Towards a Common Food Policy for the EU

Chantal Clément, PhD
IPES-Food Coordinator
What is IPES-Food?

Since 2015, IPES-Food has been working to inform policy debates on food systems reform around the world, using:

- **Holistic approach.** Bringing together different disciplines & different sources of knowledge to capture food system complexity.
- **Political economy focus.** Understanding what reforms are required to build sustainable food systems, and *how* these might occur in a context of major power imbalances?

IPES-Food’s Work programme combines 1) **policy-oriented research** (global) and 2) **policy development processes** (regional).
1. Food and farming systems are in crisis

• **Health risks.** More than half of adults in the EU overweight & more than 20% obese

• **Environmental impacts.** Food systems account for up to 30% of global GHGs.

• **Socio-economic challenges.** 1 out of 4 farms disappeared from the European landscape between 2003-2013

→ The current model delivers cheap food, but is very costly in social and environmental terms, and cannot be sustained...
Why do we need an EU food policy? (ii)

2. Fragmented governance, conflicting objectives & missed synergies

• To align actions across different **policy areas** (agriculture, trade, environment, development, food safety)
  • e.g. despite supposed alignment with climate & development goals, EU agri-trade policies encourage farmers in high-emitting sectors (e.g. meat & dairy) to seek new export markets.
• To align actions across different **levels of governance** (European, national, local)
  • e.g. local initiatives poorly-supported at EU level.
Why do we need an EU food policy? (iii)

3. Need long-term vision of what food systems should look like, created in a participatory way

• To spark coordinated shifts in production, distribution, consumption, etc. (i.e. system-wide transition)
• To move from short-term to long-term thinking
• To bring more constituencies around the table & build shared ownership of the policies governing food systems
Integrated food policy can overcome structural barriers to change (‘lock ins’)

- Export orientation
- Expectation of cheap food
- Concentration of power
- Feed the world narratives
- Compartmentalized thinking
- Short-term thinking
- Measures of success
- Path dependency
A 3-year process of research & reflection: Bringing different voices to the table & asking different questions
Integrated food policies already exist in the EU...

- Urban food policies
- City-region food policies
- National food policies

Support for integrated food policy at EU level is growing:

- EESC opinion on "More sustainable food systems (May 2016)
- CoR opinion "Towards a sustainable EU food policy" (March 2017)
- European Commission’s in-house scientific advisers (the JRC, the European Environmental Agency, SCAR)
A Common Food Policy for the EU: The Proposal

What will the final Common Food Policy proposal look like?

• Proposals mostly focused on EU level
• Proposals with greatest consensus throughout process
• Proposals that reinforce each other & need to happen in parallel
• Distinction between short-, medium- & long-term objectives
• Proposals relating to governance itself: creating the conditions for sustainable food initiatives at multiple levels
THANK YOU