gill et al., 2018). Should a coalition emerge, EU food systems transformation would be profoundly marked by the green technology revolution, yet incumbent power dynamics would not fundamentally change.
- Both the proponents of the geopoliticisation of food security and the advocates of food as a human right are at odds with the position that big agri-food multinational corporations and financial institutions occupy in current EU food systems. Both camps share the belief that the current system rewards too generously actors who contribute only marginally to the food security of Member States/local communities. Furthermore, both camps are favourable - to different extents - to Member States and EU interventions on the market to redress social and economic inequities and support investments in local food sourcing (Irwin, 2020). Should a coalition emerge, the EU would sensibly reduce the volume of its food imports and roll out important financial support schemes to support primary producers and vulnerable societal groups. The technology uptake of agri-food systems would however be limited by the smaller role reserved to private Research & Development, which could potentially hinder the pace of innovation needed to achieve most of the Farm to Fork objectives.
- Both the advocates of the liberal paradigm and of food as a human right share common roots in liberal philosophies and believe that EU normative power can be channelled to promote food security globally through international cooperation (Dur, Eckhardt and Poletti, 2020). While strong differences exist on which EU norms are to be promoted, and whether they should be promoted through trade or through a human-right based governance framework, a coalition might emerge through shared opposition to protectionist measures in potential contradiction with EU treaties.

The final outcome of the process will depend on how successful key agents operating in each camp will be at co-opting strategic allies into their ranks, as well as on the impact of new unforeseeable events and personalities shaping food security promotion narratives and allowing for cross-fertilization of ideas across the different positions.



FOOD SECURITY IN TIMES OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND COVID-19: A battle of narratives shaping a fragmented EU policy action?

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